

# SMALL FARMERS FROM RURAL AREAS ATTITUDE ON ORGANIC FOOD

**Roșca Mihai Ioan**

*The Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies*

*Marketing Faculty*

**Tanase Laura Daniela**

*Marketer Club*

**Morar Mihai Gelu**

*The Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies*

*Marketing Faculty*

*This paper is one of the few marketing research done in rural areas of attitudes towards green products. Even if the subject is generally treated at the international level, Romania has an important specific is to be taken into account in the European area. Size of agricultural holdings and their degree of technology do not have the desired agricultural economic efficiency of modern economies. But by applying marketing techniques and by approaching customer needs, the agricultural sector in Romania can develop in another direction no longer going through the business model of major West European farmers. We are referring here to transition to a agriculture on small areas, intensively exploited and ecology and a system of distributed in the markets with a big search for such products. But he must know how people in rural areas see these green products and how they are trained to understand the concepts of green marketing and marketing organic products. These issues have been dealt with in the first part of the work. The second part of this paper aims to describe the attitude of small agricultural producers towards organic products and the degree in which they are willing to go to such a production. Research is based on a survey an explorer in two rural areas of Romania one at the mountain and the other in lowlands and shows the degree of adaptation for small producers to new market requirements. Results have been contradictory. Some of them have confirmed the assumptions, namely the opening to such a grown for, and others have shown a much greater degree of the use of chemical compounds in agriculture than expected. Also the degree of taking the initiative in rural areas was an issue that came out at a level lower than expected. This is a worrying conclusion but worth being taken into account. This research gives the image concept in rural areas being the starting point for further research and strategies which to propose turning Romania into a net exporter of organic production.*

*Key words: green marketing, bio food,, rural market*

*JEL Classification: M31*

## **I. Introduction**

In the recent years people began to be interested in protecting health and the environment by using earth resources rationally and making agriculture a reinvention of a conventional organic one. Several companies have emerged to support these ideas and even promotes environmental or selling such products. In big cities have appeared numerous companies and products certified organic. There is an ecological market peasant products formed parallel but nobody ever made an analysis of the perception of these small producers of organic products. There are several programs that encourage this type of production but, the interest is to see what the perception of this concept in this area is. Developing this type of production and introducing the modern retail system would bring huge benefits to both small producers and the entire national economic system.

In the current consumer market has become more demanding and began to consider the decision to purchase several aspects of environmental quality of products, type of packaging

(biodegradable or not), their effects techniques production and environmental technologies and social behaviour of companies. It makes the transition from traditional consumer to consumer "green" - social responsibility. Ecological concerns not only reflect the final product, but the entire field of production of product from producer to consumer. Modern consumers want guarantees that the products purchased in greening their meaning. This is why governments and supra-state institutions attempted to regulate the problem. If you really want to support the development of organic food production as a way of getting the profit, must not only respect the legal rules, but to be one step ahead by studying small producers, consumers and understanding their perception of these issues. And so it meets a real need for research and economic adaptation of scientific research these real problems lead to an improvement of our system of socio-economic life.

## **II. Literature review/ previous research**

"Green marketing, from traditional marketing is directed toward community interests and environmental protection, the environment is changing. In other words it is directed towards environmental protection and quality of life ". (Danciu 2006: 25)

Green marketing should push for the use of clean technologies oriented toward saving resources and other sectors, such as production, which should be considered ecological qualities and packaging of "eco". (Stoian 2003: 16)

Eco-product is defined in terms of American professor Philip Kotler in the book "Ecomarketing" written by M. Stoian as "a service vehicle". "Eco-product is the product that consumers demand and at the same time harmonize their interests, the short, medium and long term. As long as eco product demand is steadily increasing adaptation to market needs is a simple way to increase profit entrepreneurs.

Organic products are included in the ecological products. The European Commission's view, organic products are those products derived from organic agriculture (including both plants and animals), aimed at "getting fresh and authentic processes designed to respect nature and its systems." (European Commission)

"Organic Production, consumption is an interesting option because it satisfies three needs at once. Are perceived by most consumers as compared to conventional tastes much better and healthier and the production process is less harmful to the natural environment. "(Garcia and Magistris, 2008: 386)

"The interest in organic food is seen to increasingly higher among consumers around the world, because agriculture" organic "Assurance of quality organic products that help consumers to take care of their health and families." (Roitner-Schobesberger et al 2008: 112)

Numerous studies in Europe and the United States have shown that the choice to purchase organic products is strongly motivated by the desire of a state of good health and taste much better than these organic products than conventional products taste and the belief that organic products are grown on healthy principles and protect the environment and animal welfare in their growth process. (Arvola 2008: 443)

On the Romanian market can be bought organic food from organic specialty stores, shops and organic products are on offer as are the supermarkets and online stores would have to offer organic products. Another option is to purchase products directly from manufacturers. Their list - the address, telephone and even e-mail - can be found on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Organic Agriculture section. Although not all large retail chains have highlighted green products on their shelves in many hypermarket chains emerged districts bio spaces. Unfortunately most of them are important products especially from Austria and Germany. Based on this observation our work was designed to see what is missing from the Romanian system to make our own organic products get easier on the market environment. Emergence of big retail chains and changing consumer preferences to products sorted, packed and labeled to meet quality

and food safety principles tend to reduce the percentage of production sold at the farm gate for organized markets. This percentage is declining as a result of increasing trade through intermediaries.

### **III. Research methodology**

Aim of this study is to determine perception of ecological products in rural areas.

The objectives are:

1. Existence of ecological education in rural areas.
2. Awareness of ecological products in rural areas.
3. Analysis of rural respondents' perception of ecological products.

Right from the beginning we state that this study is not conclusive but an exploratory research. As a research method a survey was realized. 150 questionnaires were applied in rural areas. 90 were applied in Harghita County, Toplita area and 60 were applied in the Old Kingdom, the County the area Titu. The two areas chosen have no statistical significance they were chosen primarily because of ease of authors to collect data from these regions and secondly as a means of checking to see if there are common views in the two rural areas so different. Data collection took place in summer 2011.

Sampling was done by the "snowball". (Cătoi et.al 2009: 534) The questionnaire was initially applied to residents of the areas studied and through them was applied on to their friends and acquaintances. The target group consists of individuals residing in rural areas, does not apply other demographic restrictions.

Because livestock and agricultural production are the basics of their own subsistence respondents were asked to exemplify that livestock are the main crops household and area exceeding 500sqm.

### **IV. Results**

The analysis of responses shows that 87% of respondents see their production of the household as a green, and only 10% do not perceive farming. Of knowledge and experience so far this is not necessarily true because many of those who say that their organic production uses chemical fertilizers and chemicals for pest removal.

Through the media over half of respondents first learned the concept of ecological, 15% have heard from friends and almost 10% of magazines. Interestingly, although the research took place in rural areas 8% of respondents have heard about organic products through the Internet. Although we expect the mayor to have increased activity in familiarizing people with the concept of ecological still below 1% of respondents indicated it as the place where they learned about the existence of such products.

Wishing to find out if there is a tendency to adapt behavior to the market, respondents were asked whether the last five years have started to grow or cultivate a new assortment of breeds of animals or plants. 67% of respondents respond negatively and only 32% responded positively.

Reasons for trying a new plant variety or a new breed of animals refers mainly to an increase in output or productivity 12% and 6%.

Because in recent years discussions about accessing pre or post-accession funds have monopolized the interest of small producers, we asked a question regarding the wearing of discussions or attending lectures or meetings held with the format farming subject. The answer is disappointing only 6% of respondents stating that they have taken part in such events. Of the seven respondents who participated in such meetings in June admitted thinking of going to transform the mode of production. Directions of change have been dictated by obtaining more green products, to increase the quantity or remove products such as chemical fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides in production activity.

Although he saw some interest in organic products however request information from specialized institutions is very low, only 12% of respondents resorting to this method of information. Most of

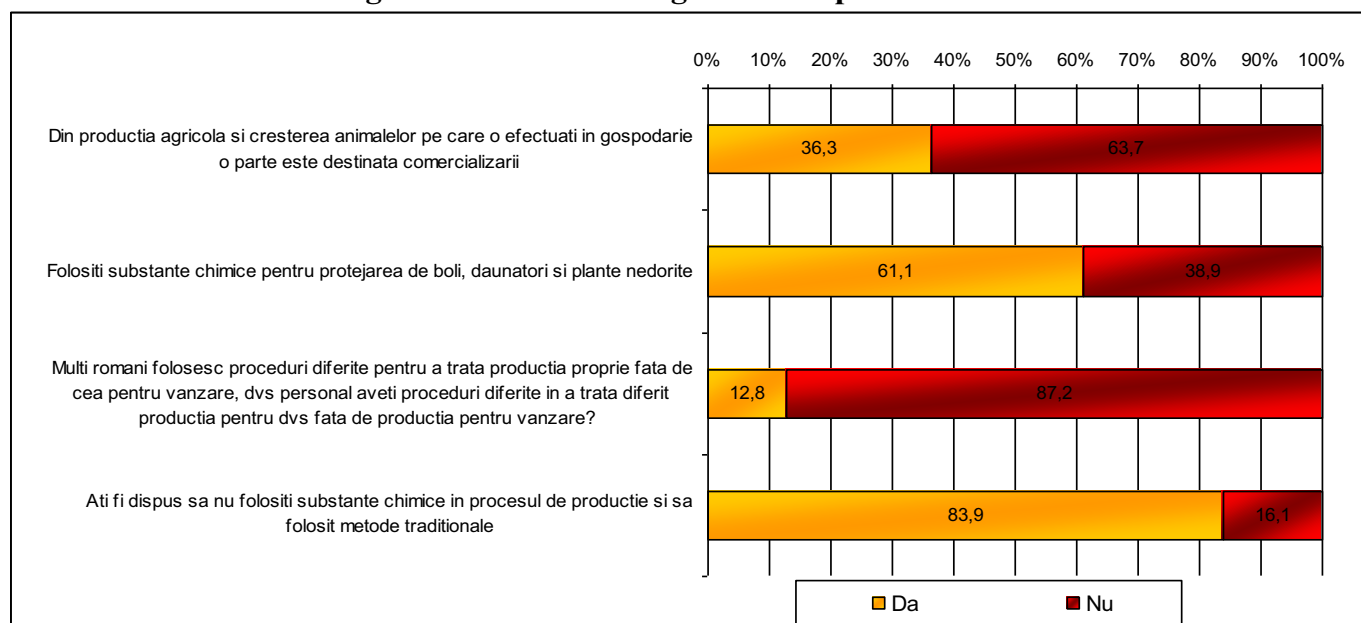
them have turned to existing information from the Ministry of Agriculture, a respondent turned to information provided by the institutions that manage European funds, one to the media, and one by the information could be provided by the municipality.

Most common place to search for information has emerged to be the Internet more than 50% indicating it as the main source of information.

The media is another important source of information 40%, along with magazines 27%. Only 23% of respondents would call the specialized agencies to obtain information, while 20% would turn to information held by friends. In last place are municipalities with 17% of respondents indicating it, as a potential site for information collection.

The vast majority of respondents use their own production for own consumption only a little over 35% of them sold part of their output. Unfortunately the majority of respondents over 60% of them use chemicals for fertilization and removal of pests or unwanted plants. (Fig. no. 1)

**Fig. no. 1 Behavior of agricultural production**



*Realized by e author*

A 12% apply different treatment products for own use from those for marketing, however over 87% do not apply differentiated treatment. Over 80% of respondents would be open to doing away with the use of chemicals in the production process and would return to traditional methods.

However, this transition would be made provided that the price of organic products to be slightly higher than the other products. Thus 29% of respondents believe that organic products should have a price 25-50% higher than other products, 27% would like a price 10-25% higher and 20% of respondents would be satisfied and with a 5-10% higher price. In other words 65% of potential producers would charge a price up to 25% higher than today.

In a battery of 5-scale Likert questions response we analyzed respondents' on various aspects of agricultural production. Thus the statement on chemicals such as fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides or insecticides tends to be relatively respondents agree that they are a necessary evil. There is a clear tendency to focus on the attitude towards them is neutral. Respondents recognize that there is adequate information on organic foods or steps that will be made to obtain environmental certification. Agree that more could and should do more to get this certification, and feel very strongly need help from City Hall. Place primary responsibility for obtaining these types of certificates to the government.

In view of respondents townspeople rarely buy organic products because they are more expensive 37%, 17% are not found or cannot afford. Western Europe prefer not to buy the Romanian origin because they trust not our products 18%, 14% are low quality, are not promoted enough 12% or have some better 9%. 4% of respondents see as the main reason lack "commercial aspect" that is not provided easy access to our products or because they are more expensive.

The main fault that things go as they should in Romanian agriculture is the government 52%, management 10%, 9% State, or Ministry of Agriculture 5% in other words not to blame but producers are still awaited from the State "to keep our hand as we cross the street".

As the bivariate analysis, we examined several questions in terms of demographics. Unfortunately due to the relatively small number of questionnaires, many of these correlations have not emerged statistically significant or have given too large calculation errors due to insufficient data. Yet few have emerged statistically relevant.

The area Toplița declares a higher percentage overwhelming that they have changed their production in recent years from 46.3% in Transylvania to 8.7% in Wallachia. This shows a greater power of adaptation in Transylvania. They also have been more interested in attending lectures, meetings, discussions about agricultural production, as well as organic food production. Although the hypothesis was that we left the mountain agricultural production is cleaner in terms of chemical treatment products, we noticed that all those from states Toplița a higher percentage (68.7% vs. 50%) that use chemicals to protect from diseases, pests and unwanted plants.

## **V. Conclusions**

Upon completion of this work we can say that rural population has a slightly wrong perception of what organic means. As we showed the beginning of this article, ecological means not only organic products that are not chemically treated but also those that are certified. Unfortunately, no one respondent of those surveyed in this research didn't made such a statement. This gives a poor training to both small producers and the authorities. Unfortunately due to this lack of knowledge we cannot exploit the potential that we have.

Even though more respondents in an overwhelming number said that their products are organic, they also said a 60 percent share of their products are chemically treated. This lack of knowledge has made in recent years much of our potential to lose its organic produce. Chemicals used without respecting quantities make some products to exceed concentrations and production considered as organic by the small farmer actually to be more toxic than those distributed through department stores.

Another conclusion we can draw on the degree of entrepreneurship of rural population. Most expect the state to do various things to increase the profitability of agricultural production. Guilty are always those in power, but training courses attended, associations of small producers, local government initiatives are not choices made by respondents. Trust that the things may change starting from low to the top is not an existing one among the respondents. All are waiting for a solution to come up from the politics and government.

Confidence in their own products or those of farmers like them is lower than industry products. In this case it is very difficult to build a functional business idea.

As recommendations made after doing this research would be the attendance to courses done in order to bring education among the rural population of what organic products, the ecologic way of production, administrative steps to be followed for organic certification, marketing and entrepreneurship means. These courses made for as part of nearly 40% of the Romanians population, the rural one, can become added value in the economy. These courses can be made both by local authorities as well as central initiative and with the help of EU funds. In order to give an alternative to the rural population in order not have to emigrate in foreign countries to survive.

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