

Organic Farming as great challenge for Georgian farmers

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Abstract

In Georgia, apples, wine grapes, peaches, nectarines, pears, oranges, tangerines, mandarins, and berries are grown. The organic agricultural sector is one of the few sectors with consistent growth over the last decade. During the current economic downturn, the growth of the organic industry has outpaced the food industry as a whole. As the leading national non-profit organization, firstly entering in Membership of IFOAM in 2000 the Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD is building the guidelines and toolkits for the success of organic farmers.

Keywords: Georgia; Mulching; Foliar Feeding; Biocontrol

Georgia is an intensely mountainous country, covered by many inter-connected Caucasus mountain ranges. It enjoys a variety of climates including warm, humid, sub-tropical along the Black Sea coast, cold and wet alpine climate in the high mountains, and arid environment in steppes. The development of the agricultural sector was not a high priority for the past Georgian governments. According to the European Union, numerous problems and challenges faced by Georgia such as capital disinvestment, the Russian embargo, absence of a functioning agricultural research-education-extension system, lack of a well-functioning land market, poor condition of irrigation systems and other infrastructures, and widespread impact of livestock diseases have resulted in the reduction of agricultural production by 20 per cent since 2005. Even though agriculture's decline in economic terms has been steady it still remains an important safety net for rural population in terms of food security. The present government has taken several bold steps to revive the agricultural sector such as inviting foreign investors and experienced farmers from countries like India to buy and develop arable land, something most Georgian farmers have not been able to do for various reasons. The development priorities of the fruit-growing regions in Georgia are distributed as follows: Samegrelo -Nuts (75,2 %); Apples (13 %); Adjara - nuts (67.6 %); Guria - nuts (83.7 %); Imereti - Nuts (60,3 %); Kakheti - Peach (66.5 %); Mtskheta Mtianeti - plums (20.4 %); Apples (18.8 %); Nuts (13.5 %); Racha, Kvemo Svaneti - apples (35.7 %); Nuts (29.2 %); Plums (12.8 %); Samegrelo and Upper Svaneti - Nuts (84,6 %); Samtskhe-Javakheti - apples (38.8 %); Plums (27.5 %); Nuts (15.1 %); Kvemo Kartli - apples (17.3 %); Mulberry (12.2 %); Nuts (11.8%); Persimmon (10.2 %); Shida Kartli - apples (73.3 %); Nuts (9.4 %).

Organic farming in Georgia is comprised of an integrated suite of practices that provide these benefits in addition to producing safe food for consumption. Studies provided by Association for Farmers Rights Defense (AFRD) conducted over the past decade have called for the agricultural industry to be responsive to changing climate and environmental conditions directly affecting organic farming development in Georgia. Converting a farm to organic needs a multi-year process and very complicated. To gain organic certification, farmers must prove that no prohibited substances have been used on the farm for at least three years, reducing the chance that the farm has residual contamination of crops, soil or water. Organic farmers in Georgia are required to maintain buffer zones between organic farmland and adjacent potential sources of water, chemical or genetic drift to prevent their

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crops from being contaminated by actions taken on nearby farms. Well known that all plant health requires vital mineral inputs to ensure growth. We provide a variety of plant nutrients for improved yield and consistent crop quality. Organic growers trust us as approved providers and Bio advises for plant nutrition resulting in less waste and higher performance.

Organic fruit growing in Georgia

Major crops grown are corn and winter wheat. Fruits include apples, wine grapes, peaches, nectarines, pears, oranges, tangerines, mandarins, and berries. Main agricultural exports are wine and processed tea. Georgia has hundreds of grape varieties and has been producing high-quality wines for centuries.

The benefits of organic farming for producing eco fruit in Georgia are widespread and important to multiple sectors of society. Organic and eco fruits can help protect what's most valuable to people--their health. Organic foods can play an important role in keeping people healthy. In addition to the health benefits, the organic industry is important in many other ways. For investors, the organic agricultural sector is one of the few sectors with consistent growth over the last decade. During the current economic downturn, the growth of the organic industry has outpaced the food industry as a whole. Organic products are increasingly important to consumers who are committed to reducing their carbon footprints and their impacts on the environment. More and more people are making their purchasing decisions based, at least partially, on environmental considerations. For families, organic products are important in protecting and enhancing the health of their children. Young bodies in particular are more susceptible to the impacts of pesticides, fungicides and other synthetic chemicals used in non-organically grown fruits and vegetables. As the leading national non-profit organization, firstly entering in Membership of IFOAM in 2000 the Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD is building the guidelines and toolkits for the success of organic farmers. Organic farmers or Agricultural Cooperatives bring economic benefits to their communities by providing increased employment opportunities, as well as health benefits to farmers and their families, consumers of organic foods, and the environment.

Challenges for Organic Fruit Growers in Georgia

Organic Farming for Health & Prosperity Increasing the role of organic farming presents a three-fold challenge: increasing public awareness of the value of organic farming, implementing policy changes that ensure organic farming meets the rapidly growing consumer demand, and conducting research to arrive at necessary technological advances. The demand for organic foods is growing.

Georgia is rich by agro biodiverse Fruits varieties (Apples, Grapes, Citruses, Tea and etc.) and has many facilities but the product packaging and storage of modern technology nor fruit processing canning factories have not yet been introduced. As a result, there is a large number of unused local fruit, while the market of imported fruit creates demand for the fruit.

Mature, well-made compost is fundamental to organic farming. It is a stable, slow-release fertilizer that builds up soil life and will not "burn" plants. Synthetic amendments and manure can provide soluble nutrients for plant growth but do not build the soil's long-term biological reserves as well as compost does. The main goals of AFRD Member organic farmer in Georgia is to build long-term soil fertility for feeding the soil with a variety of natural amendments. Composting also gives organic farmers a way to recycle manures and plant residues that otherwise might present some environmental problems. In many

instances, a good composting program also allows farmers to save money by eliminating or trimming the need for farm fertilizers and other expensive inputs.

The development of pressurised irrigation equipment such as drip irrigation has promoted the need for water-soluble fertilizers, as clean and purified as possible in order to diminish the possibility of emitters clogging. It is not really clear when foliar feeding started, but after the development of water-soluble and liquid fertilizers farmers have begun to use these fertilizers with sprayers, the same as it is used with applications of pesticides. At the beginning, this technique of spraying nutrients was used for correcting deficiencies of minor elements. However, fast curing has shown that plants can absorb some elements through their tissue. As a result, foliar feeding has gone through further development. These days foliar feeding is considered among the major techniques used for plant nutrition, supplementing the ground application.

To maintain and increase long term fertility of soils must be used mulch, no-till method, biocontrol and bio organic fertilizers within a closed system with regard to organic matter and nutrient elements for Fruits. To minimize all forms of pollution that may result from agricultural practices how maintain the genetic diversity of the agricultural systems and its surroundings, including the protection of plant and wildlife habitat to consider the wider social and ecological impact of the farming system for producing more sustainable eco fruits in Georgia.

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