

BEST PRACTICES

TURKEY

Kapadokya Organik Tarım Üreticileri Birliği Derneği
(Cappadocia Organic Agriculture Farmers Union)

Institutional information

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Summary

Explain your case in one or two sentences

The Cappadocia Organic Producers Association was established in 2009. It aims to lead organic agriculture within the geographical region covering Cappadocia, therefore, to increase the number of organic producers as well as the quantity of organic production.

Organic agriculture should be sustainable, have aims towards development, not harm biological diversity, and have an aim of reducing the effects of factors that cause erosion, desertification and climate change. We continue on our way in line with our vision and with the projects that we have developed and implemented for reaching and maintaining the mentioned specifications of organic agriculture.

Background information: How was the situation previous to your actions?

In 2009, when our association was established, there was only one organic farming producer in Kayseri. With the efforts of us today we reached to almost 100 registered members in the association. Among them, there are 50 certified producers who are having organic production on an area of approximately 900 acres.

Therefore, a considerable value of organic agriculture potential has been created in Kayseri by starting almost from scratch with the activities of our association.

What were the needs you identified?

Anything for developing organic agriculture from scratch in the region.

What solution you found to cover those needs?

When we established the Association, we first started to work on how to find and get together the farmers in the region. For this purpose we tried to create an awareness and increase the knowledge level of producers by providing trainings to them. At the same time, we tried to create organic agriculture product demand by providing awareness campaigns and trainings to consumers.

In the next stage, we carried out studies to establish an organic market in our city. With this organic market, we acted as an intermediary for the producers to deliver the products they produce to consumers easily. At the same time, we prepared and launched a project for the production of vermicompost in order to make organic farmers to produce their own inputs, so with this attempt we enabled the farmers to produce their own compost which they use in organic production as a raw material. Additionally, we carried out studies and projects which support not only farmers' certification but also the use of organic pesticides.

We also supported women to establish a cooperative as an institution where they invest in food production facilities in cooperation and be able to process organic agricultural products they produce.

What actions did you take to reach the solution?

We tried to reach our goals by constantly developing new projects. While developing and implementing these projects we chose a way of collaborating with supporting institutions. Within this framework, we worked together with the Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality and social foundations in several projects. In summary, we develop complementary projects which is built upon each other for the purpose of maintaining the progress or solving the problems becomes our policy. Therefore, complementary projects are the measure that we usually implement.

If any, which partners or other organisations did you involve during the process?

While conducting our work, we cooperated with institutions such as;

- Kayseri Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry,
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry,
- Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality and
- Kocasinan (district in Kayseri Province) Municipality.

At the same time, we knock the doors of some Chambers of Agriculture and a number of foundations operating abroad whenever we need any support either in monetary or technical terms. We use these sources we obtained from chambers or foundations in order to support women producers and their production.

What were the main problems or difficulties you had to face?

The difficulties we encountered during the development stage were basically training the farmers, especially keeping them on a line on basic moral values. In fact, I personally had some difficulties in instilling the spirit

of organic agriculture in them. We overcome this difficulty by keeping away the farmers who do not obey the rules of organic and having the behaviour which is harmful for us from the cooperative market. This measure does not only penalize the dishonest farmers but also deter the rest of the group from having wrong attitudes. I had serious difficulties whenever a farmer violates the honest production rule in terms of bringing the farmers to a point of acting correctly and producing honestly. However, the management of the association was very decisive in this regard and did not soften the rules, let the policies towards infringement broken at all. Therefore, we made a significant progress in Kayseri region.

What is the situation now, after your actions?

We are not experiencing any negative situation in the market at the moment. We have reached to this successful stage by creating a dependable atmosphere in the market through 10 years.

Apart from that, of course, it was not easy to explain our initiative to local government and to persuade them to support our activities. Naturally, our association did not have a political base and we were not offering them an activity where they could achieve short-term political success. Our activity was conducted at an equal distance to everyone and was far from political issues. However, our success that we have obtained in time, changed their viewpoint and started to give support. Today, I believe we established a powerful cooperation with the local authorities and this cooperation continues in mutual trust.

At the point that we have reached after the measures that we have taken, the situation is as follows: - We have an organic market operating for about 3 months in a year along with 8 years. This year, manufacturers earned 720 thousand TL from this market. 45 families earned this money by selling around 160 tons of fruit and vegetables.

-We have a women's cooperative which has a processing facility where a woman producer bring her organic products harvested in her field and add value on them by processing, where a woman producer add value by purchasing and processing the organic products from external sources and where contribute to regional employment by employing women in the operations of processing plant.

Recently, we keep receiving demands from local governments and district municipalities on opening organic markets in their districts. What we achieved may best be explained in such a way that we lit a small candle, it started to illuminate its surroundings. We are slowly beginning to receive the blessings of our 10-year struggle. We have been very successful in raising consumer awareness. In the past, people perceived the organic market we opened as a village market and did not even realize how valuable those products were. However, today this perception has been completely changed. There is an enormous demand to organic products. For example, our market opens at 6 am, there is no product left in the market until noon. This story explains us that people, in reality, prefer to obtain clean, fresh and healthy food from their local producers in a fast way, wish to purchase these clear and healthy products directly from producers who offering them without any intermediaries.

Main lessons learned along the way? *

I am very happy with where these small-scale initiatives have reached today, and I suppose it will reach to better points. This much effort has been for the development of the perfect system for achieving our goals. This system has now settled and gradually began to set an example for other formations in its field.

I understood that starting from zero, in other words taking organic agriculture from the zero point, than creating both producers' and consumers' awareness about it, building a market, constructing a processing

centre, and all others, someone needs to plan the initial stages on which the following steps are built on very cautiously thinking about all the following steps. If this base structure established carefully, in a perfect manner, the following stages could be achieved without much trouble. First of all, you need to create a reliable producer portfolio. Because organic agriculture is built on a basis of trust. If this trust basis cannot be established between the producer and the consumer, it is obvious that nothing can be put on it. Recently, individuals' search for healthy and reliable food is increasing day by day. At this stage, both the producer and the consumer must establish this trust environment and believe in the work done. After that, success comes very easily.

Annex:

4 Images

Other related resources

