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Turkiye's Experience in Developing the Organic Fruit and Vegetable Production and Export System

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Abstract: This article analyzes Turkiye's experience in developing organic agriculture, supporting producers, establishing certification mechanisms, and promoting organic products in international markets. Turkiye is one of the countries that has transformed organic agriculture from an export-oriented initiative into a broader agricultural sector supported by a dedicated legal and control framework. The study examines Law No. 5262 on Organic Agriculture, mechanisms for supporting producers, certification and control procedures, and recent statistical indicators. In 2025, approximately 37,000 farmers in Turkiye were engaged in organic agriculture on 235,000 hectares of land. In 2024, Turkiye exported more than 150,000 tonnes of organic agri-food products to the European Union, becoming the sixth-largest supplier to this market. The analysis indicates that Turkiye's model has developed production, certification, public support, and export requirements as interconnected elements rather than as separate components. For Uzbekistan, the most relevant aspects of this experience include reducing certification costs, organizing farmers through group certification schemes, and developing export-oriented organic agricultural clusters.

Keywords: organic agriculture, fruits and vegetables, exports, certification, Turkiye, farmers, organic products, government support, European market.

Introduction

Turkiye's experience in organic agriculture did not emerge simply from a government decision. Market demand played a major role. Organic production in the country began to develop in the 1980s and 1990s through projects involving European companies, particularly in the dried fruit sector. From 1995 onward, growing demand in European markets encouraged Turkish producers to adapt to organic certification and control systems.[1] Fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, grapes, olives, and other agricultural products have become important components of this sector. Turkiye's geographical conditions have also supported this development. The country has considerable diversity in climate and soil conditions, creating opportunities for different types of organic products to be grown in

different regions.

The development of the organic sector was later reinforced by legislation. Law No. 5262 on Organic Agriculture, adopted in 2004, established the legal framework for the production, control, and certification of organic products.[2] Under the current system, the relationships between producers, control and certification bodies, and public authorities are clearly defined. The purpose of this article is to identify the practical mechanisms underlying Türkiye's experience in developing organic fruit and vegetable production and exports and to assess their possible relevance to the conditions of Uzbekistan.

Literature Review

Türkiye is regarded as an important country in organic agriculture in both Europe and Central Asia and has been examined separately in FAO studies. The FAO evaluates the development of the Turkish organic sector in connection with legislation, governance, production, marketing, and exports.[3] Cakirli Akyüz and Theuvsen identify Türkiye as one of the major suppliers of organic products to the European market. Their study notes that although the number of producers and the volume of production have increased, domestic consumption and the overall share of organic products in the domestic market remain relatively limited.[4] This observation is important: strong export performance does not necessarily mean that the domestic organic market has developed at the same pace.

Boz and Kılıç emphasize measures such as reducing certification costs, improving farmers' knowledge, strengthening regional specialization, and expanding domestic trade in organic products as important areas for the further development of organic agriculture in Türkiye.[5] Türkiye's current policy also links certification with public support. Payments provided for organic agriculture vary depending on the type of production and the form of certification.[6]

Methods

The study applies comparative and institutional approaches. Legislation, statistical data, and public support mechanisms related to organic agriculture published by the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry were examined. These materials were compared with information from the FAO, the European Environment Agency, and relevant academic studies. The analysis focused on three practical areas: the development of the production base, certification and public support, and access to export markets.

Results and Discussion

One of the most important features of Türkiye's experience is the clear legal status assigned to organic production. Law No. 5262 defines organic products, certification, control, certification bodies, and accreditation as distinct elements of the regulatory system.[2] Under this framework, an organic product cannot simply be marketed as "natural" or as an ordinary agricultural product. Its organic status is confirmed through control and certification. According to data from the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, approximately 37,000 farmers were engaged in organic agriculture on 235,000 hectares of land in 2025. Of this area, 165,781 hectares were under certified organic status, while 68,902 hectares were in the conversion period.[7]

Table 1. Selected Indicators of Organic Agriculture in Türkiye*

Indicator			2024	2025	Change
Total organic and conversion-area land			Around 250,000 ha	235,000 ha	-6.3%
Certified organic land			Around 176,000 ha	165,781 ha	-6.3%

Land under conversion	Around 64,500 ha	68,902 ha	+6.7%
Farmers engaged in organic agriculture	More than 37,000	Around 37,000	Stable

*Source: Compiled by the author based on statistical data from the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.[7]

The figures in Table 1 do not mean that the area of organic agriculture in Türkiye automatically increases every year. In 2025, the area under certified organic production decreased, while the area under conversion increased by 6.7%. This is an interesting development because newly converted land forms part of the future production base. Farmers continue to introduce new areas into the organic system.

Public support is another factor that helps producers remain in the sector. Türkiye provides area-based support for organic agriculture. The level of support varies according to the type of production and whether the producer is covered by individual or group certification.[6] Support for group certification is particularly relevant for small farmers. Individual certification can be expensive for a small farm, while the same costs can be distributed among several producers participating in a group system.

This mechanism also has practical relevance for Uzbekistan. For example, it may be difficult for a single 10–15hectare farm to cover all certification-related expenses independently. If 20 or 30 farmers in the same area cooperate under a common internal control system, expenses associated with inspection visits, documentation, and certain laboratory tests can be distributed among the group.

Table 2. Main Elements of Türkiye’s Organic Export System*

Element	Turkish practice	Impact on exports
Legislation	Law No. 5262 on Organic Agriculture	Provides a clear legal status for organic products
Control	Authorized control and certification bodies	Verification of production processes and product origin
Public support	Payments linked to land area and certification type	Reduces part of producers’ certification and production costs
Group certification	Applied to groups of producers	Reduces entry costs for small farms
Export market	The European Union is one of the main destinations	Expands access to high-demand markets
Statistical monitoring	Annual data on organic production and exports	Creates a basis for policy and market analysis

*Source: Compiled by the author based on materials from the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, FAO, and the European Environment Agency.[3; 6; 7; 8]

Export performance makes another strength of the Turkish model more visible. According to the European Environment Agency, Türkiye exported more than 150,000 tonnes of organic agri-food products to the European Union in 2024, making it the sixth-largest organic supplier to the EU market.[8] This figure should not be viewed simply as an export volume. The European market imposes demanding requirements related to certification, traceability, product safety, and labeling. Türkiye’s ability to supply this market at such a scale is connected not only with its production capacity but also with the development of documentation and control mechanisms.

In Türkiye, organic product labels contain information such as organic status, year of harvest, producer, name and code of the authorized organization, product certificate number, and place of origin.[9] It may look like a small administrative detail. For consumers, however, such information provides a way to verify the organic claim attached to the product. Dried fruits also deserve particular

attention in the export structure. Rather than exporting organic products only as fresh fruits, they can be processed, dried, and packaged into products with higher added value. The history of Türkiye's organic sector shows that projects involving dried fruits and European companies played an important role in the early development of the sector.[1]

This experience is particularly relevant to Uzbekistan. The country has considerable potential for producing grapes, apricots, plums, pomegranates, cherries, tomatoes, and other fruits and vegetables. Alongside fresh organic products, exports of organic raisins, dried apricots, juices, purees, frozen fruits, and other processed products could increase the value generated from agricultural exports.

There are also weaknesses in the Turkish experience. Academic studies note that although Türkiye is a major supplier of organic products to Europe, domestic consumption and its overall share of the global organic market remain relatively limited.[4] Thus, export growth does not necessarily occur at the same pace as the expansion of the domestic market, consumer awareness, and availability of organic products.

Climate change represents another challenge. The European Environment Agency notes increasing pest pressure in Türkiye, which can be particularly difficult for organic producers.[8] Since the use of synthetic chemical inputs is restricted in organic farming, developing biological and agroecological methods of pest management becomes economically important. For Uzbekistan, the lessons from Türkiye can be extended in this direction. Organic exports cannot be reduced to obtaining a certificate. Farmers' production technologies, group-based internal control, processing, packaging, laboratory testing, and stable contractual relationships with exporters need to function as connected parts of the same value chain.

Conclusion

Türkiye's experience provides a practical example showing that expanding agricultural land alone is not enough to develop organic fruit and vegetable exports. The country established a separate legal framework for organic production, developed control and certification mechanisms, provided area-based support to farmers, and adapted its production system to the requirements of European markets.

The fact that approximately 37,000 farmers were engaged in organic agriculture on 235,000 hectares in 2025 indicates that the sector has developed a significant production base. The export of more than 150,000 tonnes of organic agri-food products to the European Union in 2024 also confirms Türkiye's position in the international organic market.

For Uzbekistan, three aspects of this experience are particularly relevant: bringing small farmers together through group certification, distributing certification costs more effectively between producers and the state, and expanding exports of processed organic products alongside fresh fruits and vegetables. An electronic traceability system could strengthen these measures further. If information from the farmer to the exporter is maintained within an integrated system, foreign buyers can gain greater confidence in the origin and authenticity of the products. The most useful lesson from Türkiye is not to copy its model mechanically. The greater value lies in adapting the mechanisms that have worked there to Uzbekistan's farm structure, export geography, and existing certification system.

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