Original Research Article

Experts points of view ON developing local organic bazaars in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Aims: This study, in general, determined the current status of organic bazaars and potential development in Turkey. Participants were 103 experts engaged with organic bazaars in different provinces of Turkey. The specific objectives were to identify a general profile of the expers engaged in organic bazaars in Turley, to determine respondents' opinions about the current status of organic bazaars, and to develop recommendations for the development of organic bazaars in the future.
Place and Duration of Study: Questionnaires were completed in three different workshops held in İstanbul, İzmir, and Samsun provinces in 2018. Data analysis and writing the manuscript carried out at Ondokuz Mayis University, Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Economics, Samsun Turkey.
Methodology: Experts of organic bazaars from producers, sellers, controllers, ministry employees, or municipality representatives served as respondents. This study used descriptive statistics to analyze quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses.
Results: Respondents stressed that local organic bazaars in Turkey will be very effective in producing and consuming of organic commodities. As the bazaars are distribured across the country, more farmers will be engaged in organic production while more consumers will have access to organic products at reasonable prices. However, deficiencies particularly in management and legal regulation of local organic bazaars were also noted. Main measures to be taken to establish and improve organic bazaars included increasing trust and transparency, establishing sample organic bazaars in all provinces, focusing both on domestic and international markets, overcoming bureaucratic barriers, implementing a favorable price policy, examining successful organic bazaars, and publicizing organic commodities.
Conclusion: In order to overcome the obstacles and develop local organic bazaars in Turkey, cooperation among the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Trade, and local municipalities is necessary. In addition, NGOs at local levels should take initiative to support organic bazaars. Municipalities should provide adequate places accessible for consumers, producers, and processors. Moreover, social spaces should be established in organic markets where consumers, families and children can spend good time.

Keywords: Organic products, Organic markets, Organic agriculture, Marketing of organic products

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a tendency to consume healthier food items in communities with high levels of education and income. Although every human being deserve to eat healthy food, there is no justice and fair trade in organic food markets, particularly in developing countries. While high income consumers can afford to buy and consume organic products, other segments of the population have difficulties even to taste these products (Ayanet al, 2017a; Ayan et al., 2017b). Developed countries particularly in Europe and North America consist of about 90 percent of the sales of organic and fairtrade products. While over 50% of the global organic market takes place in North America, almost 80% of fairtrade retail sales take place in Europe (Lernoud and Willer, 2017). In addition, prices of organic products are perceived high in developing countries. Research conducted in Brasl showed that the price gap between organic and conventional products is perceived as really high, but consumers think that products in organic markets are less expensive than organic products in supermarkets (Sirieix et al., 2007).

Organic markets, in general, provide many benefits to both consumers and producers, as well as any stakeholder engaged in organic value chains. They also have influence on strengthening civil society as they provide space and resources for social movement activities (Allen and Kovach, 2000). Local organic bazaars are among the most important organic markets, particularly for developing countries. Development of these bazaars will increase the number of farmers and consumers who produce and consume organic products, respectively. In developed countries, especially in Europe and North America, mainstream retailers play key role in marketing of organic products. However, in developing countries, access to organic products through mainstream retailers is more difficult because they cannot open stores in all settlements. They mostly prefer to open stores in big cities and shopping centers in densely populated neighborhoods (Aksoy et al., 2018). Therefore, the majority of the population in developing countries does not have access to organic products, even customer with high income and willing to pay higher prices for these products. Local organic bazaars are particularly important in providing organic products to consumers particularly in the places where mainstream retailers have no stores. In addition, organic markets have many advantages such as promoting fair trade, providing consumers with reliable information about products, establishing a cultural bridge between producers and consumers, and planning production according to consumer demand.

The benefits of local organic bazaars include the following (BEYDD, 2017; Ayan et al., 2017a; Eryilmaz et al., 2019): (a) Consumers receive reliable information, directly or in the shortest way, about the products and other related attributes. (b) Opens the road for the fair trade. (c) Provides assurance without any documents and certificates. (d) Allows cultural exchange, protects local culture and makes local differences worldwide. (e) Makes it possible for consumers to buy the products according to their regions and religious belief. (f) Protects biodiversity and ensures that local species, varieties, and tastes get an opportunity in the local markets. (g) Adds social, cultural, and ecological values to the commercial values (such as taste and durability) of agricultural products. (h) Disseminates information between producers and consumers. (i) Makes it possible for producers to arrange their production considering the demand of consumers. (j) Makes it possible for consumers to shop by touching, selecting, and even tasting the products. (k) Allows consumers to access the fresh products. (l) Provides opportunities to small producers who are unable to meet large demand to enter the market.

Research showed that consumers are willing to pay more for organic products. A study conducted in Ohio (Batte et al. 2007) found that consumers are willing to pay (Willingness to Pay-WTP) premiums for organic products, even those with less than 100% organic ingredients. The amount of WTP changed according to consumer groups indicating that focusing on these groups may provide better marketing opportunities for organic commodities. Another research (Van Doorn and Verhoef, 2011) tried to find differences on WTP for organic vice products and organic virtue products. Results showed that consumers are unwilling to pay high price premiums for organic vice products because of negative quality associations, which suggests that consumers may be more reluctant to purchase organic in vice than in virtue categories. Loureiro and Hine (2002) evaluated consumer preferences for locally grown, organically grown, and genetically modified organism (GMO)-free produced potatoes to determine marketing potential, and found that “Colorado grown” patatoes had higher WTP among consumers in comparison with organically grown and GMO-free produced patotoes. Ağır et al. (2014) study found that the price of organic commodities is one of the key factors that affect consumers to purchase organics, as 84,8% of the researched sample found the price of organic commodities more expensive than other products. The study suggested that to accelerate the adoption of organic products among consumers, organic products should be publicized using media, and a reasonable price policy should be implemented.

The overall purpose of this study was to determine the experts’ points of views of organic bazaars in Turkey and to address what measures to be taken to increase the number of organic bazaars and to develop the present ones. Results are aimed to provide useful material for all stakeholders engaged in organic bazaars, and for researchers involved in this field.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study collected information by administering a questionnaire to 103 experts directly involved in organic bazaars in different regions of Turkey. Sixty-five of the respondents were contacted during a workshop on developing local organic bazaars organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in April 4-5, 2018. The remaining questionnaires were completed during two different events held in İzmir and Samsun provinces.Since these experts were invited to these events to share their opinions with the ministry representatives and other stakeholders, it can be said that we employed a purpose sampling method for this study.

Experts’ opinions and insights can be used as a data collection method since they have knowledge, information, and experiences in the subject to be searched. This method was used by different researchers. For example, Chakrabarti (2010) determined the factors affecting organic food purchase in India using expert survey insights. Padel and Midmore (2005) used experts’ opinions through the Delphi method to determine strategies for organic markets in Europe. Another study used expert views to determine climate change adaptation in the least developed Asia (Sovacool et al., 2012).

Earlier works of Ayan et al. (2017a), Ayan et al, (2017b), Boz and Rasulov(2017), Boz and Kaynakçı (2019) and Kilic and Eryilmaz (2015), as well as official documents and websites of local organic bazaars, helped develop the questionnaire composed of both open ended and closed ended questions. The first section included questions about sociodemographic characteristics of the participants. The second section sought information on respondents’ opinions about organic bazaars in a five point Likert scale. To interpret the Likert scale items the researchers developed an interpretive scale considering the mean of each item as 0.00-1.49 = Strongly Disagree, 1.50-2.49 = Disagree, 2.50-3.49 = Neutral, 3.50-4.49 = Agree, and 4.50-5.00 = Strongly Agree. Open-ended questions asked respondents to describe basic problems faced by organic bazaars in which they are engaged in and to list a set of recommendations for their solutions.

Comment [RO1]: I would detail more what were considered as ‘experts’. To mee, the sample is more a group of stake-holders interested in the local bazars than experts. Pelase try to clarify that

Comment [RO2]: Is lacking a part of the original text:

‘The questionnaire was developed considering earlier work of’
Make no sense as it is....

We used both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze data collected. Quantitative methods used to describe sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. These included descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. We analyzed respondents' opinions about organic bazaars by employing a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)). We also developed a five category interpretive scale classifying the means of the responses given to each item included in this section. According to this scale we interpreted the means as 0.00 – 1.49 = SD, 1.50 – 2.49 = D, 2.50 – 3.49 = N, 3.50 – 4.49 = A, 4.5*- 5.00 = SA. We analyzed the open-ended questions by listing the most stressed problems and suggesting adequate recommendations for each issue.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Sociodemographic characteristics

Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1. Average age was 43 years old. Since the participants of this study were experts on organics, more than half of them held a college degree while one-fourth had further education including master's or doctorate degrees. Fifty-six percent of the participants were males, 47.7% were married, the number of children was 1.19 on average. Government employees, agriculturist, and organic farmers consisted the larger parts of occupation. Average monthly income was 4.440 Turkish Liras (As of October 8, 2019, $1 US Dollars made 5,843 Turkish Liras). More than half of the respondents (57.8%) had no NGO membership.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	N	%	Variable	N	%
Age of respondents*			Occupation		
Younger than 35	32	31.4	Government employee	27	26.2
35-50	42	41.2	Agriculturist	21	20.4
Older than 50	28	27.5	Organic farmer	17	16.5
TOTAL	103	100.0	College professor	6	5.8
Level of education			Organic product seller	5	4.9
Elementary school			Food technician	5	4.9
High school	13	20.0	Food scientists	5	4.9
College	36	55.4	Textile engineer	3	2.9
Master's Ph.D.	16	24.6	Municipality employee	3	2.9
TOTAL	103	100.0	Organic food processor	3	2.9
Gender			Biologist	2	1.9
Women	45	43.7	Other professions	6	5.8
Men	58	55.9	TOTAL	103	100.0
TOTAL	103	100.0	Monthly income*		
Marital status			Less than 3000 TL	28	27.2
Single	49	47.7	3001-6000 TL	55	53.4
Married	47	45.6	More than 6000 TL	12	11.7
Divorsed	5	4.9	No answer	8	7.8
Widow	2	1.9	TOTAL	103	100.0
TOTAL	103	100.0	NGO membership		
Number of children*			Yes	43	42.2
0	40	38.8	No	60	57.8
1	19	18.4	TOTAL	103	100.0
2	33	32.0			
3 and more	11	10.8			
TOTAL	103	100.0			

*Mean age = 42.95 (SD = 12.77), Mean income = 4.440 TL (SD = 2.205 TL), Mean number of children = 1.19 (SD = 1.19)

3.2. Respondents opinion about organic bazaars

Respondents opinions about organic bazaars are presented in Table 2. Of the 17 items, respondents agreed with seven items and remained neutral with 10 items. There were no items in strongly agree, disagree and strongly disagree response categories. The items had the highest means, in a descending order, were “Organic bazars are also a social living environment”, “Deficiencies in management in organic bazaars are an important problem”, and “Deficiencies in legal regulations in organic bazaars are an important problem”. From this finding it can be said that organic bazaars are the places not only selling and purchasing healthy food items but also social living environments bringing together the farmers, consumers, and their families. However, there are management, regulation, and logistic problems. Also, there is a belief among the respondents that the prices of organic products are high, they mostly appeal to high income consumers, and physical capacity of bazaars are insufficient.

The items with the lowest mean scores were “There is not much trust problems in organic bazaars”, “The publicizing of the organic bazaars in Turkey is enough”, and “The relationship and cooperation between the stakeholders involved in organic bazaars is sufficient”. This result indicates that trust and transparency in organic products should be ensured. Also, publicizing and cooperative work among all the stakeholders will make contributions to organic bazaars to be more functional.

Table 2. Respondents opinions about organic bazaars

Order	Factors relating to organic bazaars	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Agreement
1	Organic bazars are also a social living environment.	4.012	1.080	A
2	Deficiencies in management in organic bazaars are an important problem.	3.893	0.999	A
3	Deficiencies in legal regulations in organic bazaars are an important problem.	3.864	1.171	A
4	There is a conviction that product prices are high in organic bazaars.	3.854	1.088	A
5	There is a lack of logistics in organic bazaars.	3.699	1.064	A
6	Organic bazaars are more appealing to high income consumers.	3.611	0.952	A
7	The physical capacity of organic bazaars is insufficient	3.359	1.127	A
8	Communication and customer relations are insufficient in organic bazaars.	3.310	3.168	N
9	The product range and quantity of products coming to organic bazaars are sufficient	3.233	1.086	N
10	Organic bazaars are adequately controlled.	3.233	1.122	N
11	Sellers earn sufficient income.	3.184	1.135	N
12	There are many bureaucratic processes in selling organic products.	2.981	1.291	N
13	There is unfair competition among the sellers of organic products.	2.902	0.902	N
14	The awareness of consumers coming to organic bazaars is insufficient.	2.844	0.997	N
15	There is not much trust problems in organic	2.757	1.279	N

	bazaars			
16	The publicizing of the organic bazaars in Turkey is enough.	2.621	1.401	N
17	The relationship and cooperation between the stakeholders involved in organic bazaars is sufficient.	2.524	0.937	N

3.3. Measures to improve organic bazaars

Respondents' comments on the open-ended questions were organized by the researchers and the most stressed points to improve organic bazaars

Solving the problems with trust and transparency in organic products: The problem of trust and transperancy for organic products was raised especially by consumer representatives. They indicated that there is significant differences in the level of trust and transperancy between Europe and Turkey. One of the practices proposed to overcome the trust and transperancy problem in Turkey is to focus on the promotion of organic products and to create a public spot on this issue. A proposal put forward in this context is that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) should not be left alone in promoting organic products and overcoming the problem of trust and transperency. Feeding public with healthy food and raising a healthy generation is not only the duty of the MAF but also all other stakeholders such as other ministries, farmers organizations, consumers' associations, mainstream retailers, and the media.

Establishing exemplary organic markets in all provinces: Organic bazaars that play an important role in the development of organic agriculture should be established in all provinces. In fact, considering the potential of the consumer market should be established in different districts of the same province. Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, control and certification bodies, non-governmental organizations, producer organizations, consumer organizations, universities and all other stakeholders should cooperate in establishing exemplary markets. The most important task for the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock is to raise awareness, bring them together and ensure coordination among all other stakeholders.

Organizing organic production not only for foreign sale but also for domestic markets: Turkey is a typical case among developing countries for the development of organic agriculture based on export potential. Although, Turkey has suitable ecologic conditions and export potential for organic production, the share of Turkish organic products in the world market is significantly low (Demiryürek, 2011). The development of the organic markets will change the perception that "organic commodities are produced for foreign markets and will appeal to high-income groups". Local demand for organic products should be increased through many marketing channels such as organic public markets, specialty organic product stores, organic product departments of supermarkets and internet sales (Eryilmaz and Kilic, 2019). Particularly, local organic bazaars will make it possible to provide sustainable production for the family enterprises that make small scale production at the local level. At the same time, the integration of producers and consumers will be ensured and the social development of the society will be supported.

***Overcoming bureaucratic barriers for the development of organic markets*:** Different organizations play roles and accept responsibilities for the establishment and functioning of organic markets. There are procedures to be carried out with three different institutions to establish and operate organic bazaars. These institutions are Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Trade, the local municipalities. Cooperation among these three institutions will minimize the bureaucracy and accelerate the establishment and operation of local organic bazaars.

Applying a favorable price policy: Especially in the organic markets to be established in Anatolia (All regions of the mainland Turkey), prices should not be set too high at the beginning. The most important reason why the market established in some provinces did not provide enough development was stated as the high prices at the beginning. Many consumers who come to a newly established organic market to purchase healthy products are disappointed by the extremely high prices and never visit these markets again.For this reason, the prices of organic commodities should be set in reasonable levels, particularly in the early stages.

Successful markets should be examined: Kayseri Organic Market has become an exemplary organic market with both the number of producers and consumers it has reached and the price policy it has implemented. Since its establishment in 2012, it has reached 80 producers. The seasonal market has a growth capacity of approximately 30% per year. Market employees have efforts to raise awareness of producers and consumers. Two options are underlined to extend the open days of the market and enable it to operate throughout the year. One of these was the establishment of greenhouses to enable production in winter, and the other was to sell organic products produced in other provinces. Both options can contribute to the growth of the organic market in the province. However, the economics of greenhouse production in Kayseri conditions, and whether there will be high demand for products in case of high production costs, should be demonstrated by scientific research. In addition, if the option of bringing organic products to Kayseri from other provinces is to be considered, the tendencies of consumers towards these products should also be demonstrated by scientific studies.

Increasing diversity in local organic bazaars: Most of the organic bazaars in Turkey are seasonal. Since the bazaars in lage cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir have more customers their product diversity is considerably higher than other bazaars opened in other provinces. Organic bazaars in large cities have connections with producers in other provinces but other organic bazaars are more local and mostly sell the products grown in locality. Therefore, their product diversity is low. In order to increase organic product diversity in small markets, organic products should be properly transported and made available to consumers.

Introducing organic products to the new generation: The nutrition of children should be given special importance. In this context, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry should cooperate with schools and families to carry out educational activities emphasizing the importance of organic products in child nutrition. In addition, training activities for the promotion of agricultural products are needed. The names and qualities of various agricultural products are not known by the majority of the society. For example, the organic product is often mixed with products such as natural product or village product. Therefore, the conceps of organic product, good agricultural product, conventional product, natural product, village product should be clarified and explained to consumers.

4. CONCLUSION

Marketing of organic products through local organic bazaars have many benefits for farmers, consumers, and processors. Especially consumers residing close to local organic markets have easily access to organic products if they have enough income. Local organic bazaars allow small producers to bring their products and sell them at reasonable prices. As the bazaars are distributed across the country, more farmers will be engaged in organic production while more consumers will have access to organic products. The more farmers and consumers engaged in organic production and consumption, the higher product diversity is at lower price. However, there are some deficiencies particularly in management and legal regulation of local organic bazaars. In order to establish and improve organic bazaars, trust and transparency to organic products must be ensured. Then, establishment of sample organic bazaars in all provinces, focusing both on domestic and international markets, overcoming bureaucratic barriers, implementing a favorable price policy, examining successful organic bazaars, and publicizing organic commodities are required actions to be taken.

Comment [RO3]: I think that some comment on the differences found (on the qualititative level) between governmental view versus farmers view is needed, and would help to justify the umbalanced sample used...

In order to overcome the obstacles and develop local organic bazaars in Turkey, cooperation among the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Trade, and local municipalities is necessary. In additions, NGOs at local levels should take initiative to support organic bazaars. Municipalities should provide adequate places accessible for consumers, producers, and processors. In addition, social spaces should be established in organic markets where consumers, families and children can spend good time. Organic bazaars should be the places of purchasing healthy food at reasonable prices for consumers, sustainable income sources for farmers who brings their product to these bazaars and traders marketing their commodities, as well as social gathering and information exchange areas about producing abd consuming healthy food items.

Comment [RO4]: I would add something about a more balance sample in the next studies

Basic limitation of this study was lack of observation of organic bazaars by the researchers. Future research should be based on visits and observations of local organic bazaars in different provinces of Turkey. This method would probably provide an aportunity of determining more specific deficiencies and barriers of organic bazaars, and more specific solution recommendations.

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