

ORGANIC OLIVE OIL AS A SHELTER FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT

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Why should organic olive oil be produced? The organic oil is most valuable but is it not a contradiction that a food with proven beneficial properties contains substances that are bad for our health? And there is much evidence that the extra virgin olive oil is good for our health. Science confirms that there are many important substances to human health contained in the virgin oil (e.g., oleic acid and polyphenols). And it is precisely for this reason that it is extremely important that the oil is not contaminated by pesticides, chemical fertilizers and hormones. Many of the pesticides used against the olive fly, close to the harvest period, pass directly from the olive oil and we finally find them there on our plates.

Organic agriculture wants to avoid all this by eliminating the chemicals used to nourish plants and to defend them from pests, replacing them with natural substances. A biological oil must undergo detailed rules, involving all steps that are needed to produce it, from the cultivation of the olives to bottling the oil.

The cultivation takes place naturally without using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. At the biological mill the olives follow a separate path compared to the non-biological ones and also the final step of bottling and labeling, are governed by very specific rules, very similar to those required for PDO oil producers. The label must obtain a special authorization to be printed. The 'organic' label should be given both the name of the institution that performed the check and the word 'organic oil' The label is basically the certificate of guarantee of an organic olive oil.

Inspections are conducted in three phases. The institution makes periodic inspections on the ground and, with laboratory tests, checks that no chemicals are used. If 'everything's OK, the entity issues the certification to the producer in the field. Then the control moves to the mill and finally to bottling.

The organic oil generally costs a little more because all these rules cause lower production and higher costs. Natural fertilizers and pesticides are more expensive and less effective than those produced in the laboratory, and this results in less production of organic olive oil per hectare than a normal oil. Besides, who produces organic products must undergo expensive tests. Finally, three- year- long inspections are needed before being put on the market for the first time as an organic oil, and during that period higher costs are supported without having immediate benefits.

Although not required by law, the olives used to make some oils are harvested by hand. Harvesting by hand is important because it is the only way that allows you to pick the olives, at the right point of maturation without falling or injuries typing and this is a prerequisite to produce a good oil. The consumption of organic products is a way first of all to do well to ourselves, but also an investment in the future to bequeath to future generations a more clean and safe agriculture.

Characteristics of organic oil: The biological characteristics of extra virgin olive oil for its nutritional characteristics is the main food for proper nutrition able to improve health conditions. It contains fatty acids similar to those found in the human body and a large amount of vitamins. It defends the body against skin disorders, digestive disorders and phenomena of cellular aging and helps to improve the physical wellbeing and quality of life. For this reason protecting them from chemical residues becomes an obligation. The organic oil responds to this: no residue or even the suspicion that it may be polluted, because it follows precise rules.

It is biological only the oil produced with olives obtained from organic farming. But the allowed labeling shall be suitable for human consumption, that can only be extra-virgin (acidity less than 1%) or virgin (acidity less than 2%), free of defects and abnormal taste. For this reason all the activities of collection and storage of olives, oil extraction, storage and packaging of the oil have to be checked. These operations must be in accordance with good practice in the mill and processing cycles are completely separate from those of non-organic olives. Growers do not need to get 'lampante oil'.

To be able to bear the mark with "Product obtained from organic farming" is necessary for all stakeholders (growers, millers, bottlers and retailers) to be placed under the control of an organization recognized by the state, by sending a form (called notification) to the region and the indicated body. All transactions performed on their own farm and the movement of goods and raw materials used must be recorded on the relevant registers verifiable by anyone. Only if the consumer will clear all the efforts that the producer has had to endure to get that oil, the manufacturer will recognize the true value of the product. These checks are needed not only to prevent fraud and unfair competition, but also to establish a relationship of mutual trust between the producer and the consumer.

The EEC Regulation 2092/91 provides a conversion period for three-year- tree crops from the time of compiling and sending notification of organic certification body. Technically this time may decrease if the company presents the facts and documents and eco-agrofood system product label must be reported: "In conversion from organic farming". Even the farmer has to get up to date courses about organic olive growing and so his work becomes a personal, cultural growth, and it is he who enters into a system that provides information to the consumer.

Energy saving - The improvement of income and living conditions of farmers. These characteristics qualify a way of farming innovation, keeping pace with the modern needs of society and consumers. Farming activities do not respond exclusively to the economic interests of those who produce and sell, but also meet the nutritional and sanitary systems, consumer demands for environmental protection, defense of cultural values of rural culture.

In this context of new features and importance of agriculture is the farm area, a system that links agricultural production directly to final consumers, promoting "the company itself" and the consumption of food and agricultural products, services and tourist welcome, together with enjoyment of the goods of the countryside. Farmers

and consumers meet on common ground of intent, that of respect for health, environment, nature and traditions of the countryside.

Organic olive oil, the data of a survey - Half of respondents manufactures oil, not necessarily organic, from before 1990, 42% have started in the next decade, and only 8% started after 2000. Longest tradition we have in the North, followed by the Center. With the exception of a few cases, who claim to have started directly with the organic olive oil, usually the biological system was built on an earlier company, carving out a space within the existing business. Sole proprietorships account for half of the respondents, while those of capital are the most important in the North. The number of members is generally very limited, however, exceeding three units only a few times.

In cases of coexistence of the conventional bio, bio turnover does not exceed 25% of the total in nearly two-thirds of respondents, while more than half in only 12% of cases. Overall, the 140 respondents to the question on employment reveal a total of 1708 employees, of which 62% male and 38% females. The workers are temporary, at national, 48% of employment, followed by a time limit (26%), clerks and technicians (19%) and then by the managers (9%). In the single areas, the distribution is obviously a bit different: the percentage of temporary workers falls to 27% in the North, as it rises to 61% in the South and Islands. In contrast, the weight of employees and technicians is greater in the north (34%) and falls in the South (16%) and the Center (10%). Nationally, women are 49% of clerks and technicians, 42% of temporary workers, but only 24% of permanent workers and 23% of employees with managerial positions. This distribution is similar in all the regions. The great diversity of cases is confirmed by the average outstanding amount of employees per company and of the standard deviation from the average. Nationally, there is an average number of employees per company of 4.12 people, but even with a standard deviation of 29.20 due to a few large companies, concentrated in the north and center. There is a clear distinction between the three business areas: South and Islands have an average of 3.6 employees / firm, rising to 4.5 at the Center and 11.3 in the North.

About the near future, 45% plan to increase employment is more pronounced in the South and Islands than in the North, while only 11% plan a decrease, slightly more evident in the North and Center.