

Development of the Organic Ornamentals Sector Worldwide

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Abstract

Introduction

Organic ornamentals (flowers, perennials, and potted herbs) are still a very small part of organic production, but their importance is growing. Currently, the main use of flowers is in the cosmetic and medical sector. Consumer demand for organic flowers, especially edible flowers, however, is increasing. The methods of production and marketing all over the world are just as colorful as the organic ornamentals are.

Materials and methods

At the conference, different aspects of organic flower cultivation will be presented; examples from Germany, Switzerland, the US, Ecuador, The Netherlands, Georgia, and Italy are shown.

To describe the situation in Germany, the survey "Production of Organic Ornamentals in Germany: A status quo analysis of the industry" (Geschäftsstelle Bundesprogramm Ökologischer Landbau 2003) was used. For other countries, the information about the development on the organic flower sector was gained by internet-research and personal interviews with experts from federal offices, market organizations, advisory services, and inspection bodies worldwide.

Discussion

According to E.M. Rogers' model of innovation diffusion processes (Padel 2001), exemplified growers of organic ornamentals can still be called "Innovators." On average, they are better educated, have less farming experience, have smaller farms, place less emphasis on profit maximization, and they may not be respected by other members of the social system. However, more and more "Early Adopters" can be found among the growers; they are better integrated in the general growers' communities, they are often opinion leaders, and they are in close contact with information sources.

Conclusions

Today, most organic ornamental producers clearly belong both to the 'world of organic agriculture' and to the 'world of horticulture.' The sector is moving slowly out of its niche of public perception and acceptance, which makes it easier for "Early Adopters" and the majority of conventional growers to consider conversion. Currently, however, there are only few products for which production and marketing as well as the quantity available is satisfactory. When trying to expand the sector of organic ornamentals, government agencies and advisory services should consider the fact that "Innovators" mainly teach themselves or learn with the support of other innovators, while those who convert at a later stage make more use of advice and research results.

References

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