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CURRENT SITUATION, POTENTIALS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIC FARMING IN ŠUMADIJA

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Abstract: Šumadija is rich in natural potentials which provide a good basis for the future development of organic farming, given the fact that natural resources are limited. The composition and structure of natural resources are highly suitable for organic production. The region's relatively unpolluted land, favourable climate, abundant water resources and preserved biodiversity are some of the main organic farming requirements satisfied. Organic production is not possible without ensuring at least a minimum level of preservation of natural resources in areas where organic farming is practised; on the other hand, organic production itself has a positive effect on the preservation and improvement of environmental quality in these areas. Small plots of land can be advantageous for this production, particularly in upland areas, and used specifically for organic production as the conversion period is short. They can be used for vegetable farming because the soil is uncontaminated owing to distance from roads. Positive experience indicates that potatoes, rye, oats and root vegetables can be successfully grown in these areas. Another advantage is the wealth of indigenous cultivars of apples, pears and plums which are highly resistant to pathogenic pests and environmental conditions, and hence suitable for cultivation without the use of mineral fertilisers and chemical agents.

Major issues currently facing organic farming are a small-scale organic market and low prices of organic products, a low level of consumer awareness of the advantages of organic farming, suspicion and ignorance, low purchasing power, low availability of organic products through sales channels, etc.

Key words: Šumadija, organic farming, sustainable development, agricultural production

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