

## ALBANIAN CONSUMER AWARENESS FOR ORGANIC FOOD

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### Abstract

Albania has favorable climatic conditions for a wide range of agricultural products, including organic (bio) products. However, organic farming in Albania is still not very well developed. Despite the growing interest, the number of farmers certified organically is still very low - it has slightly exceeded 100 (out of more than 300,000 farmers in total) in early 2010'. The current low levels of organic production may be partially explained by a gap in the understanding of the Albanian consumer awareness for organic food products by both policymakers and private sector actors. This consumer study provides insight into consumer awareness and perceptions towards organic products, reflecting findings from a structured consumer survey – the design of the questioner was based on literature review and on an expert focus group. There were carried out 300 face-to-face interviews in Tirana during summer 2013. Tirana is the capital city and largest city in the country, and consequently offers the advantage of a high diversity in terms of culture and income, thus the potential market demand for organic products would mainly come from this region in the near future, given the size of the population and higher average income. Results from the study suggest that Albanian consumers have a strong preference for organic food. Most consumers consider that the main dimension of the organic food is related to health. Most interviewees view organic food products as safer and healthier compared to other (conventional) products. Despite the preference for organic food to the conventional one, there are gaps among Albanian consumers regarding awareness about organic food. According to this study results it appears that most consumers have no, limited or wrong understanding of organic (or bio) product characteristics or definitions. This gap in consumer education regarding organic food in Albania could be one of the hampering factors for organic food production and trade development at present and in the future in Albania.

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