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WHAT DOES CETA BRING TO ORGANIC PRODUCTION?

Abstract

Even though eco-production is based on principles brought by IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements), the standards which were brought in by the national and supranational governments may differentiate in parts of regulation. The mutual recognition/equivalence of eco-standards of the EU («EU-eco» label, based on regulation of the European Commission EZ 834/2007: 139-and EZ 889/2008: 173-256, and other regulations derived from them) and Canada («Canada organic» label, based on valid Canadian eco-standards, regulation CAN/CGSB-32.310-2015: 53 and CAN/CGSB-32.311-2015: 75) has been present for multiple years and has been re-evaluated and confirmed in 2015 as a successful practice in the increase of access to an expanded market for producers, increase of selection for consumers and lightening the regulatory cooperation. Before mutual recognition exported eco-product from Canada to the EU (and vice-versa) had to go through recertification, which created additional expenses for exporting eco-producers (10 thousand dollars per year, on average). This process mostly resulted in an increased price of eco-products for the end consumer. In some areas the Canadian eco-regulation is stricter than the EU one, while in other it is vice versa. Some markings can mislead the consumer, especially the one who does not read the product declaration where such misgivings are clearly visible and marked. The greatest challenge for eco-production in the EU is the increase in demand for eco-products with such a speed that EU farmers cannot satisfy it, which inevitably leads to an increase of import from non-EU countries. Therefore, the help of EU governments is essential in the form of support for farmers who decide to transition into eco-production. Certain estimates say that the CETA could mean a loss of a great number of producers (estimating that it could be several thousand workplaces in agriculture across the EU). A similar

agreement between the US and Mexico already led to a loss of workplace for 2 million people in Mexico in the midst of inability to compete with the industrial production of the US. The greatest fear present in eco-production is that the international agricultural businesses can force national and supranational governments to lower standards by using lawsuits, which can consequentially result in lower standards in eco-production on both sides of the Atlantic and influence the environment. It is not based on the scientific/expert arguments which governs the ecological agriculture, but a pure race for profit. Therefore, it can be expected that, once again, »greed overcomes reason«. Nevertheless, the high set »bar« of eco-production »from both sides of the pond« is the best »defence« against the fear that CETA will bring any novelties into the life of eco-producers.

Key words: organic production, CETA, trade agreement, EU, Canada

What is organic agriculture?

Organic (“Eco”) agriculture, as such, is a notion which we in Croatia use to mark agricultural production defined by the law on organic production of the European Union (Regulation of the European Commission EZ 834/2007: 139-161 and EZ 889/2008: 173-256), and the legal framework of which rests on the principles and guidelines given by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements - IFOAM. IFOAM, as such, existed since 1972 (Godinho, 2012: 3) and was based in Versailles, France as a response to the need to coordinate an ever-growing number of farmers, scientists, and experts concerned for the negative consequences which conventional agricultural production has on the environment. The world still hadn’t practically “cooled off” from the enthusiasm with the so-called “green revolution”, a series of technological improvements in agricultural production based on the introduction of high-yielding cultivars of the most significant crops, followed by perfecting agrotechnology and a strong chemical influence on agricultural production through mineral fertilizers and chemicals to control unwanted organisms in crops (the usual term “protective agents” somewhat hides the true nature of these chemicals) which were the “brainchild” of Norman Borlaug who received a Nobel peace prize in 1970 because it was the first time that mankind was “handed” promising tools to fight world starvation. Unfortunately, as with every other “revolution”, this “green” one could not go victimless, not human for starters, which somewhat concealed and reduced the dangers of introducing excess amounts of fertilizer and toxic substances which were non-existent and unknown in nature until then into food chains which were in immediate contact with agricultural surfaces, but also to habitats which were thousands of kilometres away.

The principles of organic agriculture are essentially reduced to a lesser influence of agricultural product to the environment, which can be achieved with growing plant cultivars and animal breeds adapted to local agro-environmental conditions, proper change in crops of different plant families, “green fertilization” i.e. growing crops the purpose of which is maintenance, repair and increasing the quality of ground, a mixed growth of multiple cultures on the same area (so-called biodiversity) and other technical solutions which were “forgotten” by conventional agriculture in the midst of an increase in the use of chemicals. Also, an accent has been put on a healthy life of animals where, in organic agriculture, it has been taken into account that animals are not grown in inadequate conditions without a constant stress to their organism which disrupts their quality of life and, thereby, the product which we are counting

on from those animals. That is how a wholesome, holistic approach strives for a high degree of self-sustainability of the farmland complex with as less need for outside influence as possible with all the measures of experience and science-based “prevention”, while “curation” is based on traditional preparations, natural materials, and matters which are proven to decompose in nature into harmless compounds without dangerous residues and a creation of resistance to a harmful accompanying complex (disease, vermin, weeds). Also, a good portion of those permitted agents has more of a repellent action for unwanted organisms than a toxic one. In search for such a dynamic balance, it is permitted to also reach for solutions offered by biodynamic agriculture, based on the teachings of antroposophy, a combination of teachings started by Rudolf Steiner back in 1924 (Habunek, 2001: 1-258). Contrary to that, the use of genetically modified organism has been expressly prohibited in the midst of proven and potential negative effects on the environment (Friedlander, 1999: 1; Wallheimer, 2009: 1). Ecological production is also in a special surveillance and confirmation system and all segments of production, processing, and sales are supervised by the so-called “supervisory stations” (Bioinspekt, 2013: 1), thereby adding to the security of the food “from field to table”, protection of the environment and other aspects of such agriculture.

Are there differences in organic agriculture between the EU and Canada?

Even though organic production has been originally based on principles brought by IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements), the standards which the national and supranational governments introduced may differentiate in parts of regulation. Croatia also, prior to integration into the European Union, had its own special Law on Ecological Agriculture (NN 12/2001: 222), which was even then greatly complementary to the regulation of the European Union and was different in the part of declaring the permitted agents which were, at the time, available on the Croatian market.

The mutual recognition/equivalence of the eco-standards of the EU («EU-eco» label, based on the regulations of the European Commission EZ 834/2007: 139-161 and EZ 889/2008: 173-256 and other regulation derived from them) and Canada («Canada organic» label, based on valid eco-standards, regulation CAN/CGSB-32.310-2015: 53 and CAN/CGSB-32.311-2015: 75) has been active for multiple years and has been re-evaluated and confirmed in 2015 as a successful practice in the increase of approach to an expanded market for producers,

expansion in choice for consumers and making regulatory cooperation easier. Namely, before mutual recognition, when exporting from Canada to the EU, and EU to Canada, an eco-product had to go through recertification i.e. the exported product from Canada, which was already certified by the Canadian certifier, had to go through the certification by one of the governing EU bodies which, of course, created additional costs for eco-producers exporters (around 10 thousand dollars on average per year). That kind of “dual taxation”, as a rule, resulted in a larger price of eco-products for the end consumer and products were not competitive on the export market in relation to local ecological products. In spite of synchronizing and accepting legal tools from both sides, there are still differences in some areas and some markings on the declaration can lead to misleading the consumer, especially one who does not read the product declaration where such misgivings are clearly visible and marked.

Potential threats of CETA

The greatest challenge for organic product in the Eu is the growth of demand for organic products with such a speed that EU farmers cannot satisfy it, which will inevitably lead to an increase in importing from non-EU countries. Therefore, the help of the governments of EU countries is necessary in the form of more support for farmers who decide to transition to eco-production. Certain estimates (Moore, 2014: 1) say that an international agreement like TTIP, the “big brother” to CETA, could mean a loss of a great number of producers (estimates say that it could be several thousand jobs in the agriculture across the EU). A similar agreement between the US and Mexico (North American Free Trade Agreement, so-called NAFTA) already caused the 2 million people to lose their jobs in Mexico in the midst of inability to compete to the industrial production of the US (Cypher, 2011: 61-69). The greatest fear present in eco-production is that the international agricultural businesses can force national and supranational governments to lower standards by using lawsuits (ORC, 2016: 1), which can consequentially result in lower standards in eco-production on both sides of the Atlantic, influence the environment and human health. It is not based on scientific/expert arguments which lead organic agriculture, but on a pure race for profit. Therefore, it can be expected that once again “greed overcomes reason”. Nevertheless, the high set »bar« of eco-production »from both sides of the pond« is the best »defence« against the fear that CETA will bring any novelties into the life of eco-producers.

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ŠTO DONOSI CETA EKOLOŠKOJ PROIZVODNJI?

Sažetak

Iako je eko-proizvodnja izvorno bazirana na principima koje je donio IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, Međunarodna federacija pokreta za ekološku poljoprivredu), standardi koje su uvele nacionalne i nadnacionalne vlade mogu se razlikovati u dijelovima regulative. Međusobno priznavanje/ekvivalencija eko-standarda EU (oznaka »EU-eko«, na osnovi regulativa Europske komisije EZ 834/2007: 139-161 i EZ 889/2008: 173-256, te ostalih iz njih proizašlih regulativa) i Kanade (oznaka »Canada organic«, na osnovi važećih kanadskih eko-standarda, regulative CAN/CGSB-32.310-2015: 53 i CAN/CGSB-32.311-2015: 75) postoji već više godina, te je re-evaluirana i potvrđena 2015. godine kao uspješna praksa u povećanju pristupa proširenom tržištu za proizvođače, proširenju izbora za potrošače te olakšavanju regulatorne suradnje. Prije međusobnog priznavanja, pri izvozu iz Kanade u EU (i obrnuto) eko-proizvod je morao proći re-certifikaciju, što je stvaralo dodatne troškove eko-proizvođačima izvoznicima (u prosjeku desetak tisuća dolara godišnje), što je u pravilu rezultiralo većom cijenom eko-proizvoda za krajnjeg potrošača. U nekim područjima, kanadska je eko-regulativa stroža od EU regulative, u nekim područjima je obrnuto, a neke oznake mogu dovesti u zabludu potrošača, napose onog koji ne čita deklaraciju sastojaka proizvoda, gdje su takve nedoumice jasno vidljive i obilježene. Najveći izazov za ekološku proizvodnju u EU jest porast potražnje ekoproizvoda tolikom brzinom da je farmeri iz EU ne mogu zadovoljiti, što će neminovno dovesti do povećanja uvoza iz ne-EU zemalja. Stoga je neophodna pomoć vlada zemalja EU u izraženijoj potpori farmerima koji se odluče na prijelaz na eko-proizvodnju. Određene procjene govore da bi sporazum CETA mogao značiti gubitak velikog broja proizvođača (procjene govore da bi se moglo raditi o više tisuća agro-radnih mjesta širom EU), a sličan sporazum između SAD i Meksika već je doveo do gubitka posla 2 milijuna ljudi u Meksiku, uslijed nemogućnosti konkuriranja industrijskoj poljoprivredi SAD-a. Najveći prisutni strah i u eko-proizvodnji je taj da međunarodni agro-biznisi

moгу prisiliti sudskim tužbama nacionalne i nad-nacionalne vlasti da snize standarde, što može posljedično rezultirati nižim standardima u eko-proizvodnji s obje strane Atlantika, utjecaju na okoliš i ljudsko zdravlje, i to ne bazirano na znanstveno-stručno utemeljenim argumentima, kojima se vodi ekološka poljoprivreda, nego na čistoj utrci za profitom. Dakle, može se očekivati da opet »pohlepa nadvlada razum«. Ipak, visoko postavljena »letvica« eko-proizvodnje s »obje strane bare« jest i najbolja »brana« strahu da će CETA donijeti ikakve novitete u život eko-proizvođača.

Ključne riječi: ekološka proizvodnja, CETA, trgovinski sporazum, EU, Kanada