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Women's Perspective on Organization and the Alternative Means of Income in Agriculture in Thrace Region Turkey

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author GO designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author GU managed the analyses of the study. Authors EY, FEU and GK managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in Thrace Region, which is a significant agricultural area in Turkey. The alternative means of income were determined and 477 women, consisting of 94 self-employed women and 383 women working together with their families, were surveyed and their perspectives on alternative means of income and organization were analyzed.

It is ascertained at the end of this study that women do not consider farming as an occupation, even though they work in agricultural sector together with their spouses, that many of them own small scale enterprises, that they are afraid of taking risks, and that they want to receive grants rather than loans. Women's contribution to labor force is more like unwaged employment in family-run businesses, but there are also considerable number of self-employed women in this region.

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The research show that 81% of women stated that there were not any projects regarding alternative means of income in this region. When women were asked to list the alternative income activities according to their significance levels, 70% gave prominence to organic farming. In terms of their perspective on organization, 89% of women stated that they had never participated in any collaborative works in their villages, 53% of women, however, stated that they would have been willing to play an active role if they ever got the opportunity.

Keywords: Women; organization; agricultural business; alternative income; Thrace Region.

1. INTRODUCTION

Womens' contribution to the farming sector in respect of operation and decision making has largely been ignored [1]. On the other hand women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. Many of these activities are not defined as "economically active employment" in national accounts but they are essential to the well-being of rural households [2].

Women's participation in labor force is lower in urban areas than in rural areas. This is because the women, who are omitted from labor force as "housewives" in cities, are included in rural areas in family-run businesses as "unwaged labor". Thus, the high numbers of female employees in "unwaged labor" category led to lower rates of employment in cities than in rural areas [3,4]. Lower rates of participation in labor force and employment and higher rates of unemployment in urban areas are trends that are observed on a global scale [5]. During the last ten years of the Turkish economy, although there were high economic growth rates, the unemployment rate did not diminish sufficiently, LFPR (labor force participation rate) remained low and the registered number of people employed could not be increased. During the post economic crisis period, the LFPR diminishes for female workers. The participation decision of the labor in the course of macroeconomic shocks is connected to the coherence of the labor market to the

fluctuations [6]. In fact agriculture, which involve actors who are mutually engaged to achieve common goals for sustainable agriculture and rural development by cooperating, sharing resources and co-producing new knowledge [7]. So an integrated approach is vital to avoid women becoming victims, redressing the all too common pattern whereby women suffer most from environmentally, climatic and economic shocks and stresses undermining their vital roles in sustaining their families and communities [8]. Global Gender Gap report 2014 by World Economic Forum shows that Turkey is ranked 125th among 142 countries in terms of access to educational opportunities for women [9,10,11].

Together with the intensive use of labor in small family enterprises, there is a rapid "feminization" in agriculture [12]. Unlike their urbanite counterparts, majority of women in rural areas are among the economically-active population, in other words, among the working and producing population in Turkey. On the other hand, male dominance becomes more salient especially within the orthodoxy of rural areas, and this has a negative impact on women's share of earnings through the production activities. Women's participation in economic activities is directly associated with their way of partaking within the social relations system. The fact that women bear equal, for that matter, more responsibilities than men in every sphere of life manifests itself more conspicuously in rural areas. Especially in developing countries, such as Turkey, women are the backbones of the rural economy [13]. Studies of entrepreneurs typically focus only on the individual, it is easy to overlook the important role of family and household members in starting and running a business. While women constitute only a minority of business owners and the self-employed, the statistics disguise the much wider participation of women in businesses either co-owned by men and women, often as marital partners, or where men are majority owners [14]. Developing alternative means of income and providing employment opportunities especially for female population are becoming significant

issues for reviving the rural areas that slackened for various reasons, such as diminishing product range and abandonment of traditional products. Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand and acknowledge the views of women on alternative income possibilities and organization in Turkey.

The research was conducted in Thrace Region, which is located in northwest Turkey, surrounded by metropolitan Istanbul in the east, the Black Sea in the north, the Marmara Sea in the south and the Aegean Sea in the west, bordering Greece and Bulgaria. According to Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics, TR21 Thrace Region includes Tekirdağ (TR211), Edirne (TR212) and Kırklareli (TR213) provinces. There are 83 municipalities, 26 districts and 678 villages in this region. The surface area of the region is 18.665 km² minus the lakes. The population is 1.511.952 as of 2009 [15].

The majority of the territory consists of arable lands in Thrace Region. However, only 9.7% of added value created by Thrace Region were obtained through agriculture in 2011 [15]. Thrace Region carries out 38.17% of sunflower production, 46.28% of rough rice, 8.78% of wheat and 0.98% of sugar beet production in Turkey [16]. This indicates that the region's agricultural potential is significant.

In addition to traditional agricultural activities, several value-added activities that based on agricultural product and activities should be create. These agro-based activities will generate additional income and promote development to the region. The alternative means of generating income that may be improved in line with the potential of the region are determined as rural tourism, medicinal plant cultivation, organic farming, market-oriented production of local foods and hand-crafted products.

The perspective of women living in rural areas of Thrace Region on the means of generating alternative income (rural tourism, medicinal plant cultivation, organic farming, market-oriented production of local foods and hand-crafted products, etc.) that may be improved in line with the potential of the region, and their organizational approach are the main issues discussed in this study. Thus, the agricultural properties of the region will be preserved and the sustainability of the resources will be maintained,

and this will guide women to put forth their power and expectations regarding this matter. For all these reasons, this is the first study to analyze the perspective of Thracian women regarding their approach towards alternative economic opportunities. This is an applicable study, which will set a good example for other rural areas having similar potential. The findings are expected to play an active role in constitution agricultural policies that will increase the efficiency of women in rural areas and in development of innovative projects feasible in this area. In this respect, the aim of this study is to reveal the views of women in the Thrace region on alternative income possibilities and organization. This study was conducted between June 2015 and September 2015 and the results are from 2015.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The perspective of women living in rural areas of Thrace Region (Edirne, Tekirdağ and Kırklareli provinces) on the means of generating alternative income and their organizational approach are determined. Primary data are used in this study, and these data are obtained through survey conducted on women working in agricultural enterprises. The population is divided into two groups. The first group consists of women, who work together with their spouses, and the second group consists of self-employed women. The following formula is used to determine the sample size. 95% of confidence coefficient is taken into account in determining the sample sizes of both groups. The general rule (p) = (q) = 0.5 is accepted, which is commonly used in this type of samplings. In this case, the largest possible sample size is obtained with a fixed sampling error [17]. The sampling formula is given below in detail.

$$n = \frac{N \cdot p \cdot q}{(N - 1) \cdot (z_{\alpha/2} / d)^2 + p \cdot q}$$

n: Sample size

N: Population size

$Z_{\alpha/2}$: Reliability coefficient

d: Sampling error

p: The women in this facility would like to earn income through alternative means

q: The women in this facility would not like to earn income through alternative means

Table 1. Distribution of women whom participate in production activities together with their spouses and self-employed in TR21 (Edirne, Tekirdağ, Kırklareli) (2013) [18]

Cities	Family worker as working	%	Sample size	Self employed	%	Sample size
Edirne	20897	27,7	106	1079	37,0	35
Tekirdağ	35038	46,5	178	1174	40,0	38
Kırklareli	19478	25,8	99	654	23,0	21
Total	75413		383	2907		94

Source: The data was obtained from Agricultural Farming Registration Systems (tekirdag.tarim.gov.tr)

Survey were conducted in randomly selected villages through the abovementioned sampling formula with total of 477 women, 383 of whom participate in production activities together with their spouses, and 94 of whom are self-employed.

This is a field research based on a survey study. Furthermore, the authors accessed the related scientific research and reviewed the current literature, and conceptually and theoretically utilized the current literature. The following questions led to the specification of the research method.

- What is the level of awareness of women living in rural areas regarding alternative means of income?
- What is the women’s perspective on organization and what is the probability of women to take active roles in organization?

After the alternative means of income were determined in rural areas of Thrace Region in general, the authors tried to identify the probability of women, who work in agricultural facilities, to take active roles in generating alternative income and organization, and the influencing factors. For this purpose, logit analysis was adopted, which is one of the multivariate statistical analysis methods. Binary choice model which type of the logit model, theorize the choice between two alternatives depending on the characters of the individual. When individuals have knowledge of their behaviors and the choices they make, an equation can be predicted that predicts their non-sample choices. Alternative model specifications emerge as it is possible to make many assumptions about the probability of individual choices [19]. A logit models estimated for women in the study, who want to earn alternative income. If the logit model of women’s willingness to earn an alternative income is explained, then

the probability of request for alternative income is shown as;

$$P_i = E(Y = 1|X) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_k X_k)}} \quad (1)$$

Or

$$P_i = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-Z}} \quad (2)$$

Here,

$$Z_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_k X_k \quad (3)$$

and (2) are known as (cumulative) logistic distribution function. While Zi varies from -∞ to +∞, Pi has values between 0 and 1 and it is known that the relation with Zi is not linear.

If the probability of request of alternative income is Pi, then the probability of unwillingness (1-P) is as follows,

$$1 - P_i = \frac{1}{1 + e^{Z_i}} \quad (4)$$

Therefore,

$$\frac{P_i}{1 - P_i} = \frac{1 + e^{Z_i}}{1 + e^{-Z_i}} = e^{Z_i} \quad (5)$$

As it is, Pi / (1-Pi) is the Odds ratio of request of the alternative income. If the natural logarithm of this equality is achieved, the following results;

$$L_i = \ln\left(\frac{P_i}{1 - P_i}\right) = Z_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_k X_k \quad (6)$$

Table 2. Description of variables

Independent variable	
Alternative Income Request	1 wants; 0 do not want
<i>Independent Variables</i>	
Income level	1 less than 1000TL, 2 1001-3000TL, 3 more than 3001TL
Education level	1 primary school, 2 middle school, 3 high school, 4 university
Age	Age
Own Income	1 yes, 0 no
Organization request	1 wants, 0 do not want

Source: Own work

The logarithm of the odds ratio L is linear not only with respect to X but also with respect to the principal mass coefficients. L is called logit and the logit model is derived from equation (6) [20].

The probability of alternative income request was used as a dependent variable, whereas income level, education level, age, own income and organization request have been used as independent variables. The variables are described in Table 2.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

When the demographic data are analyzed, lower education levels (76.6% are primary school graduates and less) and the scarcity of young population among women in rural areas is observed. The majority of women are married and have a few children in line with the common family structure in Thrace Region. Although women work together with their spouses and make efforts in agriculture sector, they do not regard farming as a profession. In fact, the efficiency of women in agricultural activities may be improved through focusing on their farmer attribution, aside from their known characteristics, such as child care, housework, and nutrition. Thus, women will be able to contribute to the growth of overall domestic and social welfare.

The research show that 90% of women live in a village and 55% of them have their own lands. However, the decisions regarding the facilities on those lands are taken by the men, although the lands are technically belong to women.

3.1 The Alternative Means of Income in the Region and Women's Perspectives

When the women were asked the following question "Are there any projects regarding the

alternative means of income in your region?" 81% of women said no.

When women were asked to list the alternative income activities according to their significance levels, organic farming stood out with 70%, followed by rural tourism activities with 15%, marketing of local food products with 9% and medicinal and aromatic plant cultivation with 6%.

Organic farming and rural tourism activities become prominent in the region (Fig. 1). Handicrafts, production of traditional products, husbandry and organic farming respectively stand out in terms of jobs that may be carried out by women themselves. It is observed that the participating women consider larger-scale alternative means of income for the region, but they are more inclined to jobs that they are familiar with.

The rural population in Turkey gradually decreases due to migration from country to town. Tourism is a significant factor to hold optimal amount of population in villages to maintain dynamism in touristically attractive regions and to prevent migration. Rural depopulation may only be prevented by improving the living conditions in the country and by ensuring fair income distribution. It may be concluded that rural tourism creates new job opportunities for local residents [21,22]. Thus, these may prevent domestic migration and play an important role in immobilizing the population by putting a dent on development of rural areas. It is feasible in rural areas to generate side income through rural tourism for all families, regardless of the fact that they are engaged in agricultural activities or not. Since accommodation and other services are mostly provided by small family-run businesses or countryside hotels in rural tourism, all family members get job opportunities. The fact that tourism sector is included in the services industry requires labor intensive production, it will have a great contribution to prevent unemployment.

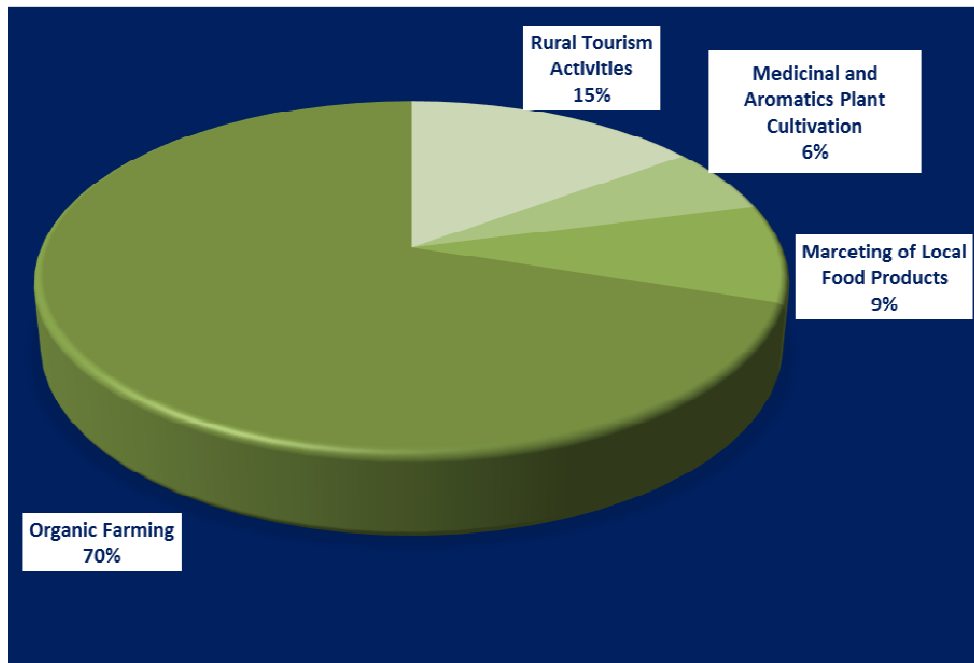


Fig. 1. Primary preferences regarding alternative means of income in the region

Source: Researcher field work (2015)

In recent years, the villages around coastal tourist attractions and metropolitan cities, the rural settlements near ancient cities, the roadside villages and towns have become familiar with tourism in Turkey. Countryside restaurants and shopping stands/displays, and even fish farms and country roads met the tourists and day trippers. Aside from individual trips, travel agencies organize excursions to these places or the rural areas comprising these places. Some significant projects, on the other hand, are designed to revive the remains of those old villages. In this respect, the participation of women in those regions becomes crucial.

3.2 Approaches of Women towards Organizations in Rural Areas

When women's perspective on organization in rural areas is analyzed; the women were asked if they had ever participated in any organizational/collaborative activities in their villages and 89% stated that they had never participated in such activity. This is a significant finding indicating that we, as a society, have been moving away from our traditional social structure (collective work, etc.) that had already disappeared in big cities.

Among the existing producer organizations in the region, Önder Farmers' Association, Agricultural

Development Cooperatives and Thrace Association (Trakya Birlik) stand out among women living in rural areas in terms of their recognition levels. Thrace Association is the most prominent among others in terms of percentage of shares and service satisfaction. The highest levels of dissatisfaction found in Agricultural Development Cooperatives.

53% of participating women stated that they did not want to have an active role in an economic organization; 45.6% among the aforementioned women stated that they did not have time, 18.8% stated that their families would have disapproved such activity, 8.4% stated that they did not have positive opinions regarding having an active role in an organization, and 5.4% stated that actively working women would not be well received in the society. 43.9% of participating women stated that they would like to participate in an existing organization, 29.8% stated that they would not like to participate, and 26.3% stated that they were indecisive. 47% of participating women stated that they would have been willing to have an active role in an economic organization. More than half of the women (53%) stated that they would not like to have an active role. 50.7% of women, who would like to have an active role, wanted to participate in social activities, 34.8% wanted to participate in marketing and service

Table 3. Logit results

Variables	Coefficient	Std. error	Wald	Probability	Odds
Age	-0,025**	0,013	4,013	0,045	0,975
Education1	-1,542***	0,933	2,731	0,098	0,214
Education 2	-2,010**	0,967	4,320	0,038	0,134
Education 3	-1,294*	0,992	1,701	0,192	0,274
Income1	-1,516*	0,528	8,258	0,004	0,219
Income2	-1,471*	0,513	8,216	0,004	0,230
Organization	2,743*	0,358	58,708	0,000	15,541
Own income	0,865*	0,228	14,424	0,000	2,375
Constant	1,686	1,167	2,088	0,148	5,397

*Statistically significant at $\alpha=0.01$, ** Statistically significant at $\alpha=0.05$, *** Statistically significant at $\alpha=0.10$
 Source: Own work

activities. The ratio of women, who would like to take part in organizational activities (14.5%) and administration (13.6%), is relatively fewer.

The women represented a virtually positive perception regarding an organization for the improvement of alternative means of income in rural areas especially in terms of better pricing of the products, utilization of government grants and supports, and development of technical support and training opportunities.

3.3 Logit Analysis for the Prediction of Women’s Desire to Generate Alternative Income and Organization

In the predicted logit model, the income and the level of education, age, whether the person is her own income, and whether she wants to participate in a organization for alternative income is determined as independent variables. Marital status and number of children variables considered important in the model were also used but these variables were not taken into consideration because the explanation coefficient of the model was very low.

The significance of the independent variables in the model can be determined by the Wald test. The significance levels of the variables according to the Wald test are given in Table 3. and all variables except the Education3 are statistically significant. Nagelkerke R² coefficient is one of the criteria for goodness of fit. The logit model has a rating coefficient of 0.40. Interpretation of estimators of the Logit model was made using Odds ratios. A person who is one year older wants to have an alternative income is 1,025 times more. The reason for this can be explained as follows. As the age increases, activities that can be done more easily than ordinary farm jobs and which can earn extra income for the family

are more desirable. A person who wants to take part in a new organization to generate alternative income wants to earn 15.54 times more alternative income than others. Other arguments can be similarly interpreted.

Education and income variables are included as categorical variables in the model. In the model framework, education is discussed under four groups and income is discussed under three groups. Due to the solution of the model, between the lowest or highest group of categorical variables remaining outside the model and variables included in the model are calculated for comparison coefficients. The highest units of education and income variables in the model are excluded to compare. According to this, the individual in Education1 wants to earn 4.67 times more alternative income than those in Education4 (university and above). When the income variable is considered, the individual in the income group 1 wants to earn alternative income 4.56 times more than the individual in the income group 3 (highest income group).

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this study, the women’s perspective on organization and alternative means of income in rural areas of Thrace Region (Edirne, Tekirdağ and Kırklareli provinces) are identified. Women’s approach to organization is also very remarkable. While almost half of the women did not want to have an active role, they had a positive viewpoint on organization. Considering the general characteristics of Thracian people, this may be interpreted as disinclination towards collaboration or avoidance of risks.

Based on these results, these women should initially be encouraged to do what they are familiar with in risk-free fields in order to increase

their effectiveness within agricultural activities, to let them embrace farming as an occupation and to provide them with an active role in economy. In addition, seminars should be given in order to increase the tendency towards organization in rural areas and existing organizations should be improved. Thus, it will contribute to the organizational activities, generation of more income through cooperatization, and to increasing life qualities for the women, who has already been living in rural areas and engaged in agricultural activities, and this will be a significant factor for reduction of poverty and improvement of income distribution.

In this way, the alternative means of income, which has been in existence, but has never been economically active (agritourism, medicinal plant cultivation, organic farming, market-oriented production of local foods and hand-crafted products, etc.) will be put in good use on a national and international scale. And thus, this will contribute to national economy. So women will not only be able make good use of these opportunities, but will also be able to take part in social continuum and development as strong individuals.

Regarding female employment solely as finding jobs, and considering agricultural female workers in their current conditions would not solve these problems. The main problem is that we cannot provide self-sufficient and self-productive employment opportunities for women within the scope of social security. The problem can only be solved if a peaceful atmosphere is created for women to access basic services.

In conclusion, coordination of all actors that will take part in planning, application and evaluation processes in regional development, which ensure that the actors of public and private sector complement each other, which also cover professional organizations, universities and non-governmental organizations, other than the organizations that represent local and public administration regarding woman and rural areas.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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