

Original Research Article

WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE ON ORGANIZATION AND THE ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF INCOME IN AGRICULTURE ¹

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.

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.

INTRODUCTION

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 (Karabıyık, 2012); (Özay and Kılıç, 2009). 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 (Ghose et al., 2010). 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 (World Economic Forum (2014)).

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32 Together with the intensive use of labor in small family enterprises, there is a rapid
33 “feminization” in agriculture (Yıldırak et al., 2003). Unlike their urbanite counterparts, majority of
34 women in rural areas are among the economically-active population, in other words, among the
35 working and producing population in Turkey. On the other hand, male dominance becomes more
36 salient especially within the orthodoxy of rural areas, and this has a negative impact on women’s
37 share of earnings through the production activities. Women’s participation in economic activities is
38 directly associated with their way of partaking within the social relations system. The fact that women
39 bear equal, for that matter, more responsibilities than men in every sphere of life manifests itself more
40 saliently in rural areas. Especially in developing countries, such as Turkey, women are the backbones
41 of the rural economy (Dilek, 2013).

42 Developing alternative means of income and providing employment opportunities especially
43 for female population are becoming significant issues for reviving the rural areas that slackened for
44 various reasons, such as diminishing product range and abandonment of traditional products.

45 The research was conducted in Thrace Region, which is located in northwestern Turkey,
46 surrounded by metropolitan Istanbul in the east, the Black Sea in the north, the Marmara Sea in the
47 south and the Aegean Sea in the west, bordering Greece and Bulgaria.

48 According to Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics, TR21 Thrace Region includes
49 Tekirdağ (TR211), Edirne (TR212) and Kırklareli (TR213) provinces. There are 83 municipalities, 26
50 districts and 678 villages in this region. The surface area of the region is 18.665 km² minus the lakes.
51 The population is 1.511.952 as of 2009.

52 The majority of the territory consists of arable lands in Thrace Region. However, only 9.7%
53 of added value created by Thrace Region were obtained through agriculture in 2011 (TÜİK (Turkish
54 Statistical Institute), 2014c). Thrace Region carries out 38.17% of sunflower production, 46.28% of
55 rough rice, 8.78% of wheat and 0.98% of sugar beet production in Turkey (TÜİK, 2014). This
56 indicates that the region’s agricultural potential is significant.

57 The alternative means of generating income that may be improved in line with the potential of
58 the region are determined as rural tourism, medicinal plant cultivation, organic farming, market-
59 oriented production of local foods and hand-crafted products.

60 The perspective of women living in rural areas of Thrace Region on the means of generating
61 alternative income (rural tourism, medicinal plant cultivation, organic farming, market-oriented
62 production of local foods and hand-crafted products, etc.) that may be improved in line with the
63 potential of the region, and their organizational approach are the main issues discussed in this study.
64 Thus, the agricultural properties of the region will be preserved and the sustainability of the resources
65 will be maintained, and this will guide women to put forth their power and expectations regarding this
66 matter. For all these reasons, this is the first study to analyze the perspective of Thracian women
67 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.

71

72 ***MATERIAL AND METHOD***

73 The perspective of women living in rural areas of Thrace Region (Edirne, Tekirdağ and
74 Kırklareli provinces) on the means of generating alternative income and their organizational approach
75 are determined. Primary data are used in this study, and these data are obtained through questionnaires
76 conducted on women working in agricultural enterprises. The population is divided into in two
77 groups. The first group consists of women, who work together with their spouses, and the second
78 group consists of self-employed women. The following formula is used to determine the sample size.
79 95% of confidence coefficient is taken into account in determining the sample sizes of both groups.
80 The general rule (p) = (q) = 0.5 is accepted, which is commonly used in this type of samplings. In this
81 case, the largest possible sample size is obtained with a fixed sampling error (Malhotra, 1993). The
82 sampling formula is given below in detail.

$$83 \quad n = \frac{N.p.q}{(N-1).(z_{\alpha/2} / d)^2 + p.q}$$

84 n: sample size

85 N: population size

86 $Z_{\alpha/2}$: confidence coefficient

87 d: Sampling error

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

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

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

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

- 96 • What is the level of awareness of women living in rural areas regarding alternative means of
97 income?

- 98 • What is the women’s perspective on organization and what is the probability of women to
99 take active roles in organization?

100 After the alternative means of income were determined in rural areas of Thrace Region in
101 general, the authors tried to identify the probability of women, who work in agricultural facilities, to
102 take active roles in generating alternative income and organization, and the influencing factors. For
103 this purpose, logit analysis was adopted, which is one of the multivariate statistical analysis methods.
104 Women’s active roles, education, income status, etc. were discussed in this model. According to these
105 results of prediction, the probability of women to take active roles in economic activities in rural areas
106 and the probability ratios were calculated. In addition, observations were also made in the research
107 field in certain periods.

108

109 **RESEARCH RESULTS**

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

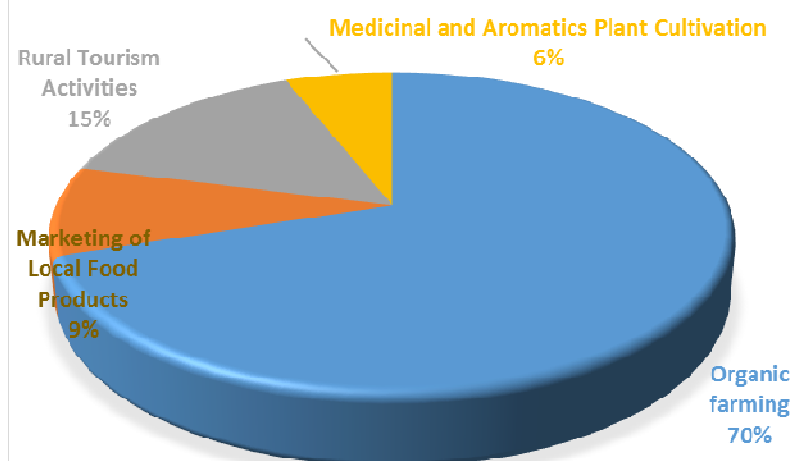
118 90% of women live in a village and 55% of them have their own lands. However, the
119 decisions regarding the facilities on those lands are taken by the men, although the lands are
120 technically belong to women.

121 ***The Alternative Means of Income in the Region and Women’s Perspectives***

122 When the women were asked the following question “Are there any projects regarding the
123 alternative means of income in tour region?” 81% of women stated that there were not any projects.

124 When women were asked to list the alternative income activities according to their
125 significance levels, organic farming stood out with 70%, followed by rural tourism activities with
126 15%, marketing of local food products with 9% and medicinal and aromatic plant cultivation with 6%.

Table 1. Primary Preferences regarding Alternative Means of Income in the Region



Organic farming and rural tourism activities become prominent in the region (Table 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 (Ün et al., 2012); (Özgen, 1995). 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.

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.

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

Two different logit models are developed in this study for the prediction of women's desire to generate alternative income and for their desire to be a part of an organization to create alternative income opportunities. Income level, educational background, age, whether they have their own income, and their desire to be a part of an organization for alternative income opportunities are determined as independent variables in the first model. The independent variables used in the second model, which is about women's desire to be a part of an organization for alternative income opportunities, are age, whether they have their own income, educational background, their desire to generate alternative income and whether dairy cattle raising activities are available in the facility.

As the *age increases* in the first model, the activities, which require less effort and *may generate side income for the family*, are preferred instead of farming, so an individual, who prefer to play a role within a new organization for the means of generating alternative income, want to earn 15.54 times more alternative income.

Hence, we can conclude that low-income and undereducated families need to increase their income and majority of these people thus prefer to organize and generate alternative income.

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.

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 chares 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 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.***

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.

When the alternative means of income and women's perspective are analyzed; it was stated that (81%) there were not any projects regarding alternative means of income in this region, and while organic farming and rural tourism became prominent in general, 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 concluded that the women consider larger-scale alternative means of income for the region, but they are more inclined to do jobs that they are familiar with.***

When the perceptions of women regarding the effects of alternative means of income in this region are analyzed, it is observed that these women are almost indecisive about the negative effects, and prefer involvement in positive effects. ***New employment opportunities, contribution to female employment and increasing attractiveness levels of the region become prominent among the positive perceptions.***

Two different logit models are developed in this study for the prediction of women's desire to generate alternative income and for their desire to be a part of an organization to create alternative income opportunities. Income level, educational background, age, whether they have their own income, and their desire to be a part of an organization for alternative income opportunities are determined as independent variables in the first model. The independent variables used in the second model, which is about women's desire to be a part of an organization for alternative income opportunities, are age, whether they have their own income, educational background, their desire to generate alternative income and whether dairy cattle raising activities are available in the facility.

As the *age increases* in the first model, the activities, which require less effort and *may generate side income for the family*, are preferred instead of farming, so an individual, who prefer to play a role within a new organization for the means of generating alternative income, want to earn 15.54 times more alternative income.

Again, according to the first model, an individual with a lower educational level wants to generate alternative income 4.67 times more than a college graduate. When the income variable is considered, an individual with a lower income level wants to generate alternative income 4.56 times more than an individual with a higher income level.

According to the second model, the desire of an individual, who wants to generate alternative income, to have an active role in an organization is 16.33 times more than an individual, who does not want to generate alternative income. Again, a self-employed individual wants to have an active role in an organization 1.81 times more than an individual with no specific income.

In education variable, which has been categorically included within this model, it is observed that the demand for organization decreases as the level of education increases; it is also observed that an individual with lower level of education is 7.13 times more inclined to organization than an individual with a college or higher degree. *It may be concluded that the people with lower income and education levels need to increase their income, and thus, they are more eager to organize and to generate alternative income.*

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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