EXPERT’S INSIGHT - SYRIA

AK Organic cotton project Syria - The AK organic cotton project is a large-scale organic experiment that is producing promising results.

 Started in 2007, the project in Syria is a collaboration between the governmental Cotton Marketing Organisation (CMO), AK Verwaltungs und handelsgesellschaft (AK) of Germany and the local company Majed Rajab Oglu and Partner Co. (MR&P Co.).

The project is a result of the integration of different worlds, bringing together the CMO which is well rooted in the cotton sector of Syria while AK brings in its long time experience with organic growing techniques and running organic projects.

Syria is considered a suitable country for organic production, due to availability of resistant cotton varieties, a ban on import and use of GMO seeds, availability of both large and small scale farmers and existing interest in sustainable production.

Currently (October 2010) the project covers over 16,000 ha, includes 1300 farmers, and is focused on large scale organic production. We have developed several innovative techniques such as large scale compost distillation, growing and open field application of natural predators, and the use of the latest organic pesticides where needed.

The total production capacity of the project is around 20,000 mt of organic cotton, which is only partly exported, depending on the local need for both organic and conventional cotton.

The organic cotton is grown in rotation with herbs and leguminous crops which are partly marketed as organic.

Integration is the key - the presence of CMO from the cotton sector allows for transparent traceability, and the presence of AK and MR&P in the field through a team of 12 agronomists allows for good internal control and efficient farmer communication.

Besides export the project also supplies the growing local organic food and textile industry.

The size and organization of the project allows for large scale experimentation with organic techniques, yielding promising results for further growth and development.

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