

The BIG INTERVIEW Series

SÜSBİR

TURKISH ORNAMENTAL PLANT GROWERS UNION



Mr. Savaş AKCAN
Turkish Ornamental Plant Growers Union
Chairman of the Board

After the pandemic the focus on going green worldwide has returned...

This is a trend that has a direct positive effect for our industry. Türkiye will play an active part of this "green agreement" and will demonstrate its willingness to create a sustainable environment. The industry has a key role to play and will share in the benefits from this progress.

What trends do you expect to see this year in the professional landscaping and ornamental plants sector both domestically and globally?

In this sense, sustainability themed trends in production and practice are becoming ever more important. Sustainability will be a driver in development and we will see technology adapt and innovate in this direction such as water cycle systems, smart pot applications, less waste production and the installation of production facilities that will balance their impact on climate change.

The negative effects of the pandemic on a human's mental wellbeing were clear to see but the positive benefits of ornamental plants was also very noticeable.

As a result of these insights, we are seeing more plants being used in living spaces such as terrace gardens, green roofs, green walls and vertical gardens and we expect this trend to continue.

What specific opportunities do you see for Turkish producers domestically and globally?

Our producers have focused on exports in recent years. The number of companies, which produce plants meeting European quality standards, continues to increase day by day. In 2021, our industry had an export of \$ 130 million and foreign trade surplus of \$ 80 million. We expect to see increased exports in the coming period.





The war between Russia and Ukraine appears to have impacted the ornamental plants industry just like every other. Countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and Italy, which traditionally have large export market shares, may decrease due to the volatile geo-political situation. Purchases may shift from European countries to Türkiye which could benefit from its advantageous proximity to emerging markets in Eurasia, Middle East and North Africa, as buyers restructure their procurement strategies.

An example of the benefits from Türkiye's location is the high export potential offered by the Middle East not least because we are a neighbouring country and we have a similar climate. The Green Middle East initiative launched by Saudi Arabia in 2021, is seen as an exciting opportunity for our country.

Despite the economic challenges experienced in Türkiye over recent years and expected to continue in the coming months, overall sales are expected to remain stable.

What do you see as the greatest challenges for Turkish producers?

Feedback from our regional consultation meetings and the results of field studies showed that the key challenges are high levels of VAT, increased costs of production, the need for access to financing and long term low interest operating loans, the lack of qualified employees and the prohibition of exports of adult fruit trees as ornamental plants.

Ornamental plants are subject to the same VAT rate of 18% as other groups and we continue to lobby the relevant authorities to urgently reduce this rate of VAT to 8%.



Reducing VAT will increase production volumes and ensure that our country's ability to compete is strengthened in international markets as we become more competitive.

The Turkish ornamental plants sector delivers \$ 80 million dollars of foreign trade surplus on total exports of \$130 million dollars (2021). This creates income for 1 million families and it supports many businesses involved in landscaping, construction, seeds, transportation, plastics and others. The single most important support to this sector is to reduce the VAT rate as this will also make a great contribution to the national economy.

Another current issue is the prohibition of exports of adult fruit trees as ornamental plants.

Fruit trees planned for export are trees that have completed their commercial life and are replaced because the fruit growers want to make changes to their production. These trees are usually between 4cm - 60 cm in the body diameter and are fruit trees over 10 years of age. The ornamental plants sector can remove these trees and prepare them for pots and make them ready for sale and use in landscaping projects worldwide rather than being cut for wood.

There are 5-10 varieties of these fruit trees to be used for overseas landscaping projects, however entire orders are cancelled due to the ban on exports of these plants. Given this uncertainty for our customers and the risk of financial loss, these potential buyers prefer to import from our competitors such as Italy and Spain. Our negotiations with the relevant ministry continue in this regard and we are doing our best to remove this regulation as soon as possible.

This is an election year in Turkey, what support would you like to see for horticulture producers from the next government?



In order to create opportunities and benefits from the changing global commercial outlook, we should prevent unregistered activities in the sector and also encourage increased quality of production.

The ornamental plants sector cannot benefit from using the same support model as that used for the agricultural sector. A new support model that covers our whole sector and provides solutions to our specific needs, will ensure that the industry enjoys accelerated growth in output and trade in the future.

Support of the ornamental plants sector is also very important in terms of ensuring continuity of business enterprises, encouraging their modernization and their future investments. However, there is still no dedicated support model for the ornamental plants sector.

A new support model should be introduced to consider production quality, investment, marketing, trade, employment capacity, environmental sensitivity, etc.

How important do you feel exhibitions like LIF 2023 are in promoting trade, knowledge, and networking?

Having had the opportunity to see production and applications abroad, we think producers in Türkiye have grown and developed and the quality of their products is increasing as a result.

Fairs such as LIF 2023 bring together international manufacturers and buyers and are a great way for our producers to meet with and experience different manufacturing techniques and varieties of products from many countries, as well as gain insights into purchasing trends amongst their potential customers. This is why international fairs are very important with many business connections delivered through face-to-face meetings.

Our manufacturers see international fairs as an opportunity to learn about foreign markets and to see new products and production techniques first hand.

Mr. Savaş AKCAN

Süsbir - Turkish Ornamental Plant Growers Union

Chairman of the Board



Landscape Istanbul Fair 2023 will take place
16-18 November 2023 at the Istanbul Fair Centre.



If you need any images of LIF 2022, please click the link
<http://www.peyzajistanbulfuari.com/en/lif-2022-photo-gallery/>



If you would like to use the videos from LIF 2022 or exhibitors interviews, please visit the youtube channel
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC827v-SdDht4ZrDEfM9SbUg>

For further information please contact

Mustafa Gültekin GÖKGÜL
ATHENA Fuarçılık A.Ş.
info@AthenaFuar.com.tr

OR

Ms. Miray ENGİN
Süsbir - Turkish Ornamental Plant Growers Union
miray@susbir.org.tr