

Marketing Problems in Local Agricultural Product: The Case of Cherry*

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Abstract: Based on the fact that a product produced, which constitutes the basis of marketing, must meet with the consumer, the fact that a wide variety of agricultural products can be grown requires that these products meet with the consumer. This necessity brings along the marketing problems of agricultural products. At this point, the aim of our study is to examine the marketing problems of agricultural products and the importance and problems of marketing in the production of cherry fruit, which is one of the special products grown in our region, Honaz-Denizli, and to develop solutions. For this purpose, consumer and producer factors of marketing, which are interdependent and at the same time act independently of each other, were analyzed. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with Honaz cherry producers seeking solutions in this complex structure. After the interviews, research data were obtained and the results obtained in the light of these data were compared with the results obtained in similar studies. As a result, within the scope of the data and comparisons obtained, suggestions were made to increase the added value of cherry fruit, to sell it at higher prices and to increase the competitiveness of cherry producers.

Key Words: Marketing Problems of Agricultural Products, Cherry Fruit

1. INTRODUCTION

Thanks to its climate zone, Türkiye is one of the lucky countries to be able to grow a wide variety of agricultural products. The fact that a wide variety of agricultural products can be grown brings with it the necessity of bringing these products to the consumer. At this point, agricultural economics and agricultural marketing are issues that require attention.

In general, the branch of science that examines how and with which options individuals who make up societies consume limited resources to meet their needs is called economics. In this parallel, agricultural economics is an applied science that analyzes the problems that may arise in the application of the laws of economics to the agricultural sector (Kabukçu and Oğuz, 1998: 6). Unless a product satisfies the consumer's taste, producing this product is a waste of time and labor. Since the consumer is in the leading role, agricultural marketing is included in the literature as the branch of science that examines the processes that agricultural products undergo from the producer to the consumer's table (İnan, 1994: 142).

Cherry fruit is one of the fruits grown in our country and subject to agricultural marketing. Due to its genetic characteristics, it is the earliest ripening fruit among temperate climate fruits. The homeland of cherry is the region between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. With the improved varieties, cherry production has a wide growing period from very

early to very late. The fact that cherry is a showy, popular fruit and sought after in foreign markets has led to an increase in demand, especially in recent years (Sarıyer and Marangoz, 2007:1).

The basic functions of marketing are the proper preparation of the market, as well as the availability of quality products at the right price, at the right time and in the right place for the target audience. When the consumer and producer factors of marketing, which are interdependent and at the same time independent of each other, are examined, a very complex structure is encountered. The aim of this study is to investigate the problems of Honaz cherry producers seeking solutions in this complex structure and to suggest solutions.

1.1. Cherry Production in Türkiye and Denizli

Türkiye has been one of the most important regions for fruit cultivation since the past years thanks to its geographical location and climatic conditions that allow different fruit species to grow.

In many provinces of Türkiye, especially cherry cultivation can be practiced and the amount of this production is seen as an increasing value. The most important factors in the increase in production are the different soil structures of the agricultural lands of the regions and the long harvest times due to ecological characteristics. The fact that there are few diseases or pests especially in production in the highlands is effective in increasing organic

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production (www.tarimorman.gov.tr, 2025; www.uib.org.tr, 2025).

The cherry tree is a species from the Rosaceae family with the Latin name 'Prunus avium'. It is known that there are 1,500 different species of cherries with hard seeds and sweet aroma worldwide (www.tarimorman.gov.tr, 2025) There are varieties of cherry fruit ranging in color from yellow to dark red and even burgundy, and all of them are very rich in fiber, minerals and vitamins (www.memorial.com.tr, 2025).

The homeland of the cherry is Northern Anatolia and the South Caucasus Region and it is rumored that the name of Giresun province comes from the wild cherry tree called 'Ceresia' that grows in the region. After being cultivated in Anatolia, the cherry spread first to Europe and then to the whole world (www.tarimorman.gov.tr, 2025).

Most of the cherry production in Türkiye is made from the 0900 Ziraat variety. This variety is known as 'Turkish Cherry' in Europe due to the amount of production. The main characteristics of this variety are that it ripens very late, the fruits are very large, large heart-shaped, the flesh is pinkish red, shiny, hard, juicy, very large and of high quality, the fruit does not crack and is suitable for long distance transportation (www.kalkinmakutuphanesi.gov.tr, 2025).

Modern agricultural techniques are used in cherry cultivation and export-oriented methods are followed. Türkiye's geographical structure favorable to agriculture allows the same type of cherry to be produced in different regions for a long period of

time. The first harvest starts in late April and early May and lasts until the last days of July. Our regions that allow cherry cultivation are

as follows: Izmir, Manisa, Amasya, Denizli, Çanakkale, Bursa, Isparta, Afyonkarahisar, Niğde and Konya (www.tarimorman.gov.tr, 2025).

Although cherry cultivation is carried out in many regions in Turkey, in some regions cherry is an important source of income because the cherries grown in these regions are offered to the market for export (Dere, 2006: 56):

-In the Aegean region: Uluborlu, Senirkent, Çay, Honaz and Kemalpaşa districts,

-Marmara region: Karaca Bey and some districts of Çanakkale and Balıkesir,

-Central south: Aksehir, Sultandagi, Ermenek, Hadim, Tashkent regions,

-In the central north region: Tokat, Erzincan, Malatya and some districts of Gümüşhane.

Cherry is a highly demanded product in the world market due to its nutritional value, early ripening and showiness. For this reason, the amount of production is also quite high. When the worldwide production amounts and percentages for the years 2024-2025 are analyzed, it is seen that Türkiye ranks first in cherry cultivation with a share of 18%. Türkiye is followed by China with 17%, European Union Countries with 14%, Chile with 10%, U.S.A. with 8%, Russia with 7%, Uzbekistan with 6%, Iran and Ukraine with 5% and Serbia with 4% (www.fas.usda.gov, 2025: Table 1).

Table 1: 2024-2025 Cherries Production-Top Producing Countries

Market	% of Global Production	Total Production (2024/2025, Metric Tons)
Türkiye	18%	900,000
China	17%	850,000
European Union	14%	715,346
Chile	10%	502,000
United States	8%	413,340
Russia	7%	356,600
Uzbekistan	6%	297,700
Iran	5%	240,000
Ukraine	5%	238,400
Serbia	4%	187,400

Source: www.fas.usda.gov

In Denizli province, it is seen that cherry cultivation is carried out on a total area of 35 thousand 9 decare in Denizli province in 2013 (www.tarimtv.gov.tr, 2025). Exactly ten years later, in 2023, according to TÜİK data, 11 thousand 504 tons of cherry production was realized in Denizli from an area of 2 thousand 279 hectares. The cherry

yield per decare was 504.7 kilograms. It was recorded that approximately 5 thousand tons of product yield was expected this season in the cherry orchards of approximately one thousand 180 hectares in Honaz district (www.iha.com.tr, 2025). According to TÜİK 2024 figures, in the fruits group, it is predicted that there will be a 1.4% increase in

cherry production compared to the previous year (www.data.tuik.gov.tr, 2025).

The fruits can be consumed fresh or dried and can also be used as jam, vinegar, canned or frozen food. Cherry, which has a high economic value, is valued not only for its fruits but also for its stems, leaves and timber, and its cultivation is mostly carried out in our country.

The demand for cherries in world markets is steadily increasing. Therefore, investments in the sector are also increasing rapidly. Seeing that Türkiye is increasing its market share in the cherry sector, other rival producing countries are working to get a share of this market; however, Türkiye has its own unique advantages in this regard. According to the Mediterranean Exporters Association 2024 report, cherry fruit is among the top 10 products exported in Türkiye's fresh fruit exports in June 2023-2024 (www.akib.org.tr, 2025). The geographical location and climate of our country positively affect cherry production "from early to late". This makes the presence of our products strong in the market for a very long time (www.uib.org.tr, 2025).

In terms of the domestic fruit market, market expansion in the export market continues to be the focus of considerable attention. Market expansion is becoming an increasing priority for the Turkish fruit industry (Akbaş et al., 2005: 101).

According to the Mediterranean Exporters' Association 2023-2024 data, Russia is Türkiye's largest market for fresh fruit exports. In this context, fresh fruits produced in Türkiye are generally exported to Russia. Other countries to which Türkiye exports fresh fruits are India, Iraq, Germany, Romania, Romania, United Kingdom, Ukraine, Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands (www.yms.org.tr, 2025).

1.2. Marketing Problems Encountered in Agricultural Activities

The products produced go through many operational processes until they reach the consumer. These paths and places through which the products flow from their production and encounter various events such as processing, storage, packaging, and passing from hand to hand are collectively called "marketing channels" (Albayrak et al., 2010: 1309). Different marketing channels are used to deliver agricultural products to consumers. While some producers sell their products directly to consumers without any intermediaries by selling them at roadside markets or directly in the field, some prefer to sell their products to brokers in order to avoid high

transportation costs or because the production area is far from the markets. Brokers deliver the products they receive from farmers to supermarkets, greengrocers and grocery stores through wholesalers and retailers and offer them to consumers. Producers can also market their products directly through agricultural cooperatives and export companies. Another marketing method used is to deliver fruits and vegetables to retailers through agricultural cooperatives and from there to consumers. One of the longest distribution channels in fresh fruit and vegetable marketing is the process that proceeds as "producer - collector - broker at the production site - wholesaler - broker at the consumption site - retailer - consumer" (Akbaş et al., 2005: 100).

The inadequacy of producers in the agricultural sector causes serious problems in obtaining sufficient technical support, marketing support, price determination processes, service provision and training. A complete integration between agriculture and agriculture-based industry has not been achieved. This deficiency has made it difficult for the agriculture-based industry to access the quality and sufficient amount of raw materials it needs, reduced the capacity utilization of industrial facilities and negatively affected the sustainability of marketing processes. Millions of people working in the agricultural sector spend great effort in production, but their biggest difficulty is in the marketing phase of their products. Today, a large portion of producers state that they have more trouble in the marketing area than in the production process (Dere, 2006: 27).

When marketing is considered as a whole, any disruption that may disrupt the whole is too important to be ignored. For this reason, it is thought to be useful to consider the possible problems in a dimensional manner. In their study conducted in 2010, Albayrak and his colleagues examined the possible disruptions in three dimensions and reached the following dimensions:

1. Business/operator dimension

- a. Enterprise size
- b. Level of fragmentation
- c. Level of input utilization
- d. Level of technology utilization in the enterprise
- e. Level of utilization of information technologies
- f. Education level of the operator
- g. Level of participation in producer organizations
- h. Demand for organization and level of consciousness

- i. Bargaining power in bringing products to market
- j. Level of monitoring market developments (prices, demand, etc.)
- 2. In the dimension of marketing systems
 - a. Infrastructure status of enterprises/institutions in the market
 - b. The level of monitoring of market developments by enterprises/institutions in the market
 - c. Compliance with the law in the implementation of marketing services
 - d. Marketing margins
 - e. Consumer and producer prices
 - f. Market shares of units in the marketing chain
- 3. Legislative dimension
 - a. Carrying out production and marketing services in accordance with the legislation
 - b. Level of awareness of legislative content
 - c. Awareness of legislation and developments on food safety
 - d. Supports that encourage producer organization and support given in case of membership to producer organizations and related extension activities.

Due to the situational effects experienced day by day (such as pandemics or global warming, etc.), other issues that may affect marketing in Turkey may develop. It is very important for Turkey to take various measures and resort to new methods in order to reach higher rates in fresh fruit and vegetable exports. With a conscious and systematic program to be implemented from production to marketing, the export rate can be increased both in quantity and value. For this purpose, it is very important to eliminate the factors that prevent the success of fresh fruit and vegetable exports. In order for fresh fruit and vegetable batches prepared for export to be minimized in quantity and quality from production to the table, the necessary conditions must be created to protect quality and deliver them to the consumer in the best possible condition (Coşkun, 2014: 20).

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. Marketing Problems of Local Agricultural Products: Honaz Cherry Research

Honaz is located on the northern slopes of Mount Honaz and is located in an area with high rainfall, which is the climate of the Aegean Region. For this reason, Honaz has a climate and ecological structure that is considered suitable for cherry

cultivation. Cherry has been grown locally in Honaz in limited quantities since ancient times. Cherry cultivation has increased in the region with the introduction of new and more productive species, especially the Napoleon type, to Honaz. So much so that cherry has become a very important source of income for the people. Most of the cherries grown in Honaz are exported. Some of them are offered to local markets and markets (<http://www.honaz.gov.tr>, 2025).

2.2. Purpose and Importance of the Study

Since cherries are grown in different ecologies in our country, it is possible to find cherry fruit in domestic and foreign markets for about 2 months. The harvest starts in Kemalpaşa (İzmir), then moves to Honaz (Denizli), then to Sultandağı, Dereçine (Afyon), Akşehir (Konya), then to the Taurus Mountains and Andırın (K.Maraş) and thus it is possible to find cherries in the markets for a long time (Engin and Ünal, 2003: 153). Although there are many different varieties, Ziraat 0900 cherry is the most desired variety in cherry exports due to its large, showy and delicious fruit, long shelf life and resistance to transportation (Engin and Ünal, 2006: 1). In this context, the cultivation of Ziraat 0900 cherry is increasing rapidly in geographies with important cherry regions.

One of the regions where Ziraat 0900 cherry variety is grown is Honaz District of Denizli. The most produced cherry variety in Honaz District is Ziraat 0900, also known as "Napoleon" by the people. This type of cherry is produced in 80% of the cherry areas in the district. The products below 26 caliber of this cherry variety are sold to the domestic market, while the products above 26 caliber are exported to the foreign market.

The idea that the import and export of cherries may bring along possible marketing problems makes it necessary to conduct this study. For this reason, in this study; it is aimed to increase the added value of the cherry fruit, which we can reach in the markets for a long time and which is grown in Honaz District of Denizli, to increase the added value of the cherry fruit, to sell it at higher prices and to determine the marketing problems in order to increase the competitiveness of cherry producers and to bring solutions to these problems.

2.3. Methodology of the Research

In the study, the marketing problems of local agricultural products were examined and especially the marketing problems of Honaz cherry were studied. During the research, as Patton stated for

the purpose of the interview, it was tried to enter the inner world of the individual and to understand his/her point of view (cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013: 148). For this reason, face-to-face interview technique was preferred and the participants were determined by convenience sampling method.

Within the scope of the research, face-to-face in-depth interview technique was applied by asking open-ended questions with 17 participants who are authorized in cherry production in Honaz District or who are themselves cherry producers, and the interviews were left at 17 people because the answers repeated each other. The answers given by the participants in the interview were recorded on paper in the form of note-taking and all interviews were recorded simultaneously on the voice recorder to minimize possible errors. The audio recordings were then transcribed.

The interviews were conducted by appointment, at a time when the participants felt comfortable, in a relaxed environment, and the participants participated in the interview with their own consent. Each interview lasted approximately 20-40 minutes. Participants' statements were checked for consistency and supporting questions were asked to clarify statements where necessary.

A sample of 17 people was found to be sufficient due to the fact that the study was an exploratory study and time constraints. In addition to the time limitation of the research, the product on which the research was conducted was cherry fruit, and it may not be appropriate to generalize to every product as it may produce a different result in another product.

3. RESULTS

The data obtained as a result of the interviews can be grouped as follows in the light of the marketing mix;

3.1. Product Problems

The fact that cherry fruit is not a very resistant fruit as a product is a problem that arises from the natural structure of the fruit and is very difficult to deal with. Cherry is a species that is sensitive to changing climatic conditions. Especially in recent years, cherry cultivation is in great danger due to extreme weather conditions caused by global warming, which we have increasingly felt the effect of in the world and in our country. (Soysal, 2024: 143).

Excessive rains and cold weather, especially during harvest time, cause cracking and rotting in the cherry fruit, making it impossible to sell to the foreign market. The cracked fruit is offered to the domestic market instead of the foreign market,

which inevitably leads to lower prices. The producer, who does not apply agricultural techniques and pesticides that can be applied against cracking, is forced to offer his product to the domestic market as a rubbish product because it is cracked.

In addition, the fact that cherry fruit can be grown in geographically close regions (İzmir Kemalpaşa, Isparta Uluborlu) increases competition in the region. In addition, the fact that the producers of the district use previously learned methods in production processes and are closed to modern agricultural techniques prevents them from protecting the product and emerges as factors that reduce their power in the market.

3.2. Price Problems

One of the biggest problems in the district is that producers do not have much say in pricing. The reason for this is that marketing is not done directly but indirectly, that is, through intermediaries and brokers. The pricing of the products is done wholesale by brokers and company intermediaries while the product is still in the field. Since the fruit is harvested at the same time in the neighboring regions, the producer has to accept the price given by the brokers or middlemen. Supporting this result, Kantaroğlu and Demirbaş (2023) also concluded that the cherry producers in Kemalpaşa district were also in a difficult situation in terms of pricing. Since the harvest seasons are very close, the producer knows that if he does not accept the price given by the commission or the intermediary, he cannot sell his product and that the commission or the intermediary will buy the product from other regions. This puts pressure on producers and takes away their bargaining power over the price of the product.

In addition, the interviews revealed that some intermediaries and brokers make unprofessional decisions in favor of well-known producers and set prices that put other producers in a difficult situation.

3.3. Place Problems

Marketing is a chain starting from the producer until it reaches the consumer. Any problem that may occur in this chain will affect the success of the whole chain and reduce efficiency. Therefore, marketing is not only production. In the study, it was found that the main problem that disrupts the marketing chain is the failure to establish quality standards. Similarly, Kızılaslan and Kılıç (2022: 195) found similar marketing deficiencies in their study on Amasya muscatel apple. Packaging, packaging and storage conditions are not the same, which

causes damage to the products. Altun and Öztürk (2024) also drew attention to distribution costs and product losses. In addition, fraudulent and uncommercial behavior of some producers in order to make their products look better quality during crating is one of the distribution problems experienced in the district.

In addition, the fact that Honaz District cherry producers do not have the chance to trade directly in foreign markets due to the small amount of land they own obliges the producers to use intermediaries or brokers. Since the shelf life of the product is short due to its perishable nature, the necessity to distribute within the broker or intermediary networks is a factor that prevents opening to new markets.

Şen and Eroğul, in their study conducted in 2023, proposed a thermal cover solution for the transportation problems of cherry fruit, especially for air transportation problems. According to the results of the study, it was concluded that thanks to the thermal cover applications, the quality of the product was preserved by limiting the temperature changes in the transportation and marketing process of cherry fruits.

3.4. Promotion Problems

Since the cherry producers in Honaz District are small producers, they do not have an effective structure in marketing their products. After the product is harvested, some of it is sold to middlemen or brokers in the field and the rest is marketed by the producers in the local market. The farmer does not get enough income from the sale of the product. For this reason, it was concluded that all these small producers should be gathered under the roof of a union that will gather all these small producers under one roof, defend their rights and provide certain standardization for the product produced. Similarly, Karadaş and Bulut (2022), who studied the marketing problems of plant products, drew attention to the inadequacy of the wholesale market and the inadequacy of marketing cooperatives.

The results of the interviews showed that there is a union in the district, but it has not yet started to operate, and there is no trained and impartial agricultural engineer at the head of the union, so there are already prejudices against the union, which is just trying to be established.

Participants stated that the Honaz Cherry Festival, which is organized as a promotional activity in the district, has not had the desired effect and that a common branding should be done in addition to the festival.

4. CONCLUSION

Marketing is a very important tool to increase the contribution of production to the national economy. One of the objectives of marketing is to minimize the losses in the stages of the product from harvesting to the consumer, to maintain the quality and to spread it over a long period of time so that the consumer can benefit from it in all seasons. For this reason, marketing is extremely important for enterprises to reach economies of scale and to gain competitiveness in international markets. In order to talk about an effective marketing power, there must be a common goal and stability.

This goal and stability can be achieved by first gathering under the umbrella of a union and then going for joint branding. Considering the importance of brand creation today, the first step should be taken for the branding of these products by preparing standards for local products specific to our country.

In the light of the information collected, the solution suggestions developed for the solution of the marketing problems of Honaz Cherry, which is a local product, taking into account the economic, managerial, geographical and socio-cultural conditions can be listed as follows:

It is foreseen that establishing a common brand, packaging and certain quality standards under the roof of a union or cooperative and thus selling first to the domestic and then to the foreign market with a brand will both bring a quality standard to the product and make it easily recognizable by consumers with the brand.

In order to further increase export opportunities, it is necessary to increase producer organization and the effectiveness of producer organizations, to carry out cherry production techniques according to scientific principles, and to disseminate cherry varieties preferred in terms of taste and aroma in international markets (www.uib.org.tr, 2025).

Through the brand, middlemen or brokers will be removed between the producer and the consumer and direct marketing will be a more economical solution for producers.

It is thought that identifying new gaps in the foreign market and delivering the products produced before the products of the nearby region are harvested to these foreign markets will not only open up new markets, but also eliminate the dependence on the distribution networks of intermediaries or brokers.

Signs indicating a product originating from a certain region or identified with this region in terms of a

distinctive quality, reputation or other characteristics are called geographical indications (www.tpe.gov.tr, access date: 27.01.2016). In this way, the product gains a distinguishable feature from other products. For this reason, Honaz Cherry, like Malatya Apricot, Amasya Apple, Çengelköy Cucumber, can be differentiated from other cherries with geographical marking.

It would be useful to have at least one agricultural engineer, who is trusted by the people of the district to act impartially and who has the qualifications of a consultant, at the head of the union to be formed.

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