

Program Script for Victor Ananias (Aired on 10 January 2010)

Category: Economic Development

Location: İstanbul

It’s Sunday, 10 o’clock in the morning, it’s raining in İstanbul and the city hasn’t even woken up yet.

But there are those who have already started the day

This is the Kartal Ecological Marketplace in İstanbul, or more popularly known as the organic products -marketplace.

While most of İstanbul is still sleeping, those who are passionate about organic agriculture meet up early in the morning to set up this marketplace in Kartal.

And they do not do this just once but every week.

A tradesman who sells at the marketplace speaks is singing a “Turkish Folk Song”

Presently in Turkey, marketplaces that sell organic products are set up every week in Samsun, Antalya, Şişli -İstanbul and Kartal- İstanbul.

In these marketplaces organic products that have been grown in Turkey are being sold, and brought from the field to the customer with a great meticulousness.

The leadership of these marketplaces and the Pioneer of ecological agriculture in Turkey is the Buğday Association.

Buğday stands with the efforts of one changemaker.

Victor Ananias, born to a Chilean father and Turkish mother was born in a mountain village of Switzerland.

And with his birth brought forth a different fate for him.

Interview with Victor Ananias:

I have a hard time explaining where I’m actually from because I don’t belong to a specific religion or race and not part of a geographical location.

I was born in Switzerland. My father’s Chilean, a son of a family who migrated from Beytullahim to Chili and my mother is Turkish.

But her family tree goes back to different ethnics as well.

I feel like a world citizen actually. This brought with it responsibilities while I was growing up, I don’t discriminate where people are from.

This helped me stay respectful and be in humble service towards all the people of the world who are all connected to one another.

This is the story of my life.

Even though Victor Ananias calls himself as a world citizen, his introduction to the real world happened on the abundant soils of the Aegean.

While trying to learn the meaning of life’s secrets in a small town in the Aegean, he started pursuing a life of ideals.

And he decided to build his life based on expanding this idea.

Interview with Victor Ananias:

I grew up in a small town in the Aegean. I spent time among windmills, and observed that plantation and harvest are rituals of life.

I grew up in rural life that had a cycle of its own, where it had its own rituals and everything was celebrated.

I came here from abroad as a small child and lived here, with people like Mr. Windmill Bayram, Uncle Ali, Aunt Fatma actually, were my teachers in my life.

They are etched into my mind, my brain and I learned to live righteously from them.

Basically, our social problems, economic problems, and environmental issues and occurred because we’ve put aside living a righteous life.

Victor Ananias’s first occupation as a teenager was being a cook.

He would travel the world and seek happiness in cooking but his feet would always guide him towards Anatolia.

The Aegean’s soil whispers a different secret and he is in pursuit of that secret, where ever he went, he returned to Anatolia.

Interview with Victor Ananias:

After university, I was best at being a cook. I travelled many countries as a cook.

I visited various places trying to find different solutions to the world’s problems; sometimes in Scotland, sometimes in South America or elsewhere.

I observed what these people were doing and I realized that the same things were being done in my town as well.

I worked in a hotel, florist, was a deck boy. While doing all of these jobs I noticed something; it didn’t make a huge difference in people’s lives even if I did my best.

I made a family happy, two families happy but in this real life, this was not something that was enough to make me happy.

With this thought in mind, Victor Ananias set out on his expedition in 1992 by founding the Buğday (Wheat) Association.

While no one in Turkey was discussing anything about organic agriculture, while genetically modified foods had not entered Turkey’s or the world’s agenda,

he was in pursuit of healthy agriculture and healthy food.

His purpose was not to establish an association that would only discuss particular issues but he wanted to take an active role in training farmers and directing consumers to healthy food.

For this, he first went to the villages and farmers. He tried to explain to them that there are alternative ways of agriculture.

With those who believed him, he took steps towards having an ecological life in Turkey.

Interview with Victor Ananias:

We were harvesting; the seeds were being separated during the harvest. If we take planting wheat for example, which is also the name of our organization, it has a natural ritual; we thank nature when we harvest.

There is working with animals and sharing the food. It starts while planting, we planted for the birds, wolves and for us.

Actually only one third is seen as our share. Then one part of our share is separated as the seed of the next year, the rest washed, and made into cracked wheat and flour.

Then some part of it consumed and the rest given to others. Everyone makes everyone rich in the village.

Living righteously is very important. Thus, we become conscious of the nature, each other, children, weak, and the poor.

We should live righteously and make our decisions accordingly.

We always consume, then for a time period we are trying to help others or to solve a particular environmental problem with a small amount of effort.

None of this will change our lives, and it doesn’t actually.

Buğday Magazine which is lead by Victor Ananias has taken part in many areas and activities.

First, they educate the farmers about ecological agricultural issues.

They show farmers methods for more effective and healthier production.

Then they try to get decision making mechanisms into action and specifically inform politicians about organic agriculture.

They lobby for organic agricultural in Ankara and at local administrations.

The establishment of ecological marketplaces would assure that consumers would be introduced to organic agriculture.

These marketplaces ensure that certified agricultural farmers sell and the consumers are led to the right path.

Interview with Victor Ananias:

The organic marketplace model that was formed by Buğday Association is completely organic. And the model provides income for all the parties involved.

Nature wins in ecological marketplaces, natural resources win; the soil wins, the soil doesn’t get dirty; water wins, the water doesn’t become polluted.

The millions of micro-organisms in the water and soil win. All the animals and plants have a share of all the biological and agricultural farming that is done in the region.

The farmers and the producers in the region win. The farmer who himself produces these products also consumes these products.

Neighbors win too and they stay healthy.

Insurance companies win because there are less health issues, people become less sick.

The consumer wins; their life has a better quality, they consume these and they feel more content.

With each thing you purchase, it supports and protects nature and the people’s lives. There are so many sides that win.

The Municipality wins; they are providing a good service. There is very little work being done in the health protection sector.

This is a health protection service. When we think of health, hospitals are first to come to mind.

Hospitals are where we try to win back our health. Hospitals are not something made to protect health.

Ecological marketplaces are a health service. When you look at it this way, all sides win...

Interview with a customer at the marketplace:

Customer: In the old days, when we were children, fruits, vegetables were not over developed. They were presented naturally in the bazaars.

Now it is not possible to find them. We came as a family for shopping and the products are really good.

Interview with another customer at the marketplace:

Customer: This is my first visit, I haven’t seen the whole place yet but I am sure it is much healthier. We prefer it because it is organic.

Interviewer: Compared to regular marketplaces, how did you find the prices?

Customer: The prices aren’t too high. They are about the prices that a family with an average income can purchase.

But it is healthier and more natural. I have a grandchild and because of him I wanted to come and shop here.

Interview with a tradesman at the marketplace:

Tradesman: We live in a small town located in Karacabey, Bursa.

Interviewer: When do you come to the marketplace?

Tradesman: We leave our production area on Saturdays and Sundays and come to Şişli and Kartal.

When we look at organic products of previous years, a huge portion, about 98% were being sent to abroad.

With these marketplaces, thanks to the help of Buğday Associations new marketplaces are being established all around us

and we are thankful to Buğday and municipalities for bringing the producers and consumers together because the consumer and the producer meeting directly is very important.

If we producers win, we will invest again in organic agriculture, we will earn good money and develop organic production,

and we will build our infrastructure and know it will work better.

Interview with Victor Ananias:

For a producer to be able to sell their products in ecological marketplaces, that producer has to apply to Buğday one year before.

The team will forecast a production planning process when each product will be able to sell.

If there is no production planning here, if there is no production control here, the producers will

come with a huge amount of products, the possibility of them returning empty handed is very high.

Therefore, there is a careful planning process; it is a critical planning process. They cannot just dump their products and sell them like in any other bazaar.

The product should not lose its value. Therefore, a certain amount of each product should be found every week. According to this plan, there is a planning process among those that apply

and for the year, meaning from 2009 to 2010, we will know who will be selling what.

Also, these producers have to have an ecological certificate.

So the producer and the products must have ecological certificate. According to ecological agricultural laws,

there are certification associations like notaries; and the producer makes a contract with one of these certification associations.

The whole production is made according to certain conditions; meaning no use of synthetic chemicals,

and no components that can pollute the product. All the production must be done according to ecological agriculture.

The producer gets the certificate, determines the amount that he will bring every week, and notifies us. Our team works throughout the whole week.

The whole team in Buğday comes from all parts of Turkey. This is for İstanbul of course, for İstanbul they come from all parts of Turkey.

Even if Buğday Association is in the media with its ecological marketplace, they are signing onto something different that they had been working for the past 6 years.

Interview with Victor Ananias:

Buğday Association started the TaTuTa (Eco-Agro Tourism and Voluntary Exchange) Project 6 years ago. The website has a system that helps people go to ecological farms for vacation.

There are 70 points in Turkey that have ecological farms. These are within the TaTuTa system. TaTuTa is an abbreviation for.

Eco-Agro Tourism and Voluntary Exchange. Detailed information about this is on the website, which you can use to make reservations. People can go to these ecological farms as vacations and also as volunteers.

Victor Ananias has been working for years to give back to the earth what he gets from it.

Happiness is everywhere, instead of looking up to the skies, he looked down at the earth he walks upon.

He does not take it for granted.

Interview with Victor Ananias:

People may think I have lost my mind. They may even be angry with me because I don’t make any money from it.

There are people who love what I do, others who benefit from what I do, people who see me as a role model,

and others who add something to their own lives. Everyone has their own reactions.

It doesn’t make a difference for me because I am doing something I believe in. It’s not something I do to win the approval those around me.

I do it because I believe in what I do and I see the results. I am not the hero here of the ecological marketplace.

But I am content if anything I have done or my vision has put in a positive aspect to this.

I am content to know that thousands of people consume these healthy foods, hundreds of producers are selling things they never sold before, they are becoming good examples to their neighbors.

This is like an avalanche. If I have made a small positive impact this will give me the motivation I need to continue living.

If you hear someone, somewhere is constructing an ecological marketplace, they state negative words.

We come across this idea in Turkey; this idea gives people the following thoughts,

“someone out there is making big money out of this, they are just trying to sell us another idea to earn them money.”

This is the problem that Buğday comes across most often, because people do see this as a trend.

Something becomes a trend such as supporting children in need. Whenever some things becomes a trend,

all famous people, NGOs, top government people come out and do something on that issue; corporations provide financial support for this.

Whereas, the actual team and number of people who really do this whole-heartedly, who live this belief throughout their lives and abide by this is actually very few.

Victor Ananias is one of those rare people, who is trying to live righteously.

He’s dedicated his life to earth, to share what he has learned from the earth with its people.

He believes that we can live healthier lives. He set out not only to change his life but also the lives of millions of people.

He followed his inspiration, while Turkey was not even talking about organic agriculture, he went and educated farmers, and he created the organic marketplace introducing it to thousands of people.

He made a huge difference in the millions of people of this country with his efforts.

Victor Ananias’s story is not an easy one. In a country like Turkey were we are a agricultural society but don’t see agriculture in the news, with patience and determination, Victor worked hard.

And if there is organic agriculture today in Turkey, it is because Victor has played a significant role in it.

There are many lessons to be taken from Victor’s story. He really is a Changemaker. If you feel there are Changemaker’s around you, after a short break I will explain how to nominate someone to Turkey’s Changemakers.

Dear viewers, we are at the SEED Conference Center of Sabancı University Sakıp Sabancı Museum in İstanbul.

If you, or someone you may know is a Changemaker

please go to our website and fill out our form in order to participate to “Turkey’s Changemakers”(www.farkyaranlar.org)

Or you can call us at +90-212-249-23-14. Our friends will direct you to the right place.

In this project realized through the support of the Sabancı Foundation, our Advisory Board carefully assesses your nominations and selects Changemakers who will be featured on the show...

Until the next episode of “Turkey’s Changemakers”, we are wishing you a good evening.