

Recent Trends in Organic Farming in India: A Study

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Abstract: Organic farming system in India is not new and is being followed from ancient time. Organic farming is defined as cultivation without the application of chemical fertilizers and synthetic pesticides or genetically modified organisms, growth hormones, and antibiotics. Agricultural development policy for developing countries needs to focus on increasing the productivity of the land under cultivation, with lower costs, higher efficiency of products with little or no damage to both humans and the environment. The scientists have realized that the 'Green Revolution' with high input use has reached a plateau and is now sustained with diminishing return of falling dividends. Thus, a natural balance needs to be maintained at all cost for existence of life and property. Organic farming promotes food security, especially for the small farmers operating in traditional or low-input systems through improvements in yields and incomes, enhancement of food availability through diversification and mixed farming as well as lower chances of crop failure in case of extreme climate events. Revival of traditional varieties and reintroduction of traditional foods into diets of farming communities through organic agriculture also promotes food cultures. In this paper an attempt is made to examine the trends and area and production of organic farming in India.

Keywords: Organic, Farming, Area, Production, Health, Ecology

Introduction :

Organic farming system in India is not new and is being followed from ancient time. It is a method of farming system which primarily aimed at cultivating the land and raising crops in such a way, as to keep the soil alive and in good health by use of organic wastes (crop, animal and farm wastes, aquatic wastes) and other biological materials along with beneficial microbes (bio-fertilizers) to release nutrients to crops for increased sustainable production in an eco-friendly pollution free environment.

Organic farming systems have attracted increasing attention over the last one decade because they are perceived to offer some solutions to the problems currently besetting the agricultural sector. Organic farming has the potential to provide benefits in terms of environmental protection, conservation of non-renewable resources and improved food quality.

Concept of Organic Farming :

As per the definition of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) study team on organic farming “organic farming is a system which avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetic inputs (such as fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, feed additives etc.) and to the maximum extent feasible rely upon crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, off-farm organic waste, mineral grade rock additives and biological system of nutrient mobilization and plant protection (OFPA, 2010).

“Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system which promotes and enhances agro- ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It emphasizes the use of management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs, taking into account that regional conditions require locally adapted systems. This is accomplished by using, where possible, agronomic, biological, and mechanical methods, as opposed of using synthetic materials, to fulfil any specific function within the system (FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, 1999).

Organic farming has a long way of life and a tradition in our Indian farming system over centuries, it's not a new concept. Organic farming has its own system in controlling pest and diseases in raising the crop and livestock, by avoiding the use of different synthetic chemicals or gene manipulation. There are different types of organic farming are followed in a diverse climate of the country, like forest produce by default fall under this category. Organic farming among all different kind of farming system is gaining more attention due to the positive effect on the ecosystem. Also, organic farming is labour intensive, this increases rural employment and long-term improvement in the quality of the resources.

Need of organic farming :

Food quality and safety are two vital factors that have attained constant attention in common people. Growing environmental awareness and several food hazards (e.g. dioxins, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, and bacterial contamination) have substantially decreased the consumer's trust towards food quality in the last decades. Intensive conventional farming can add contamination to the food chain. For these reasons, consumers are quested for safer and better foods that are produced through more ecologically and authentically by local systems. Organically grown food and food products are believed to meet these demands (Rembialkowska, 2007).

With the increase in population our compulsion would be not only to stabilize agricultural production but to increase it further in sustainable manner. The scientists have realized that the 'Green Revolution' with high input use has reached a plateau and is now sustained with diminishing return of falling dividends. Thus, a natural balance needs to be maintained at all cost for existence of life and property. The obvious choice for that would be more relevant in the present era, when these

agrochemicals which are produced from fossil fuel and are not renewable and are diminishing in availability. It may also cost heavily on our foreign exchange in future.

Principles of organic farming :

The four principles of organic farming are as follows:

1. Principle of health: Health is the wholeness and integrity of living systems i.e. maintenance of physical, mental, social and ecological well-being. Organic Farming should sustain and improve the quality of the health of soils, plants, animals and humans. This principle points out that, healthy soil produces healthy crops that nurture the health of animals and people. In particular, organic farming is required to produce high quality, nutritious food that enhances health and well-being. To achieve this, organic farming should avoid the use of fertilizers, pesticides, animal drugs and food additives that may have adverse health effects.

2. Principle of ecology: Organic farming should be based on the ecological system and cycles, working with them in a sustained manner, i.e. organic farming should root up with ecological systems within a specific production environment. For example, crops with living soil; animals in its farm ecosystem; fish and marine organisms with the aquatic environment, etc. Organic farming has to attain ecological balance through a well-designed farming system, by the establishment of habitats and maintenance of genetic and agricultural diversity. Those who produce, process, trade, or consume organic products should protect and benefit the environment including landscapes, climate, habitats, biodiversity, air and water.

3. Principle of fairness: Fairness is nothing but equity, respect, justice and supervising of the common world, both among people and their relationship with other living beings. Similarly, organic farming should ensure fairness with the environment, life and all level of practices. It should also contribute food sovereignty, reduce poverty and also reduce social cost.

4. Principle of care: Organic farming should be done in a responsible manner and with precautionary care to protect the health and well-being of present, future generation and the environment. Organic farming should be able to prevent significant risks by adopting appropriate technologies and rejecting unpredictable ones, such as genetic engineering. Decisions taken should reflect the values and needs of all who might be affected, through transparent and participatory processes.

Present status of organic farming :

Presently, India ranks 9th in terms of the world's organic agricultural land and 1st in terms of the total number of producers (IFOAM, 2019). India is the home for 30 percent of the total organic producers in the world, accounting 2.59 percent i.e. 1.5 million hectares of the total (57.8 million hectares) organic cultivation area (World of Organic Agriculture 2018 report). But also, most of our

organic farmers are struggling due to poor policy measure, inadequate knowledge, increasing input cost and lack of market knowledge (ASSOCHAM report, 2018).

Organic Farm Production :

The total organic farm production in India is presented in table 3. It can be noted from table 3 that the farm production constitutes 99.20 per cent of total organic production in India. The wild harvest production is 27808.36 MT, which constitutes 80 per cent of total production.

Table: Production of Organic Agriculture in 2020-21- 2023-24

Farm Production	3468991.98 MT
Wild Harvest Production	27808.36 MT
Total Production	3496800.34 MT

Source: Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

Conclusion :

Organic farming is a part of Indian culture that values conservation of nature and life on earth as the ultimate philosophy. The popularity of organic food is growing dramatically as consumer seeks the organic foods that are thought to be healthier and safer. It is a new venue for export earnings, but the export potential is a short-term reward; restoration of environmental health is the long-term reward, which will influence all aspects of life of the people. Moreover, the organic produce market is now the fastest growing market all over the world including India. Therefore, action plans for developing organic farming should be part of a larger plan for nature conservation and health of the community and the land, and should be relevant to the social, economic and cultural ethos of Kerala. Organic Food Industry has been blossoming in India; it has to be recognized as a separate industry. Both the Government and private players need to develop a strong policy to benefit producers, processor and consumers as a whole. There is an immense potential and scope for organic farming to grow in India if fed with steady investment and benefits on both existing and new initiatives.

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