

THE TIME FOR INDG.A.P. IS NOW

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According to recent research by Aditi Organic Certifications, over 92% are aware of organic products mainly in the category of fresh fruits & vegetables. Over 57% stated inability to identify genuine organic products for their decision not to go for organic. When people buy “organic products” there is a need to check whether the producers have followed Good Agricultural Practices or not. To address this concern, the Quality Council of India (QCI) has introduced a voluntary certification program called IndG.A.P.

Organic farming with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) can be optimised to achieve particular goals. Profitability is usually an important goal, since without profit you can't keep farming. Integration of IndG.A.P. with organic farming can help to prevent certain environmental problems. Introduction of IndG.A.P. to small and marginal farmers can prevent on-farm contamination of fruits and vegetables. GAPs are a new way of thinking about food safety. Good agriculture practices are also used to maximize the farm produce in different ways and quality production. Farmers can do self-assessment and learn about potential food safety hazards that can occur on the farm or orchard and take preventative steps to avoid contamination with harmful microbes and chemical residues. IndG.A.P. certification may protect your business. They not only prevent the public from illness, but they also protect your farm business from the economic consequences of food contamination

WHAT IS INDG.A.P.?

IndG.A.P is a voluntary certification scheme developed to certify Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) in India. The scheme is to promote sustainable agriculture to bring in culture of food safety, enhanced produce quality, optimization of human and natural resources by our agrarians. This will result in better price realization of their produce and thereby secure and strengthen livelihoods of the small and marginal farmers.

Following general modules are developed under IndG.A.P.

1. a) All farm base module
2. Crop base module includes – Fresh Fruits & Vegetables, Combinable Crops, Tea, Green Coffee and Spices
3. Agro Biodiversity module

The main components of IndG.A.P Standards are

- Soil amendments & soil fertility management including INM
- Planting Material including seeds and vegetative propagation materials
- Water management
- Pest & disease management including IPM
- Worker's health and safety
- Harvesting Practices and maintenance of good sanitary as well as hygienic condition at field to final packing stage

Organic farming and IndG.A.P. certified products must be marketed to ensure the consumers are getting products, which are grown with the least risk of cross-contamination from any of the possible contaminants. When it comes to the production of fresh fruits & vegetables, assessment of farms with IndG.A.P. certification criteria helps the farmers to guarantee consumers the efforts taken to get the farm IndG.A.P. certified and get a better price for the farm products. According to the same study, over 60% of consumers buy organic products on daily or weekly basis. This could be beneficial to farmers if they can convince the end consumers about the quality and authenticity of their produce.

IndG.A.P. certified products must be grown for local consumption to reduce food-borne ailments. People think anything green, fresh is organic and farmers do not see the need for certification if it is just for local consumption. Our studies show that over 54% of consumers do not know the difference between “organic” & “natural”. Do we not care about the requirement of such certification by a third party to ensure that what we consume as organic is authentic and chemical-free? The local consumer must increase the consumption of certified products and pay a better price. This will encourage the local farmers to embrace such certification while following good agriculture practices.



WHY SHOULD WE INSIST ON BUYING ORGANIC/INDG.A.P. CERTIFIED PRODUCTS ONLY?

This will secure and strengthen livelihoods of the small & marginal farmers. The certification process helps to define measurable improvement in terms of increased productivity, quality of the produce and income level. If the product is certified, buyers have to simply order such health products by looking at the IndG.A.P. logo as the produce and certification process ensure on all quality aspects which the buyers are looking for.

In the case of small and marginal landholdings, the farmers are unable to market their products directly to consumers. They may need support from a middleman or a consolidator to bring the farm produce to the consumers. IndG.A.P./Organic certification helps farmers to communicate: the value of their time spent in taking extra care of crop production, the extra money spent to maintain minimum infrastructure to mitigate the risks

of cross-contamination identified during self-assessment and external inspections. The State Governments can play a key role by supporting farmers to go for such certification to market precious produce in designated hygienic areas. Marketing such certified products in designated areas help the farmers to adopt chemical-free farming and utilize natural resources judiciously. We have recognized a small farmer who is selling INDG.A.P. certified products to small markets.

Trust factor goes a long way while buying day-to-day food items. Most of the small shopkeepers presume that if a vegetable comes from a local farmer or a traditional farm (meaning not certified), they may consider the freshness and price factor. The importance of ecological and environmental effects to the local community is considered additionally in the case of certified products.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CONSUMER?

We will talk of distance market demand, every consumer must be aware of the traceability of the product, whether it is a supermarket or retailer. The consumer must be able to track the entire journey of the product- trace back to the concerned farmer to prevent if there are any quality issues noticed by consumers. Consumers must look for a certification mark and be willing to pay a premium or reward to the farmer for helping them to have access to healthier farm produce. Here comes the role

of a third-party certification body like Aditi Organic Certifications, to verify and assure the consumers that certification is important. Certification helps the farmer to sell his farm produce for a “better” price with minimum wastage at every stage of product handling. The pandemic has taught us that in the future, what we eat will play a key role in building our immunity against microbial (bacteria/fungus/virus) based diseases. Hence, it is all the more important that we must help the farmer to

grow and market directly to consumers with certification of quality assurance.

IndG.A.P. certification also helps the legally registered farmers group to apply for certification. Only by robust planning of production, consolidation of farm produces, a group can develop a sustainable business module to and ensure regular supply of better and healthier produce to its consumers. As a consumer, one must look into these factors.

- Must interact with farmers and read about the difference between conventional produce and certified ones
- Must identify certified produces to support farmers' groups and buy from them or ask their local retailer who supports the IndG.A.P. and organic agriculture.
- Must know the difference between IndG.A.P. (Good Agricultural Practices) and Organic Farming Practices.

It is the need of the hour that consumers help drive demand for the organic/IndG.A.P. certified products from the farmers so that they are encouraged to retain their “organic/IndG.A.P. certified farm status and do not go back to traditional ways of using chemicals and pesticides indiscriminately to get only high production. Even those converted to organic farming may just grow enough organic produce for their family's consumption, if the consumers fail to recognize them. So, if we want to eat healthier produce, we must play our part in the entire exercise.

It's about time we discuss in each family our options on what to eat and where to buy from. The certified farmer knows how important to serve the consumers' nature-friendly produce. But do we know our farmer? You can choose either one. Grow your food, or identify certified farmers and pay for their farm produce better. The latter is the easier and better way to go as we believe in the collective responsibility of all stakeholders in the supply chain of Certified Organic/IndG.A.P. producers. Eat good, clean, and minimally processed food.

