

## Certification and Challenges of Organic Farming in India

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### **Introduction:**

The organic farming in India has three dimensions and is being adopted by farmers for different reasons. First category of organic farmers are those which are situated in no-input or low-input use zones, for them organic is a way of life and they are doing it as a tradition (may be under compulsion in the absence of resources needed for conventional high input intensive agriculture). Second categories of farmers are those which have recently adopted the organic in the wake of ill effects of conventional farming, may be in the form of reduced soil fertility, food toxicity or increasing cost and diminishing returns. The third category comprised of farmers and enterprises which have systematically adopted the commercial organic farming to capture emerging market opportunities and premium prices. While majority of farmers in first category are traditional (or by default) organic they are not certified, second category farmers comprised of both certified and un-certified but majority of third category farmers are certified. These are the third category commercial farmers which are attracting most attention. The entire data available on organic agriculture today, relates to these commercial organic farmers and entrepreneurs.

India has the largest number of organic producers in the world, according to the World of Organic Agriculture Report 2018 published in February. With 835,000 certified organic producers, it is home to more than 30 per cent of total number of organic producers (2.7 million) in the world. Uganda (210,352) and Mexico (210,000) are the second and third largest organic producers. However, when it comes to area under certified organic cultivation, India contributes only 2.59 per cent (1.5 million hectares) of the total area (57.8 million hectares). China has around 50 per cent and India has 30 percent of total organic cultivable land in Asia. The 19th edition of the World of Organic Agriculture report claimed that organic agriculture area, and its products value has increased. The data was collected



from 178 countries by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), the State of Sustainability Initiative (SSI), and International Trade Centre.

The Government of India (National organic programme, 2000; Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, 2015) as well as different state governments (Sikkim organic mission, Karnataka organic policy etc.) has adopted different policies to promote organic agriculture. Despite the considerable effort in organic farming, the organic sector was not flourishing up to the mark in most of the states except Sikkim which officially has been declared as organic state. As per the report of the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), the area under organic farming was increased from 0.72 million ha during 2014 to 2.29 million ha during 2019 out of 156.416 million ha arable land in the country.

### **Organic Certification:**

Certification is the procedure by which officially recognized certification bodies, provide written or equivalent assurance that foods or food control systems confirm to requirements of organic operation. All the certified organic products carry the organic labels and certification marks.

After growing the crops for 2-3 year as per the organic standard, one become eligible for applying organic certification. It is a certification process for producers of organic food and other organic agricultural products. In general, any business directly involved in food production can be certified, including seed suppliers, farmers, food processors, retailers and restaurants. Requirements vary from country to country, and generally involve a set of production standards for growing, storage, processing, packaging and shipping that include:

- Avoidance of synthetic chemical inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, antibiotics, food additives, etc) and genetically modified organisms;
- Use of farmland that has been free from chemicals for a number of years (often, three or more)
- Keeping detailed written production and sales records (audit trail)

In India, there are two accreditation systems for authorizing Certification and Inspection agencies for organic certification. National Programme on organic Production (NPOP) promoted by Ministry of Commerce is the core programme which governs and defines the standards and implementing procedures. National Accreditation Body (NAB) is the apex decision making body. Certification and Inspection agencies accredited by

NAB are authorized to undertake certification process. The NPOP notified under FTDR act and controlled by Agricultural Processed Foods Export Development Authority (APEDA) looks after the requirement of export while NPOP notified under APGMC act and controlled by Agriculture Marketing Advisor, Directorate of Marketing and Inspection looks after domestic certification.

### Why Certification?

- For Producer- Certification is a tool to provide that his product is distinct in the market.
- For Consumer- Certification is a quality assurance that the product is genuine and from a reliable source as claimed in label.

### Types of Certifications-

#### A. Third Party Certification System- Valid for export market

1. Individual Certification
2. Small Group Certification



**NPOP LOGO**

#### B. Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) - Valid for domestic market only



←PGS LOGO→



### Certification process-

- Study the organic standards, which cover in specific detail what is and is not allowed for every aspect of farming, including storage, transport and sale.



- Compliance - farm facilities and production methods must comply with the standards, which may involve modifying facilities, sourcing and changing suppliers, etc.
- Documentation - extensive paperwork is required, detailing farm history and current set-up, and usually including results of soil and water tests.
- Planning - a written annual production plan must be submitted, detailing everything from seed to sale: seed sources, field and crop locations, fertilization and pest control activities, harvest methods, storage locations, etc.
- Inspection - annual on-farm inspections are required, with a physical tour, examination of records, and an oral interview.
- Fee – A fee is to be paid by the grower to the certification body for annual surveillance and for facilitating a mark which is acceptable in the market as symbol of quality.
- Record-keeping - written, day-to-day farming and marketing records, covering all activities, must be available for inspection at any time. In addition, short-notice or surprise inspections can be made, and specific tests (e.g. soil, water, plant tissue) may be requested. For first-time farm certification, the soil must meet basic requirements of being free from use of prohibited substances (synthetic chemicals, etc) for a number of years. A conventional farm must adhere to organic standards for this period, often, three years. This is known as being in transition. Transitional crops are not considered fully organic. A farm already growing without chemicals may be certified without this delay.

#### **Challenges in organic farming:**

- Lack of proper knowledge about organic tools and practices.
- Difficulties for ensuring continuous market for organic products.
- During the conversion period (2-3 years) yield will be poor and there will not be any premium price for the products.
- High cost and difficulties for certification and inspection (especially for export).
- Poor infrastructure facilities, roads, cold storage facilities, processing facilities.
- Fragmented and unorganised management of entire value chain of organic products.
- Requirement for more labour input than conventional farms
- Low consistency in quality of produce.



- Lack of quality standards for bio manures and other inputs.
- Problems regarding the availability of organic, bio fertilizers and bio pesticides.
- Lack of financial support from government for certification, research & development etc.
- Practicability of feeding ever increasing population and its economic viability.

### **Conclusion:**

Organic farming is very much native to this land. The country is shifting its focus from chemical and fertilizer based agriculture system to organic based sustainable farming system but our farmers and extension officers are not competent enough on using diverse organic technologies and practices. The adoption of organic farming is driven by a variety of different reasons such as economic and socio-economic, structural, and institutional factors. The role of socio-psychological factors like awareness, knowledge, subjective norms, value system, cultural ethics, attitudes, perception, sustainability orientation etc. also played an important role towards adoption of organic farming. Therefore, it is highly important too narrow down the existing knowledge and skill gap on organic farming for promoting scientific rationale for adoption of organic farming among the farming communities and also create trust through certification regarding quality of the product among the producers, sellers and consumers.