

Organic Farming Certification in India

Mrinal Kumar
 Himalayan Institute of Technology, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

ARTICLE ID: 92

Introduction

Organic farming is a system which primarily aims 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 Agriculture: A Sunrise Industry In India

A country known for its wisdom in traditional agriculture, which was essentially organic in nature, is picking up fast and emerging as the hub for organic food products and its raw material. Robust mechanism for certification and accreditation has earned international recognition. India is home for largest cultivated and arable land under organic certification process and about half of the total grower in the world. In terms of policy support and



government intervention also India stands apart and is poised to have a well organized organic agriculture sector, supported with series of institution and supportive policies of central and state government.

Emergence of certification systems

With the growing demand for organic food in national and international markets, it became necessary to ensure that the agricultural products labeled as “organic” comply the basic standards of organic production and entire production process is verified by independent certification agencies. The National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) launched during 2001 was the first such quality assurance initiative by the Government of India under Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The NPOP not only provided the institutional framework for accreditation of certification agencies and operationalization of certification programme through its accredited certification bodies but also ensures that the system effectively works and is monitored on regular basis. During 2004 the NPOP was brought under the ambit of Foreign Trade Development and Regulation (FTDR) Act wherein it was mandated that no organic products can be exported unless they are certified under NPOP. To make the certification system affordable and accessible without the need for third party certification agencies a farmer group centric certification system was also launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare under PGS-India (Participatory Guarantee System for India) programme for local and domestic market.

Both the programmes (NPOP and PGS-India) are independent of each other and products certified under one system cannot be processed or labelled under another system. While NPOP certified products can be traded in export and in domestic market including imports, PGS-India certified products can be traded only in domestic market.

Labelling requirements for domestic Trade

All products labelled as organic shall be required to be certified either under NPOP or PGS-India and shall bear logo of Jaivik Bharat (FSSAI organic food logo) along with the concerned certification programme logo as follows:

Labelling of Organic logos on organic products



Certification process

In order to certify a farm, the farmer is typically required to engage in a number of new activities, in addition to normal farming operations: 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.

Detailed Steps in organic certification

- 1. Receipt of application form:** the farmer intending to get his farm organically certified must apply to the organic certification board. For example In Tamilnadu the organic certification is done by TNOCD (Tamilnadu organic certification department), in Uttarakhand it is USOCA (uttarakhand state organic certification agency). The documents required for applying are duplicate of application form, Pan card, Annual cropping pattern, Field map, General details of the farm, Soil and water analysis report, Chitta (land documents), 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.)
- 2. Scrutiny and registration of application:** the application received along with the others farm or field details are verified by the inspector if it meets the requirements then the application is forwarded for the registration. For the registration the farmer must pay a prescribed amount. Once the farm is registered it must be strictly maintained under the organic conditions only.

3. **Inspection and evaluation of the farms and documents:** annual on-farm inspections are required, with a physical tour, examination of records, and an oral interview is done. Record keeping written, day-to-day farming and marketing records maintained and will be checked, the farmers must have covered all activities like biodiversity conservation and buffer zone. The farmer must be available for inspection at any time. In addition, short-notice or surprise inspections can be done by the certification officer.
4. **Sampling of soil, water and plant products if necessary:** if the certification officers doubt that the grower has done a mal practice then he has all the right to collect the soil, water and plant sample. Analysis of plant and soil sample will be done and if the results indicate the presence of any chemicals or toxic substance then their certificate will be taken back.
5. **Issue of certificate to eligible organic farms:** if the grower has maintained his farm purely under organic condition then a certificate will be given to him assuring others that he is an organic grower. The certificate is online generated, and it takes around six months from date of application.

Organic standards

1. **Conversion period** it is the time required for the conversion of inorganic field to completely organic field. Its two years for annuls and three years for perennials.
2. **Buffer zone:** Area of three-meter square must be left in border of field to separate the organic field from inorganic field. If the organic field is in low regions, then there must be a drench dug to avoid entry of polluted water in the form of runoff to organic field. One per cent of area must be covered under the trees to protect the biodiversity and the farm must have a live fencing.
3. **Selection of crop and variety:-** the crop must be suitable to the area and season. The seeds used must be organic if such seeds are not available then the farmers can use the commercial seed in the first year and from the consequent year he must use the seeds that are produced in his farm.
4. The crops grown must be divers as it avoids loss to grower.



5. Only biodegradable material of microbial, plant or animal origin should be used, minimize nutrient loss is needed and accumulation of heavy metals and other pollutants must be prevented.
6. Origin farm must encourage the soil and water conservation.
7. Weeds should not be controlled chemical method.
8. No use of synthetic growth regulators.

Registration can be done by

1. **Individual farmers:-**the farmer willing to register a field under organic must be a legal owner of the land and there no limit of area for certification.
2. **Group: -** all the members of the group must be within the revenue district and no restriction on the area for certification but numbers of farmers with more than 10 ac of land should be less than 50 per cent of total area of group.
3. **Corporate bodies:-**group of farmers can come together and register as a corporate body. They can produce organically, process and sell but there should be an office setup to monitor the activities.