



Organic Farming: Farming for a Better Future

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INTRODUCTION

Organic farming is one of the several approaches found to meet the objectives of sustainable agriculture. Organic agriculture offers trade opportunities for farmers in the developing and developed countries. This market of organic products is expected to grow globally in the coming years and high growth rates over the medium term (from 10-15 to 25-30%) are expected. This organic market expansion makes it possible for farmers to reap the benefits of a trade with relatively high price premiums. Furthermore, information about it is not readily available to farmers in the developing countries. The absence of sufficient technical and market information and financial support also means that few farmers will risk changing their method of production. In developing countries it is therefore essential for major key players (e.g. NGOs, farmer organizations, traders, exporters etc.) that promote organic farming to have up-to-date information on the available opportunities (market requirements) and trends of the organic market. One example is India, a country with a huge number of small farmers who still use traditional methods and do farming with few agricultural inputs. NGOs that promote organic farming and other organizations support farmers in these aspects. Niche markets have gradually been created, commonly based on trust and goodwill (formal certification did not begin until the 1960s and 1970s), and often using novel direct marketing strategies such as box schemes and community supported agriculture. After many years of consumers having to hunt around for their organic produce from several suppliers, perhaps directly from the farmer, the task is now a lot easier with specialist food shops and organic shelf space in supermarkets, in the industrialized world at least.

Global links have been forged in all continents as organic agriculture has been seen to be an effective rural development option. Although the movement is still regarded with some skepticism.

Significance of organic agriculture for Indian farmers :

In the Indian context, Organic farming can be significant in two distinct ways:

1. To increase the efficiency and sustainability of production: Organic farming can help to reduce production costs (especially where labor is cheap compared to input costs) and to increase or stabilize yields on marginal soils. This is especially relevant for small holders in marginal areas where Green Revolution agriculture has led to a depletion of soil fertility and to high debts because of increase in input costs.
2. To increase product value: In areas where farmers have access to established organic markets within the country or abroad, products can achieve a higher price compared to the conventional market. Especially in the trend of decreasing prices for agricultural products, this can be an important way to stabilize or even increase incomes.

INDIAN DOMESTIC MARKET AND EXPORT:

Organic Food Consumption in India is on the Rise. Some people believe that organic food is only a “concept” popular in the developed countries. They think that when it comes to organic food, India only exports organic food and very little is consumed. However, this is not true. Though 50% of the organic food production in India is targeted towards exports, there are many who look towards organic food for domestic consumption. The most important reason for buying organic food is the concern for the health of children, with over 66 percent parents preferring organic

food to non-organic food. Though organic food is priced over 25 percent more than conventional food in India, many parents are willing to pay this higher premium due to the perceived health benefits of organic food. The increase in organic food consumption in India is evident from the fact that many organic food stores are spurring up in India. Today every supermarket has an organic food store and every large city in India has numerous organic food stores and restaurants.

Organic food exports from India are increasing with more farmers shifting to organic farming. With the domestic consumption being low, the prime market for Indian organic food industry lies in the US and Europe. India has now become a leading supplier of organic herbs, organic spices, organic basmati rice, etc. The increasing demand for organic food products in the developed countries and the extensive support by the Indian government coupled with its focus on agri-exports are the drivers for the Indian organic food industry. Organic food products in India are priced about 20-30% higher than non-organic food products. This is a very high premium for most of the Indian population where the per capita income is merely USD 800. The domestic market is not sufficient to consume the entire organic food produced in the country. As a result, exports of organic food is the prime aim of organic farmers as well as the government.

Demand for Indian organic products in the domestic and export markets:

The domestic market for organic products is as yet not as developed as the export market. The products available in the domestic market in organic quality are rice, wheat, cotton, tea, coffee, pulses, fruits and vegetables. Wholesalers / traders and supermarkets play major roles in the distribution of organic products. As most organic production originates from small farmers, wholesalers / traders account for a 60% share in the distribution of organic products. Large organized producers distribute their products through supermarkets as well as through self-

owned stalls. Considering the profile of existing consumers of organic products, supermarkets and restaurants are the major marketing channels for organic products. Major markets for organic products lie in metropolitan cities –Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad to name a few. According to the interview results, domestic sales of organic products are barely 7.5% of the organic production.

Export market and trends:

Indian organic producers and exporters are well aware of the demand for organic products in developed countries.

Since 2002-03, organic products exports have increased by 80 times from \$13 million to \$1.04 billion.

“Between 2016-17 and 2018-19, organic products exports increased by 25 per cent, 40 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively.

Apeda functions as the secretariat for the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) that is implemented under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce. major reason for organic products exports' rapid growth is because India has been able to demonstrate that it can meet the necessary compliance at each level of handling of the product and consistent supply, while contributing to the ecosystem's sustainability.

A feature of Indian organic products exports is that the US and European Union (EU) are among the major markets. “During **2020-21**, our organic products were shipped to 58 countries with major ones being the US, EU, UK, Canada and Switzerland. Exports are currently limited to raw and processed agricultural products comprising oilmeals, oilseeds, cereals, millets, sugar, fruit pulps, purees, plantation crops, spices and medicinal plants.

Unique advantage:

In the organic products sector, India enjoys a unique advantage of having a wide-range of climatic and geographical conditions. It has regions that are most suitable for growing various kinds of field and horticultural crops

According to agricultural experts, the need for an alternative such as organic products arose since the green revolution had led to indiscriminate use of chemicals in pesticides and fertilisers. Organic farming not only sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and the people but it combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit all stakeholders. Though organic farming principles are being followed and practised in many parts of the country, the absence of certification prevented them from being labelled as organic product.

Institutional mechanism:

With demand rising for certified products in developed nations, the Indian government developed an institutional mechanism, the NPOP, under the Foreign Trade Development Regulations Act of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade. The adoption of an organised system through NPOP is verified through a third party and such products fetch a premium in the global market. This was mainly in the plantation sector where in product handlers were defined to ensure the source of raw material. However, as demand increased for other products also in overseas markets, certification has expanded to other agricultural crops and products".

A REVOLUTION !

The NPOP has developed over the years, and it now encompasses small and marginal farmers under the certification system. **A grower group certification** has been introduced that helps a group of farmers to collectively get certification at an affordable price. It will help them supply ample quantities of certified products. A revolution has taken place in Indian organic farming as certification of cultivable land has expanded to 34 States and Union Territories. Under NPOP, 1.36 million farmers are certified, making India the country with the largest number of producers in the world, addition, minor forest produces such as medicinal plants, products like stem, flower, bark, root, bud and fruit are also certified “as organic provided the collection

from the forest area is done without affecting the sustainability”. Export of minor forest produces caters the demands of ayurvedic, pharmacological and cosmetic industries.

There was one challenge that Apeda had to meet in organic products exports. As the area under certification increased as also the products shipped from the country, the authority had to ensure that each consignment could be traced back to the farm

Thus, the application of technology was brought into the certification as a tag and also a web-based traceability system, **Tracenet**, was launched to help track the movement of any organic product from one place to another. India is the pioneer in developing such a traceability system for organic products in the world.”

Currently, efforts are on to expand the product categories for organic livestock, poultry, aquaculture and apiculture. There is also demand for organic animal feed in the organic livestock and poultry rearing sector, he said, adding that all these have been brought under NPOP.

CONCLUSION

Organic farming has attracted considerable attention from those who see it as a panacea to those who see it as ideological nonsense. A more humble responsibility for the organic movement may be to serve as role model for a farming system in which values other than

financial are cultivated. Organic farming asks how we ought to relate to each other and our natural environment. The values of the organic movement are not esoteric, but are based on observation and common sense: treat livestock well, use resources sparingly, use the least harmful method, nature is inherently valuable and so on. Food security depends upon personal relationships of integrity and trust among farmers, farm workers, suppliers, consumers and others up and down the agricultural supply chain and integrity and trust have been fundamental to organic agriculture’s success. Organic farming has emerged as one of the best known alternative farming systems developed in response to the short comings of mainstream agriculture.

- The Indian Organic markets is at GROWTH
- India can take advantages of growing opportunities in Organic sector. Making use of varied agro climatic condition and traditional Organic resource and Farming practice.
- The major challenges in market of Organic product are quality and safety standards, certification and supply chain linkages
- India is a potential one of the largest producer of Organic produced. But there urgent need to overcome the challenges of markets and take the advantages of emerging opportunities.