

## **Issues and Challenges Faced By Organic Farming with Special Reference to Certified Organic Inputs in Maharashtra**

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### **Abstract:**

The Government's agricultural policy seeks to enable technically sound, economically viable and socially acceptable use of natural resources for organic agriculture. The policy will bring potential area for organic farming, sustainability in soil water conservation, strengthening rural economy and bringing value addition to organic produce through fair pricing and organized marketing system. To facilitate organic farming, 12 state governments (Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim, Mizoram, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Odisha) have come out with their own State Organic Farming Policies, and Sikkim became the first state to be declared an organic state. To increase the farmer income and improve the productivity of the farms, government has initiated a systematic approach towards promotion of Organic farming. The supply of certified organic inputs is an important link in the development of sustainable farming. Most of the governments in the world are emphasizing on promotion of organic farming.

**Keywords:** Organic Farming, eco-friendly, Urbanization, Certification, APEDA, FSSAI, NPOP.

### **Introduction:**

The system of Indian agriculture, based on the traditional knowledge and practices handed down from generation to generation, could not produce enough to feed the increasing population. The disrepute of our dependence for food on the western developed nations and the politics of food aid practiced by them added to our determination to be self-sufficiency in food production by modernizing agriculture. Organic farming has several advantages over the conventional one apart from the protection of both the environment and human health. Improved soil fertility, better water quality, prevention of soil erosion, generation of rural employment, etc. are some of them. A study is necessary and hence the present study is conducted with following specific objectives.

#### **Objectives of research:**

- Awareness creation about certified organic products is recommended to improve the market for organic produce and assurance of minimum premium price for organic produce.
- Promote Governmental aid and planning for certified organic farming.

**Benefits of organic products:** The consumers are increasingly becoming aware of the food safety issues and environmental issues because of their increased concern about health, the environment's health and its global implications. The benefits of organic products are summarized below:

**a. Health:** Organic agriculture regulates how food is grown and processed. In addition to meeting the health and safety requirements of conventional food, organic food must also meet the additional safety standards of organic farming such as tougher regulations on manure use and disease control.

**b. Environment:** Organic farming primarily focuses on eco-friendly agriculture practices. It might not eliminate the negative environmental impacts wholly, but it can help reduce water pollution and improve the soil quality.

**c. Economics:** Certified organic foods fetch higher prices, in comparison to conventional foods as most of the organic produce is directly procured by companies thereby excluding the middlemen. The retail price of organic food is high and eventually, organic production reduces cost also. This provides farmers a good return on an organized supply chain system.

#### **Key growth drivers of organic cultivation and markets in India:**

**a. Increasing health awareness:** In recent years, there has been an increase in health concerns among Indian consumers. They have started giving importance to the nutrient content and the quality of the food they eat, thereby resulting in an increase in the consumption of organic food.

**b. Increasing support from Government of India:** The Government of India is promoting organic farming and the

consumption of organic food in the country. Financial assistance is provided to farmers who are adopting organic farming under various central sector schemes such as National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), National Food Security Mission (NFSM) and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY).

### **Challenges in the organic Sector in India:**

Some of the challenges faced by the organic sector today can be grouped into three heads:

#### **a. Producer-level challenges:**

- **Certification process:** Issues like high certification costs, lengthy procedures, international validity, inadequate certifying agencies and inadequate supporting infrastructure facilities for verification are rampant in the certification process for pursuing organic farming. It is expensive for many small groups of farmers or individual farmers.

- **Certification standards:** There is also a gap in the understanding of the certification standards and labelling requirements.

- **Lack of standardization for the certification of different commodities:** Dairy products have a different standard while meat has a different standard. The process of standardization of organic coconut will be different from that of the value-added products of coconut. Therefore, a company having multiple commodities needs to obtain multiple certifications and maintain multiple records as per the applicable standards.

- **Lack of incentives for farmers:** The transition from conventional to organic farming is accompanied by high input costs and low yields in the initial years. The cost of going completely organic is quite high, due to the high cost of organic manure. The commercially available bio-manure products may not be completely organic, and therefore the products sometimes get disqualified at the certification stage.

#### **b. Processor-level challenges:**

- **Supply chain issues:** Many farmers are apprehensive of organic farming since it involves high production costs. The emphasis on collection, transportation and storage of fresh organic produce is very high. Due to relatively low volumes, the marketing and distribution chain of organic food products is relatively inefficient and the costs involved are very high.

- **Lack of proper branding and packaging:** Promotion and sale of organic products require separate packing material that is natural and requires distinctive branding that distinguishes organic from conventional products. At present, there is an absence of regulations on labelling standards. There is also lack of standards and clarifications regarding labelling and certification requirements for the domestic market and import market leading to malpractices such as mixing organic with conventional produce. The Indian certification agency plays an important role in branding. Since it requires financial assistance, the Government and private sector should come to a common understanding of organized export, brand development, and promotion with incentives from the Government.

#### **c. Consumer-level challenges**

- **Lack of awareness among consumers:** Many consumers in India are still unaware of the health benefits of organic food products. The situation is worse in non-metro cities where consumers do not know the difference between conventional farming and organic farming. They are buying products labelled as natural assuming them to be organic.

- **The high cost of organic food products:** The cost of organic food products in India is currently higher than that of conventional food items. Specialized farmer training cost, processing and inventory holding cost (without chemical additives), and increased packaging, logistics, and distribution cost (due to low volumes), contribute to the high price of organic food products.

#### **Regulatory environment and government initiatives to address some of the challenges and increase competitiveness in the organic Sector:**

- a. Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) for implementing the National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP)

- b. National Centre for Organic Farming (NCOF) for implementing the Participatory Guarantee System in India

- c. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) for regulation of food safety standards of organic packaged food and beverages products.

### **Solutions for improving the logistics and awareness of genuine organic products.:**

- Adequate research and extension support needs to be provided for improving the region -specific farming techniques and disseminating the findings for conversion and management of organic farms in farming-system mode.
- Central and state governments should acknowledge organic agriculture as an effective mechanism to reduce greenhouse gases and sequester soil carbon.
- The governments should recognize organic agriculture in Kyoto-Protocol carbon - credit mechanisms.
- Organic market development sector needs major thrust on development of supply chains and related infrastructure to ensure competitive price of organic produce to the grower in domestic and international markets.
- Government support is required for cheaper access to organic certification of farms.
- Consumer awareness programs through consumer awareness initiatives on organic labelling from the government like jago grahak jago need to be undertaken for a healthier country.

### **Conclusion:**

Year on year the cost as well as dependency of the farmers on these external inputs kept on rising. Even the pharmaceutical and cosmetic companies that consume agricultural produce or derivatives in their products are now increasingly demanding residue analysis and the farm practices being followed that are tougher than the government regulations. The conventional farming practices are using non-renewable resources and the chemicals are polluting and destroying the ecosystem. Most of the followers of conventional farming practices also accept the point that conventional farming is causing heavy harm to the land and human health. The main point they promote to justify conventional farming was its high produce. I will end the report on a note saying “We are what we eat, Food itself should be the medicine”

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