

Chapter 21

Organic Farming: Growth and Issues

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ABSTRACT

India practised organic farming in early centuries but Green revolution lead to shift of farming to fertilizer based farming. So, in this chapter the focus is to elucidate the idea of organic farming and its growth over the years across the countries with focus on India. Organic farming is a type of farming method where the crops are sowed and raised by using organic wastes instead of the regular use of pesticides and insecticides. This method has been quickly accepted and adopted by most of the countries across the world with the number being 144 in the year 2010 with major percentage being practised in developing nations. Out of this, India has just about 0.03 percent of the total land under organic farming across the world. India has witnessed a significant growth in organic farming since the last few years, keeping in sync with the world market.

INTRODUCTION

Organic Farming is based on various principles. The primary principle states that nature is the best role model for farming, as it neither uses any inputs nor demands unreasonable quantities of water. The entire system of organic farming is thus, based on an intimate understanding of the ways of nature. The system discourages the mining of soil for nutrients, and its degradation keeping in mind today's needs is avoided extensively. This leads to the soil being considered as a living entity, rather than as a necessary material.

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Organic Farming

Microbes and other living organisms, which make the living population of soil, are important contributors to its fertility, on both strength and sustainability basis. These organisms need to be protected and nurtured for the long term sustainability of soil and farming in itself (Yadav, 2011). The protection of the total environment of the soil, right from its structure to its cover, is important. This in principle leads to the system of farming termed as organic farming (“The world of Organic Agriculture in India”, n.d.).

In today’s terminology, organic farming is a method of farming system which primarily aims at cultivating the land and raising crops in such a way, as to restore and rejuvenate the soil by primarily using organic wastes (crop, animal and farm wastes, aquatic wastes) and other biological materials along with beneficial microbes (bio-fertilizers) for a sustainable production in an eco-friendly pollution free environment with the release of the nutrients.

India has its roots based in organic farming. In the earlier days, India was primarily an organic based farming nation, but later on due to the problems of population boom and scarcity of the food it had to shift to synthetic fertilizer based farming. With the current wave of rising awareness to preserve environment and food quality consumer, both the farmers and government are shifting towards organic food and farming (“Organic Farming an Overview”, n.d.).

Few of the major advantages that organic food has over the normally produced food are listed as follows -

1. Organic food is less toxic as compared to normally produced food.
2. Taste giving ingredients like fat, carbohydrates, etc. are found to be higher in quantity in organic food.
3. Organic food is comparatively much less adulterated and mainly available in pure form.
4. Organic food is found to be superior in nutrients than normally produced ones.

Organic farming is primarily growing crops with the help of bio fertilizers and organic waste to keep the soil nutrients intact. The present scenario in India is one in which the government is providing aid to the farmers to produce organic food (“The world of Organic Agriculture in India”, n.d.). The farmers are also reciprocating by showing interest towards it. But, contrary to popular perception, there are three main reasons for farmers to shift to the organic farming –

1. A sector of farmers does not have access to the normal farming resources like fertilizers and seeds and shifted towards organic farming.
2. Reduction in soil fertility and food toxicity due to excessive use of the fertilizers and also increasing cost of production and loans has shifted another sector towards it.
3. Increasing growth opportunity and high revenue margins in organic farming is a primary contributor towards farmers adopting it.

India has almost 1 million hectare land under organic farming and 340000 organic producers and is one of major contributor in organic food. But, still there are some areas which need to be developed and worked upon to promote awareness about organic products among consumers and farmers.

The purpose of this research is to study the problems and constraints faced by Organic farming. These problems are analysed both from the perspective of operational issues and also government policies. The research studies the growth of Organic farming and then goes onto look into the constraints, followed by measures that can be taken up by all stakeholders for its growth.

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