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Organic Farming in The Context of Food Quality, Climate Change and Sustainable Agriculture

Dinesh Kumar and Y.S. Shivay

During the past few decades, agricultural development focused mainly on short-term gains in crop productivity, which has been primarily based on external inputs resulting in neglect and improper use of locally available resources. It has resulted in a serious damage to the soil health and environment. Further, the income from conventional farming is declining or stagnant under most of the farming situations. These changes ask for a shift in farming practices. Organic farming of selected commodities appears to be a good alternative in certain farming conditions. In organic farming, bio-physical production factors are intimately related to socio-economic and institutional factors. **Organic farming** may help to improve and sustain the productivity and quality of farm produce besides protecting the soils and the environment.

The concept of organic farming is not new to India as it has existed here before the introduction of modern methods of farming. It is actually based on the minimal use of off-farm resources (inputs) and on management practices that restore, maintain and enhance ecological harmony. The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) has defined it as a **production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people**. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. According to the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) of India "Organic products are grown under a system of agriculture without the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides with an environmentally and socially responsible approach. This is a method of farming that works at grass root level preserving the reproductive and regenerative capacity of the soil, good plant nutrition, and sound soil management, produces nutritious food rich in vitality which has resistance to diseases."

Current scenario of organic farming in India

At present, organic farming is practiced in 162 countries and 37 million hectares of agricultural land are managed organically by 1.8 million farmers. The current market for organic foods in India is pegged at Rs.2500 crore, which according to ASSOCHAM, is expected to reach Rs.6,000 crore by 2015. Thus, a huge potential is seen in the nascent Indian organic sector. Organic products, which until now were mainly being exported, are now finding consumers in the domestic market also. The current status (data) of organic farming in India is given in Table 1.

A great diversity of climatic conditions exists in India, which may help in producing all varieties of organic products. In some parts of the country, the inherited tradition of organic farming seems to be an added advantage. Currently, India ranks 10th among the top ten countries in terms of cultivable land under organic certification. The Government of India has implemented the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP). This programme involves the accreditation of certification bodies, standards for organic production, promotion of organic farming etc. Among all the States of India, Madhya Pradesh has covered largest area under organic certification followed by Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The other important states are Uttaranchal, Kerala and many north-eastern states.

The North Eastern (NE) Region of India has tremendous potential for development of organic farming. With a growing global demand for organic food, people living in the NE states can reap rich dividends from development of commercial organic farming. To facilitate commercial organic farming in NE states, The Government of India has proposed in the budget to provide a sum of Rs.100 crore for this purpose in the current financial year i.e. 2014-15. The allocation of this fund will lead to the promotion of commercial organic farming in NE states and farmers will get the premium prices for their produce in the national and international market. It thus suggests that The Government of India is committed to promote organic farming in our country, which will have better impact to counteract the ill effects of climate change and natural vagaries.

Table 1. Data for organic products in India (2012-13)

Number of products exported	135
Total quantity exported	165262 M.T
Value of total export	US\$ 374 million
Total certified area (including under cultivation, forest and wild harvest)	5.21 million hectare
Organic crops/ commodities/ products produced in India	Sugarcane, Cotton, Basmati rice, Pulses, Tea, Spices, Coffee, Oil Seeds, Fruits and their value added products, organic cotton fiber, functional food products etc.
Countries importing Indian organic products	EU, US, Switzerland, Canada, South East Asian countries and South Africa.
Share of Indian organic products in export	Oil seeds - Soybean (41%) lead among the products exported followed by Cane Sugar (26%), Processed food products (14%), Basmati Rice (5%), Other cereals & millets (4%), Tea (2%), Spices (1%), Dry fruits (1%) and others.

Source: <http://www.apeda.gov.in>

Food quality

Organic farming helps in improvement of food quality and reduces environmental pollution. It has demonstrated its ability not only to produce safer commodities for consumers but also to produce biodiversity at all levels. The organically produced food items are better in quality aspects as compared to that produced by synthetic chemicals. They are good in taste, flavour, essential nutrients etc. and at the same time, they are free from harmful or toxic chemicals. Several scientific reports confirm that pesticide residues are much less or negligible in organic food than in conventionally grown food.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India under the Union Agriculture Ministry in its recent study indicated that common food items contained even banned pesticides in quantities more than the permissible limits. The findings are based on random samples

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JOB HIGHLIGHTS

SBI

- State Bank of India, Mumbai requires 2986 Probationary Officers (Pg 6-8)
Last Date : 18.09.2014

HIGH COURT

- High Court of Judicature at Allahabad requires 1060 (Approximately) Tube well Operator-cum Electrician (Category-D), Process Server (Category-D), Orderly/Peon/Office Peon, Farrash (Category-D) etc. (Pg 27)
Last Date : 12.09.2014

IOCL

- Indian Oil Corporation Limited requires 226 Junior Engineering Assistants-IV. (Pg 37)
Last Date : 16.09.2014

Turn over the pages for other vacancies in Banks, Armed Forces, Railways, PSUs and other Govt. Deptts

WEB EXCLUSIVES

Following item is available in the Web Exclusives section on www.employmentnews.gov.in :
● Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana : A Step towards 'Sab ka Sath Sab ka Vikas'
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Wellness Industry of India: Career Prospects

Dr. Somya Pandit

Wellness industry comprises of various health and beauty services which any individual enjoys in any salon or center. It was previously an unorganized industry but now its contribution to India's GDP is significant. According to a study jointly conducted by industry body Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) and global consulting firm Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC), the wellness industry in India is poised to touch Rs 1,00,000 crore (Rs 1 trillion) by 2015, with a compounded annual growth rate of 15-17%, from about Rs 70,000 crore in 2012. Of the entire wellness industry, beauty care would continue to dominate with almost 50% (about Rs 49,000 crore), followed by alternate therapy (about Rs 21,000 crore) and health and wellness food and beverages at about Rs 27,000 crore, according to the study. The size of the beauty care industry is estimated at Rs 29,000 crore in 2012 estimate, while fitness and slimming market was estimated at Rs 60,000 crore in 2012. About 60% of the market is dominated by products. The industry is expected to witness a increase in health and beauty clubs in

form of franchises in tier one and two cities of India. Research shows that between 1995 and 2005, household spending on personal care products doubled from 4% of total income to 8%. The figure is expected to grow to 11% by 2025. India is becoming a global center for Ayurvedic treatments & yoga. Herbal cosmetics sector gaining its strength in Indian wellness industry and is expected to grow at a rate of 7% as more people are shun chemical products in favor of organic ones. Consumption of nutraceuticals in form of health drinks; slimming teas, dietary supplements etc. have also multiplied many folds. This segment itself is expected to be around USD 3212.6 million by 2016. The global Wellness Tourism segment is estimated to grow nearly 50 per cent faster than global tourism by 2017, and a significant contribution will be from Asia, states a recent study by SRI International. With the evolution of more organized units there are now many institutes all over India which provide specific knowledge in terms of training, education in the field of wellness. Some of the institutes like The Mantra Institute of Health and

Fitness Management, Orient Spa Academy, Anand Spa institute, NSHMUdaan Skills Foundation etc. offer programs and courses of international standards. India also hosts various summits, conferences, awards (eg:- Global Indian Beauty Expo 2014). The wellness industry of India is filled with lucrative opportunities and growth potentials. The plethora of services within this industry caters to every individual. Wellness services in India are projected to generate more than three million jobs by 2015. There is need for skill development, training centers, accredited and certified courses, consistency in quality of products and services. The initial investment to open such units is not huge and one does not need a lot of man power at a very initial stage. The payback period of the industry is comparatively smaller and is not easily affected by economic fluctuations. A lot of competition with respect to price of services, types of services, packages, ambience and public relations etc are faced by the entrepreneurs. (The Author is teaches in Shri Ramswaroop Memorial Group of Professional Colleges (SRMGPC), Lucknow
email: somyapandit21@gmail.com)