



Nurturing Nature: The Dynamics of Organic Farming in India

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In the vast expanse of India, over 60% of available land adheres to traditional agriculture methods, avoiding synthetic inputs. Although not officially classified as organic, these products are inherently genuine organic produce. Despite the initiation of the organic movement a decade ago, it hasn't gained the anticipated momentum due to various ambiguities. Organic farming is commonly perceived as the cessation of synthetic inputs, replacing them with organic alternatives—using organic manures and natural plant protection methods instead of conventional fertilizers and pesticides. Unfortunately, lack of awareness often steers farmers towards synthetic alternatives, unaware of the potential health risks to consumers.

Current Landscape of Organic Farming in India

India boasts a rich history of organic farming, contributing significantly to the global organic food producers. However, the extent of organic food cultivation in India, covering only 2.59% or 1.5 million hectares of the global organic cultivation area of 57.8 million hectares, portrays a relatively small market. States like Sikkim have pioneered the shift to entirely organic cultivation, albeit in an unorganized manner. Estimates indicate that India's organic agriculture is growing at an impressive rate of 25% annually.

The Relevance of Organic Farming in a Post-COVID-19 World

In the era of COVID-19, health professionals emphasize the consumption of healthy vegetables and fruits to bolster the immune system. This has triggered an unprecedented demand for organic food, known for its unambiguous origins and organic cultivation. However, a critical question emerges: Where will the surge in demand for organic food be fulfilled? The post-COVID-19 world might witness a remarkable transformation, making health-conscious choices more crucial. The demand for organic, especially vegan and vegetarian food, is likely to skyrocket globally as humanity reevaluates its relationship with nature.

Sustainable Organic Farming: A Prerequisite for a Healthier Future

Ecologically and economically sustainable organic farming becomes imperative for broader adaptability, secure livelihoods, affordability, and consumer satisfaction. While India has a rich organic farming history, the expansion of domestic organic food markets can spearhead the organic movement. Large-scale organic conversion necessitates awareness programs for both consumers and farmers. Innovative organic farming technologies play a crucial role in popularizing the practice, even among resource-poor farmers, ensuring sustainable crop production.

Renowned agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan's insight, "The wars of the future will be won by those with food, and not by those with guns," gains significance in the current

context. The democratic upheaval caused by the coronavirus underscores the power embedded in the availability of food resources.

Exploring Inhana Rational Farming (IRF) Technology: A Beacon in Organic Farming

In the backdrop of declining crop yields and the perils of chemical farming, an Indian organic farming practice called Inhana Rational Farming (IRF) Technology has demonstrated promising results. This approach aligns with the principles of organic farming, emphasizing a closed system, long-term soil fertility, avoidance of pollution, and production of high-quality, nutritionally rich food. IRF Technology stands as a testament to the relevance of organic farming in the contemporary agricultural landscape.

Debating Issues in Organic Farming

1. **Feeding the World:** The role of organic agriculture in food security sparks debate, considering productivity losses and increased production costs. While theoretically sound, large-scale economically sustainable organic production faces technological challenges.
2. **Pesticide Residues:** Studies indicate either no or very low levels of pesticides in organic food products. Residues often result from drift from conventional farms, emphasizing the safety of organic products.
3. **Taste Quality:** High yields in conventional farming may compromise the nutritional and organoleptic quality of food. The debate centers on the vitality and taste of organic products compared to conventionally grown ones.
4. **Food Poisoning Risk:** Organic cultivation, relying on higher manure use, raises concerns about contamination. Scientific consensus suggests no increased risk of food poisoning or bacterial infection through organic products.
5. **Nutritional Superiority:** Scientific debate surrounds the nutritional quality of organic versus conventionally grown food. Trends indicate potential superiority of organic products in terms of nutrients.
6. **Environmental Benefits:** Organic farming demonstrates significant environmental benefits, outperforming conventional systems in various environmental impacts. Minimizing pesticide and heavy metal residues in the food chain is a crucial advantage.
7. **Economic Feasibility:** While in theory, organic farming reduces variable input costs, challenges like the outsourcing of organic inputs, inefficient pest control, and production losses increase costs. Technological advances are essential to cut down production costs.

Suggestions and Recommendations

1. **Awareness Campaigns:** Farmers should be educated with scientific information about organic agriculture.
2. **Government Support:** Governments should provide subsidies for organic produce and offer easy credit with lower interest rates.
3. **Fair Pricing:** Higher prices for organic produce should be determined by the government to incentivize farmers.
4. **Research Promotion:** Agriculture universities should encourage research in the field of organic farming.
5. **Workshops and Seminars:** Government bodies, NGOs, and extension workers should organize various workshops, seminars, and conferences for farmers.
6. **Private Investment:** Private companies should invest in projects producing organic food products free from harmful chemicals.
7. **Individual Initiatives:** Individuals should promote the use of organic produce by cultivating organic agriculture in kitchen gardens and buying available organic products.

Conclusion

Organic agriculture, as a holistic food production system, promotes sustainable use of natural resources. A comprehensive approach involving all stakeholders, environmentally friendly technologies, marketing infrastructure, and financial support is essential for the promotion of organic agriculture. An environmentally sustainable system like organic agriculture is crucial for maintaining resource balance, preventing resource over-exploitation, and preserving soil quality, biodiversity, and human health.

In the words of M.S. Swaminathan, "The wars of the future will be won by those with food, and not by those with guns." The democratic upheaval caused by the coronavirus underscores the power of this statement, emphasizing the importance of embracing organic farming for a healthier and sustainable future.

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