



## From Farm to Table: Strategies for Effectively Marketing Organic Products

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The agricultural environment has changed due to the rise of organic farming and the growing demand from consumers for sustainable and health-conscious food options. In order to survive in the fiercely competitive market from farm to table, organic farmers might use the successful marketing techniques discussed in this article. Understanding target consumers, utilising digital marketing channels, interacting with local communities, and developing a strong brand identity through transparency and storytelling are important areas of attention. Additionally stressed is the role that certification and labelling play in building consumer trust. The essay also addresses the possibility of branching out into foreign markets, emphasising the importance of strategic alliances and research as necessary elements. Organic farmers may increase their awareness, fortify their relationships with customers, and profit from the growing market for organic products by putting these tactics into practice.

**Keywords:** Organic Farming, Certification, Nutrition, Chemical fertilizers, Organic products

### Introduction

Organic farming, also known as ecological farming or biological farming is an agricultural approach that uses organic fertilisers such as compost manure, green manure, and bone meal, and emphasises tactics such as crop rotation and companion planting. It arose early in the twentieth century in response to rapidly changing farming practices. Certified organic agriculture covers 70 million hectares (170 million acres) worldwide, with more than half of that number in Australia. Biological pest control, mixed cropping, and the development of insect predators are encouraged. Organic standards are intended to allow the use of naturally occurring compounds while forbidding or strongly limiting manufactured substances. For example, naturally occurring insecticides like pyrethrin are tolerated, whereas synthetic fertilisers and pesticides are often prohibited. Among different states Madhya Pradesh is the largest producer followed by Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Odisha. In terms of commodities, Fiber crops are the single largest category followed by Oil Seeds, Sugar crops, Cereals and Millets, Medicinal/ Herbal and Aromatic plants, Spices & Condiments, Fresh Fruit Vegetable, Pulses, Tea & Coffee. Organic farming system in India is not new and is being followed from ancient time. It is a method of farming system



which primarily aimed at cultivating the land and raising crops in such a way, as to keep the soil alive and in good health by use of organic wastes (crop, animal and farm wastes, aquatic wastes) and other biological materials along with beneficial microbes (bio fertilizers) to release nutrients to crops for increased sustainable production in an eco friendly pollution free environment. Organic farming is one of the several approaches found to meet the objectives of sustainable agriculture. Many techniques used in organic farming like inter-cropping, mulching and integration of crops and livestock are not alien to various agriculture systems including the traditional agriculture practiced in old countries like India. However, organic farming is based on various laws and certification programmes, which prohibit the use of almost all synthetic inputs, and health of the soil is recognized as the central theme of the method. Adverse effects of modern agricultural practices not only on the farm but also on the health of all living things and thus on the environment have been well documented all over the world.

### What is organic farming?

As per the definition of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) study team on organic farming “organic farming is a system which avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetic inputs (such as fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, feed additives etc) and to the maximum extent feasible rely upon crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, off-farm organic waste, mineral grade rock additives and biological system of nutrient mobilization and plant protection”.

### Principles of organic farming

Organic agricultural practices are largely based on IFOAM’s four principles of organic agriculture

1. **Principle of Health:** Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible.
2. **Principle of Ecology:** Organic agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them
3. **Principle of Fairness:** Organic agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.
4. **Principle of Care:** Organic agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well being of current and future generations and the environment



### The key characteristics of organic farming include

1. Protecting the long term fertility of soils by maintaining organic matter levels, encouraging soil biological activity, and careful mechanical intervention;
2. Providing crop nutrients indirectly using relatively insoluble nutrient sources which are made available to the plant by the action of soil micro-organisms;
3. Nitrogen self-sufficiency through the use of legumes and biological nitrogen fixation, as well as effective recycling of organic materials including crop residues and livestock manures;
4. Weed, disease and pest control relying primarily on crop rotations, natural predators, diversity, organic manuring, resistant varieties and limited (preferably minimal) thermal, biological and chemical intervention;

5. The extensive management of livestock, paying full regard to their evolutionary adaptations, behavioral needs and animal welfare issues with respect to nutrition, housing, health, breeding and rearing;
6. Careful attention to the impact of the farming system on the wider environment and the conservation of wildlife and natural habitats

### **Organic farming approach involves following five principles**

1. Conversion of land from conventional management to organic management.
2. Management of entire surrounding system to ensure biodiversity and sustainability of the system
3. Crop production with the use of alternative sources of nutrients such as crop rotation , residue management , organic manures and biological input.
4. Management of weeds and pests by better management practices , physical and cultural means and by biological control system
5. Maintenance of live stock in tandem with organic concept and make them an integral part of the entire system

### **Marketing and Export Potential of Organic Products**

Organic products refer to agricultural goods produced without synthetic chemicals, pesticides, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The marketing and export potential of organic products has witnessed significant growth in recent years due to increasing consumer awareness of health and environmental concerns.

Factors Driving Demand

- a) **Health consciousness**- Consumers are becoming more health conscious , leading to a preference for organic foods free from harmful chemicals.
- b) **Environmental Sustainability**-Growing concern about environmental sustainability are reduced carbon footprint drives the demand for organic products.
- c) **Regulatory Support** - Governments are implementing stricter regulation and certification to ensure the authenticity of organic products.

### **Marketing Strategies**

**Labeling and Certification**- Obtaining organic certification like USDA organic or EU organic is crucial for marketing. - Clear labeling helps consumers identify genuine organic products.

**Online Presence** - E-commerce platforms offers a global reach for marketing organic products.- utilizing social media and online advertising enhances visibility.

**Story telling**- Sharing the journey and values behind organic farming builds trust with consumers.

### **Export Potential**

**Global Market Growth** - The global organic food market is expanding with increasing demand in developed and emerging markets.

**Export Regulations**-Understanding and complying with import regulation in target countries is crucial.

**Quality Assurance** - Maintaining consistent product quality is essential for international reputation

**Market Research** - In depth research on target markets helps identify trends and consumer preferences.

### **Challenges**

**Price Premium** - Organic products often come with a higher price tag, which can limit market penetration.

**Supply Chain** - Ensuring a reliable and efficient supply chain for perishable organic goods can be challenging.

**Competition**- The organic market is competitive, requiring innovative differentiation strategies.

Certification and labeling

## Organic certification and labeling

It is a certification process for producers of organic food and other organic agricultural products. In general, any business directly involved in food production can be certified, including seed suppliers, farmers, food processors, retailers and restaurants. Requirements vary from country to country, and generally involve a set of production standards for growing, storage, processing, packaging and shipping that include:

- Avoidance of synthetic chemical inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, antibiotics, food additives, etc) and genetically modified organisms
- Use of farmland that has been free from chemicals for a number of years (often, three or more)
- keeping detailed written production and sales records (audit trail)
- maintaining strict physical separation of organic products from non-certified products
- undergoing periodic on-site inspections.



## Purpose of certification

Organic certification addresses a growing worldwide demand for organic food. It is intended to assure quality and prevent fraud. For organic producers, certification identifies suppliers of products approved for use in certified operations. For consumers, "certified organic" serves as a product assurance, similar to "low fat", "100% whole wheat", or "no artificial preservatives". Certification is essentially aimed at regulating and facilitating the sale of organic products to consumers. Individual certification bodies have their own service marks, which can act as branding to consumers- a certifier may promote the high consumer recognition value of its logo as a marketing advantage to producers. Most certification bodies operate organic standards that meet the National government's minimum requirements.

## The certification process

In order to certify a farm, the farmer is typically required to engage in a number of new activities, in addition to normal farming operations:

- **Study** the organic standards, which cover in specific detail what is and is not allowed for every aspect of farming, including storage, transport and sale.

- **Compliance** - farm facilities and production methods must comply with the standards, which may involve modifying facilities, sourcing and changing suppliers, etc.

- **Documentation** - extensive paperwork is required, detailing farm history and current set-up, and usually including results of soil and water tests.



- **Planning** - a written annual production plan must be submitted, detailing everything from seed to sale: seed sources, field and crop locations, fertilization and pest control activities, harvest methods, storage locations, etc.
- **Inspection** - annual on-farm inspections are required, with a physical tour, examination of records, and an oral interview.
- **Fee** – A fee is to be paid by the grower to the certification body for annual surveillance and for facilitating a mark which is acceptable in the market as symbol of quality.
- **Record-keeping** - written, day-to-day farming and marketing records, covering all activities, must be available for inspection at any time. In addition, short-notice or surprise inspections can be made, and specific tests (e.g. soil, water, plant tissue) may be requested.

For first-time farm certification, the soil must meet basic requirements of being free from use of prohibited substances (synthetic chemicals, etc) for a number of years. A conventional farm must adhere to organic standards for this period, often, three years. This is known as being in transition. Transitional crops are not considered fully organic. A farm already growing without chemicals may be certified without this delay.

Certification for operations other than farms is similar. The focus is on ingredients and other inputs, and processing and handling conditions. A transport company would be required to detail the use and maintenance of its vehicles, storage facilities, containers, and so forth. A restaurant would have its premises inspected and its suppliers verified as certified organic.

## Marketing

Marketing of organic products involves creating and executing strategies to promote and sell organic products to target consumers. Marketing of organic products is critical for organic farmers and producers to create demand for their products, increase sales, and grow their business. Here are some key aspects of marketing organic products:

**Branding:** Creating a strong brand identity is essential for marketing organic products. This involves developing a brand name, logo, and packaging that communicates the organic and sustainable nature of the product.



**Labelling:** Organic products must meet specific labelling requirements set by regulatory agencies such as the USDA or EU. The label must communicate key information such as the organic certification logo, ingredients, and production methods.

**Targeting the right consumers:** Organic products typically appeal to consumers who are health-conscious and concerned about the environmental impact of their food choices. Therefore, marketing efforts should target these consumers through channels such as social media, health food stores, and farmer's markets.

**Product differentiation:** Organic products should be differentiated from conventional products through their unique selling points such as their natural and sustainable production methods and their health and environmental benefits.

**Pricing:** Organic products typically command a higher price than conventional products. Pricing should be based on the cost of production and market demand while still being competitive.

**Promotions:** Organic products can be promoted through various channels such as advertising, public relations, and in-store promotions. Promotions can help create awareness and demand for the products.

**Partnerships:** Organic farmers and producers can partner with retailers, restaurants, and other businesses to promote their products and expand their distribution channels.

## Export potential

The export potential of organic products can provide significant benefits to organic farmers and producers, including access to larger markets, higher prices, and increased revenue. Here are some key factors that can impact the export potential of organic products:

**Organic certification:** Organic products must meet specific certification requirements to be sold as organic products in international markets. Certification can be obtained through various certification agencies such as USDA, EU, JAS, and others. Organic certification assures that the products meet international standards for organic farming and production.

**Market demand:** The export potential of organic products depends on the demand for organic products in the target market. Some countries have a higher demand for organic products than others, and the demand may vary depending on the product and the market.

**Market access:** Access to the target market is crucial for exporting organic products. Tariffs, trade barriers, and other regulations can affect the export potential of organic products.

**Quality control:** Ensuring the quality of organic products is essential for exporting organic products. Proper storage, packaging, and transportation are critical for maintaining the quality and freshness of the products during transportation.

**Price competitiveness:** Price competitiveness is important for exporting organic products. The price of organic products should be competitive compared to conventional products in the target market.

**Market knowledge:** Understanding the target market and consumer preferences is critical for exporting organic products. Researching the market, its regulatory requirements, and consumer preferences can help organic farmers and producers adapt their products to meet market demands.

**Partnerships:** Partnerships with distributors, importers, and other businesses can help organic farmers and producers access new markets and expand their export potential.

The export potential of organic products depends on organic certification, market demand, market access, quality control, price competitiveness, market knowledge, and partnerships. Organic farmers and producers can increase their export potential by focusing on these factors, developing their export strategies, and building strong partnerships with importers and distributors in target markets.

## Conclusion

Effectively marketing organic products requires a multifaceted approach that blends strong branding, digital engagement, community involvement, and a solid understanding of certification. By leveraging these strategies, organic producers can successfully navigate the journey from farm to table, ensuring their products reach the consumers who value them the most. With the right tactics in place, the potential for growth in the organic market is limitless. It concluded that the adverse effects of modern agricultural practices not only on the farm but also on the health of all living things and thus on the environment have been well documented all over the world. Organic farming is one of the several approaches found to meet the objectives of sustainable agriculture. Certification is essentially aimed at regulating and facilitating the sale of organic products to consumers. Individual certification bodies have their own service marks, which can act as branding to consumers- a certifier may promote the high consumer recognition value of its logo as a marketing advantage to producers.