Report on
NATIONAL CONFERENCE
Sustainability | Organic Villages | Markets

VENUE: The Atria Hotel
#1, Palace Road, Bangalore, Karnataka 560001 Ph. : 080 2220 5205
DATE: September 19th, 2014

Organized by:
National Conference: Sustainability - Organic Villages – Markets
19 Sep 2014, Bangalore: Report

National Conference on Sustainability – Organic Villages – Markets was successfully organized in Bangalore. This event was organized by International Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture, ICCOA along with the Dept. of Agriculture, Government of Karnataka

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Introduction
Organic farming is defined as the cultivation of crops without chemical pesticides, synthetic fertilizers or genetically modified organisms which can sustain the health of the soils, ecosystem and people.

It is seen as an alternative system to conventional agriculture which tries to integrate agriculture and its allied verticals. It has the potential to address the issues of inclusiveness by involving small and marginal farmers into the agriculture value chain. It also has the potential to improve soil fertility, lower soil degradation, control pest attack and above all protect the environment.

Realization of these benefits of organic farming has acted as a driven force for the organic movement in India.

The state of Karnataka is also not untouched by this organic movement. Karnataka was the 1st state in India to frame an organic policy for its state in 2004. Its potential for organic farming lies with its abundant natural resources in terms of soil types spread across ten agro climatic zones, great number of small and marginal farmers especially in dry farming regions.

Still a dramatic drop in land under organic cultivation from 2009 to 2014 was reported by APEDA. Random practice of mono cultivation, unavailability of adequate markets for organic produce, poor logistic management and weak market linkages are some of the factors to be blamed for this drop. So there is a need to work and improve upon these factors.

Realizing these needs for the State of Karnataka, International Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture, ICCOA along with the Dept. of Agriculture, GoK thought of conducting a National Conference on Sustainability – Organic Villages – Markets on 19th September 2014 in Bangalore.

The aim of this national conference was to bring together people from diverse sector to formulate organic strategies for the people of Karnataka like the government, farmers, NGO’s, research institutes, private organizations, ICCOA members and students.

The conference started with an inaugural session followed by four sessions in which eminent speakers from diverse sectors deliberated on the concepts of sustainability and markets in organic agriculture. It ended with a closing ceremony.
Conference Participation
The event attracted participants from diverse sectors. Seventy two enthusiastic participants attended the conference. They constituted of organizers, speakers and delegates.

I. Dignitaries graced the occasion:

- Sri Krishnabyre Gowda, Minister of State of Agriculture, GoK.
- Sri Bharat Lal Meena, Principal Secretary, Agriculture, GoK.
- Dr. B.K. Dharmarajan, Director of Agriculture, GoK.
- Dr. T. N. Prakash Kammardi, Chairman, Agriculture Price Commission, GoK.
- Dr. A. K. Yadav, Former Director NCOF, GoI & President, ICCOA.
- Mr. H. R. Jayaram, Director, ICCOA,
- Mr. Manoj Kumar Menon, Executive Director, ICCOA
- Others participants from Karnataka State Department of Agriculture.
- APEDA officials

II. Private organizations and NGOs:

- Purna Organics, Bangalore
- Genius Organic, Bangalore
- Margobiocom, Bangalore
- Poabs Estate Private Limited, Bangalore
- Pro Nature Organic Food, Bangalore
- Akshayakalpa, Bangalore
- Swarg Foods, Bangalore
- Eco Green Unit, Coimbatore
- Sahaja Samrudha, Karnataka
- Sri Parmanand Society
- SL Foundation, Madurai
- APOF, Organic Certification Agency, Bangalore
- Initiatives for Development Foundation, Bangalore
- Green Foundation, Bangalore
- Bio Dynamic Association of India, Tamil Nadu

III. Other Participation – Farmers, Students, Research Institutions, Federations

- Farmers from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- ICCOA board members, employees and members.
- KSCOF Karnataka State Co-operative Organic Producers Federation Limited
- Indian Institute of Soil Sciences, Bhopal
- University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore
- Students from; The Humboldt University Germany, The University of California, GKVK, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore
Inaugural Ceremony - Session I

On 19th September 2014, the event was inaugurated by Hon’ble Minister of State for Agriculture, Sri. Krishna Byre Gowda, GoK, Sri Bharat Lal Meena, Principal Secretary, Agriculture, GoK and Dr. B.K. Dharmarajan, Director of Agriculture, GoK. Other dignitaries who graced the occasion were Dr. T. N. Prakash Kammardi, Chairman, Agriculture Price Commission, GoK, Dr. A. K. Yadav, Former Director NCOF, GoI & President, ICCOA, Mr. H. R. Jayaram, Director, ICCOA and Mr. Manoj Kumar Menon, Executive Director, ICCOA.

It started with a lamp lighting ceremony followed by the key note address by Dr. A.K. Yadav and Manoj Kumar Menon. The honorable minister delivered the inaugural speech. The session provided an insight about the status of organic agriculture at global, national and state level. It chiefly focused on the status of the State of Karnataka.

Following points were discussed,

- Demand for organic produce is growing worldwide in Europe, Middle East, Asia, Australia and USA. The global trade today is at USD 60 billion (Rs. 3,60,000 crores). India constitutes Rs. 2500 crores organic market. Huge scope and potential exist for Indian organic producers in international market.

- Area under organic certification in the State of Karnataka has dropped from 121507.56 ha to 27191.27 ha from 2009 to 2014. Lack of support and advisory services to producers, inadequate
input availability, and insufficient support from research institutions and weak supply chain were identified as some of the causes.

- Measures to be taken for the addressing the drop in area under organic certification was discussed by the honorable minister of agriculture. He said that agriculture is not a subject to be romanticized. It is a means of livelihood for farmers, especially small and marginal farmers. Hence it is necessary to build a reliable and sustained commodity market for organic produce, chiefly domestic markets that exists partially and in niches. Consumers must also be made aware about the high price of organic produce as it is necessary to sustain organic farmers in the initial years. Organic markets targeting health and aesthetic segments should be tapped. For e.g. minor millets.

- Government efforts in forming federated groups of organic producer at block and district level were discussed. Such efforts need time. To achieve 100 ha in a village requires 2 years of service therefore farmers should be motivated to take it up. Organic outlets by government can also support the farmers. Four such jaivik outlets are already opened by the government.

- Formation of a high level committee for looking into the issues related to organic cultivation, markets and linkages with farmers representation. ICCOA was also requested to be a part of this member committee.

**Farm Biodiversity: Elixir to Sustainability - Session II**

Chaired by Dr. A. K Yadav, Former Director, NCOF, Govt. of India

**Speakers**

1. Dr. A. K Yadav, Former Director, NCOF, Govt. of India
2. Dr. K. Ramesh, Sr. Scientist, Indian Institute of Soil Sciences, ICAR, Bhopal
3. Mr. Satish, Organic Farmer, Andhra Pradesh

**Discussion**

The session focused on, what is biodiversity, why it is essential and how organic farming can sustain biodiversity? It also discussed about the role farmers can play in managing genes, species and the ecosystem. Crop diversification was put as the replica of biodiversity which can be achieved by,
Careful selection of crops
- Appropriate combination of cereals and legumes.
- Appropriate soil coverage with diverse plant coverage.

Stress was given on crop rotation, inter-cropping and mixture farming. Benefits of crop combinations like Maize-Cowpea, Red Gram-Soyabeans and Rice with Azolla were discussed. Cover crops were suggested to increase plant diversity on field like planting green manures or trap crops as border plants, phacelia, fava bean etc. Role of crop diversity in controlling pest attack was also discussed.

A film was played highlighting the role of animal husbandry in sustaining zero budget organic agriculture. It was based on the experiences of an organic farmer.

**Karnataka Organic Journey: The way ahead - Session III**
Chaired by Dr. T.N. Prakash Kammardi, Chairman, Karnataka Agriculture Price Commission

**Speakers**
1. Dr. Siddaraju, Additional Director, Govt. of Karnataka
3. Chaired by Dr. T.N. Prakash Kammardi, Chairman, Karnataka Agriculture Price Commission

**Discussion**
The session stressed on the Savyava Bhagya Yojana of the Govt. of Karnataka that aims to develop 100 ha farmers land as model organic farming unit in each taluka.

The reasons for drop in Karnataka’s organically cultivated land were also addressed. Mismatch between organic production and demand was identified as the main cause. Precursors for this cause was also identified like,

- Lack of proper market linkages for organic products.
- Unwillingness of the consumer to pay high price though interested to buy good quality organic products.
- Large number of small and marginal farmers who could not carry with organic farming.

Measures taken by the government to counter these factors were also discussed. They were same as mentioned by the honorable minister in his speech.

Various questions were raised by the participants during this session like,
• Why the government do not banish chemical subsidy and give subsidy to organic farmers who have to struggle in the initial years?
• Why not the government introduces organic products in PDS?

The questions were answered by highlighting the need for a separate policy for pricing and marketing of organic products that will include the local varieties, millets and products from the kitchen gardens. The role of farmers in deciding the price of their produce was highlighted because they are the only group who has the right to produce but not the right to fix their product price.

The session also shared the experiences of an organic farmer in utilizing the concept of C3 and C4 plants (light harvesting technology based on rate of photosynthesis) in cultivation of sugarcane, turmeric and onion. The system optimally utilizes sunlight and allows efficient use of water for irrigation.

**Organic Biovillages: Farmers Income and Livelihood - Session IV**

Chaired by Dr. G.K Veeresh, Former V.C, UAS, Dharwad

**Speakers**

2. Pradeep Kumar, Swarg Foods, Bangalore.
3. N. Ravindranath Shetty, President and Founder of Sahaja Samrudha, Karnataka

**Discussion**

The session discussed about the efforts needed for converting a village into organic at an organization level.

Speakers suggested that organizational effort should mainly focus on farmers training and creating awareness through campaign mode. Group efforts are needed at farmer’s level to create and build market linkages for selling the products. Sahaja Samrudha, the organic farmers association of Karnataka and Swarg Foods are two such examples.

Few points that were stressed for revival and promotion of organic farming in a village were,

• Focus on local/traditional varieties includes both crops and desi milk.
• Creating market linkages through campaign mode
Promotional events like millet mela, rice mela, sridhanyamela, organic food fest were organized to build networking between buyers and sellers.

Bulk procurement from farmers for supplying to retail firms in cities by creating good transportation and packaging facilities (like milk transportation in chillers).

Organic markets for long term sustainability - Session V
Chaired by Mr. Devidas Gaonkar, President, KSCOF

Speakers
1. Ms. Sunil Surendran, Aum Consulting, Chennai
2. Dr. Usha, Associate Professor, UAS, Bangalore
3. Mr. Devidas Gaonkar, President, KSCOF

Discussion
The session primarily focused on marketing and sale of organic produce by making it more attractive to the consumers. Concept of utility in marketing, value addition and processing were discussed to make organic products attractive to buyers.

Utility was defined in terms of place, time and form relating to where, when and how the customer needs the product. For example the high demand for locally grown produce was highlighted.

The significance of value addition to organic foods in increasing its acceptability in the market was largely discussed by all speakers. Value addition and processing were seen as an innovative approach to sell forgotten organic food in a new forms and packs.

Role of crop diversity in creating a pool of diverse food segments in the market was discussed. The scope of major and minor millets, jack fruit in preserving crop diversity and their marketability were highlighted. Their role in curing and preventing health related problems were also shared with the participants.

Success stories of few market players like millet home, Lumiere, Akshayakalpa and Farmerie were put as examples to highlight their innovative ideas for marketing their products.

Targeting of customers as per their need was also talked about. Customers were understood as different categories based upon their needs like health conscious, image conscious, special needs and convenience seeking. The need to develop and market products fitting to their category was stressed upon.
Conclusion

The conference concluded with the culmination of all the valuable inputs delivered by all the dignitaries, speakers and the delegates. After a long session of discussions, various new ideas and thoughts were generated towards formulating a road map for the organic sector in the State of Karnataka.

Strategies to deal with the drop in the organic area under certification in Karnataka were identified. They focused on reviving the sector by creating and building reliable and sustainable organic markets, adoption of efficient farming techniques and principles for managing organic farms (like light harvesting technology, crop diversity), creation of organic hubs or villages with strong market linkages with special focus on value addition and processing of organic produce. The potential of organic millets was also identified as a growth segment for the organic sector in Karnataka.

It is believed that the momentum that is fuelled into the organic sector through this conference will help certainly help the farmers, government, NGO’s and entrepreneurs to frame strategies for the growth of organic sector in Karnataka.