The World of Organic Agriculture in India

Emergence

The growth of organic agriculture in India has three dimensions and is being adopted by farmers for different reasons. First category of organic farmers are those which are situated in no-input or low-input use zones, for them organic is a way of life and they are doing it as a tradition (may be under compulsion in the absence of resources needed for conventional high input intensive agriculture). Second category of farmers are those which have recently adopted the organic in the wake of ill effects of conventional agriculture, may be in the form of reduced soil fertility, food toxicity or increasing cost and diminishing returns. The third category comprised of farmers and enterprises which have systematically adopted the commercial organic agriculture to capture emerging market opportunities and premium prices. While majority of farmers in first category are traditional (or by default) organic they are not certified, second category farmers comprised of both certified and un-certified but majority of third category farmers are certified. These are the third category commercial farmers which are attracting most attention. The entire data available on organic agriculture today, relates to these commercial organic farmers

Growing area

Emerging from 42,000 ha under certified organic farming during 2003-04, the organic agriculture has grown almost 29 fold during the last 5 years. By March 2010 India has brought more than 4.48 million ha area under organic certification process. Out of this cultivated area accounts for 1.08 million ha while remaining 3.4 million ha is wild forest harvest collection area. Year wise growth of cultivated area under organic management is shown in Table 1. Overall status of organic production projects, processors, quantity produced, quantity exported and the value of export is given in Table 2, State wise details of total area and number of farmers under full organic, in-conversion and total under organic management (2009-10) are given in Table 3. Details in respect of important commodities produced during 2008-09 are given in Table 4.

Regulatory mechanism

For quality assurance the country has internationally acclaimed certification process in place for export, import and domestic markets. National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP) defines the regulatory mechanism and is regulated under two different acts for export and domestic markets. NPOP notified under Foreign Trade Development and Regulation Act (FTDR) looks after the export requirement. The NPOP notified under this act has already been granted equivalence by European Union and Sweden. USDA has also accepted the conformity assessment system of NPOP. Due to this, the product certified by any Indian accredited certification agency under NPOP can be exported to

Europe, Sweden and USA without the requirement of re-certification. To look after the requirement of import and domestic market the same NPOP has been notified under Agriculture Produce Grading, Marking and Certification Act (APGMC). Regulatory body of NPOP under FTDR act is Agricultural and Processed Foods Export Development Authority (APEDA) under Ministry of Commerce and of NPOP under APGMC act is Agricultural Marketing Advisor (AMA) under Ministry of Agriculture. Accreditation of Certification and Inspection Agencies is being granted by a common National Accreditation Body (NAB). 18 accredited certification agencies are looking after the requirement of certification process. Out of these 4 agencies are under public sector while remaining 14 are under private management.

Growing number of farmers and operators - Out of total 2099 operators, while processors account for 427 and individual farmers 753, majority of farmers i.e. 597,873 are small and marginal farmers covered by 919 grower groups. Out of the total organic producers in the world approximately half of them are in India. This is mainly because of small holdings with each producer.

Table – 1 Growth of area under organic management

S.No.	Years	Area under Organic management in Ha
1.	2003-04	42,000
2.	2004-05	76,000
3.	2005-06	1,73,000
4.	2006-07	5,38,000
5.	2007-08	8,65,000
6.	2008-09	12,07,000
7.	2009-10	10,85,648

Table 2 Overall status of organic production projects, processors, quantity produced, quantity exported and the value of export (Year 2008-09)

S.No.	Component	Quantum
1.	Area under Organic certification Process (ha) Full organic In-conversion Total	 757978.71 327669.74 1085648.45
2.	No. of Farmers under Organic certification Process Full organic In-conversion Total	 351297 246576 597873
3.	Number of operators	2099
4.	Number of processors	427
5.	Number of grower groups	919
6.	Number of exporters	253

7.	Total Production (MT)	1,811,111
8.	Total quantity exported (MT)	53,918
9.	Value of export in US $	116.09 million
10.	Value of export in INR Rs.	591 crores INR

Table 3. Production of important commodities under organic management (Year 2008-09)

S.No.	**Commodities**	**Quantity produced in MT**		
		Organic	**In-conversion**	**Total**
1.	Rice	44335	32354	76690
2.	Wheat	6892	15364	22560
3.	Other cereals/ millets	67333	63985	131318
4.	Pulses	17560	16785	34345
5.	Oil seeds including Soybean	163185	59647	222832
6.	Cotton (raw seed cotton)	284832	86906	371740
7.	Spices	17419	20084	37504
8.	Tea/ coffee	16506	10838	27344
9.	Fruits and Vegetables	194505	538073	732579
10	Herbal/ medicinal plants	129543	58767	188310
11.	Other miscellaneous crops	8001	25235	33236

Table 4 Estimates of area covered by different crops under organic management (Year 2008-09)

S.No.	**Commodities**	**Area in ha**		
		Organic	**In-conversion**	**Total**
1.	Paddy	18134.00	9766.00	27900.00
2.	Wheat	4056.00	7192.00	11248.00
3.	Other cereals/ millets	26184.00	37678.00	63862.00
4.	Pulses	12023.00	17617.00	29640.00
5.	Oil seeds including Soybean	91849.00	87307.00	179156.00
6.	Cotton	259699.00	93299.00	352998.00
7.	Spices	6507.00	23291.00	29798.00
8.	Tea/ coffee	12711.00	12465.00	25176.00
9.	Fruits and Vegetables	128879.00	41176.00	170055.00
10	Herbal/ medicinal plants	32313.00	10690.00	43003.00
11.	Other miscellaneous crops	27995.00	28306.00	56301.00
12	Crop details not	19812.00	198110.00	217922.00

	available			
	Total area	640162	566897	1207059

Important features of Indian organic sector

With the phenomenal growth in area under organic management and growing demand for wild harvest products India has emerged as the single largest country with highest arable cultivated land under organic management. India has also achieved the status of single largest country in terms of total area under certified organic wild harvest collection.

With the production of more than 77,000 MT of organic cotton lint India had achieved the status of largest organic cotton grower in the world a year ago, with more than 50% of total world's organic cotton.

Future prospects

Although, commercial organic agriculture with its rigorous quality assurance system is a new market controlled, consumer-centric agriculture system world over, but it has grown almost 25-30% per year during last 10 years. In spite of recession fears the growth of organic is going unaffected. The movement started with developed world is gradually picking up in developing countries. But demand is still concentrated in developed and most affluent countries. Local demand for organic food is growing. India is poised for faster growth with growing domestic market. Success of organic movement in India depends upon the growth of its own domestic markets.

India has traditionally been a country of organic agriculture, but the growth of modern scientific, input intensive agriculture has pushed it to wall. But with the increasing awareness about the safety and quality of foods, long term sustainability of the system and accumulating evidences of being equally productive, the organic farming has emerged as an alternative system of farming which not only address the quality and sustainability concerns, but also ensures a debt free, profitable livelihood option.