



ORGANIC FARMING IN KARNATAKA: PRACTITIONERS PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

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During the last two decades, there has also been a significant sensitization of the global community towards environmental preservation and assuring of food quality. Ardent promoters of organic farming consider that it can meet both these demands and become the mean for complete development of rural areas. After almost a century of development organic agriculture is now being embraced by the mainstream and shows great promise commercially, socially and environmentally. While there is continuum of thought from earlier days to the present, the modern organic movement is radically different from its original form. It now has environmental sustainability at its core in addition to the founders concerns for healthy soil, healthy food and healthy people. The empirical evidences of efficiency analysis of Organic and conventional farming systems are scarce or even absent. In the above setting, this study made an attempt to critically examine the contemporary alternate agriculture and the perception of organic farming as perceived by farmers.

INTRODUCTION

The input-intensive cultivation types of the **Green Revolution**, which was initiated in the sixties by the international agricultural research centers, are on the outer opposite side of the diagram. Here, the emphasis was on introducing so called high-yielding maize, wheat or rice varieties in the countries of the South, and the aim was to increase agricultural output. The yield of these varieties will only be higher in comparison to traditional land races if intensive use is simultaneously made of artificial irrigation, fertilizer and pesticides - and these costs a lot of money, which is why the Green Revolution coincided with accelerated structural readjustment in agriculture. Initially, there were enormous increases in yielding the good farming locations, especially in Asia. But by and by, the high-yield strains had to be crossed with more suitably adapted local varieties in order to maintain yield levels in the long run. In retrospect, with its massive interventions in sensitive agro-

Domestic Product (GDP-at constant prices) in 2008-09 as compared to 21.7 per cent in 2003-04. Notwithstanding the fact that the share of this sector in GDP has been declining over the years, but its role remains critical as it accounts for about 52 per cent of the employment in the country. Agricultural sector also contributed 10.2 per cent of national exports in 2008-09 (Economic Survey, 2009-10). Agriculture provides food for more than one billion people and yields raw materials for agro-based industries. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2007), sustainable agriculture "is the successful management of resources for agriculture to satisfy changing human needs while maintaining or enhancing the quality of environment and conserving natural resources". In this context, Organic Farming considered to be most appropriate eco friendly technology in contemporary agrarian crisis in the developing countries like India.

Need for sustainable/alternative farming system

The performance of the agricultural sector influences the growth of the Indian economy. Agriculture (including allied activities) accounted for 15.7 per cent of the Gross

Domestic Product (GDP-at constant prices) in 2008-09 as compared to 21.7 per cent in 2003-04. Notwithstanding the fact that the share of this sector in GDP has been declining over the years, but its role remains critical as it accounts for about 52 per cent of the employment in the country. Agricultural sector also contributed 10.2 per cent of national exports in 2008-09 (Economic Survey, 2009-10). Agriculture provides food for more than one billion people and yields raw materials for agro-based industries. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2007), sustainable agriculture "is the successful management of resources for agriculture to satisfy changing human needs while maintaining or enhancing the quality of environment and conserving natural resources". In this context, Organic Farming considered to be most appropriate eco friendly technology in contemporary agrarian crisis in the developing countries like India.

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grows, the organic farming philosophy and practice become more important. Policy makers noticed this opportunity and have tried to create a stimulating framework for the development of organic farming. Hence, today a whole set of policy instruments exists both at European and national level, reflecting the willingness for active support, e.g. the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming (European Commission, 2004)

Keeping in view the above situations the research study was undertaken with the following specific objectives.

Objectives of the study

- 1 To review the need assessment of the contemporary alternate agriculture
- 2 To find out perception about meaning of organic farming and specific features of organic farming as understood by the farmers.

Research Methods

The present study based on purposive sampling the selection of sample organic farmers for the cases studies were chosen from four districts i.e. namely; Mandya, Chitradurga, Gadag and Raichur. Apart from the quantitative analysis of primary data, qualitative analysis was also done by in-depth case analysis of selected farmers.

Scope of the study

Broadly, the present study has been planned to cover five major issues. First, an overview of organic farming

Limitations of the study

Since the study has covered only four Districts in Karnataka the results cannot be generalized to other districts.

The case studies were conducted in Four districts of Karnataka. Ten organic farmers were selected based on following criteria.

- a) A minimum of five years of experience in organic farming,
- b) Cultivating either annual or perennial crops. Farmers cultivating only perennial crops were excluded,
- c) Proximity to the university. The respondents belonged to Mandya, Chitradurga, Gadag and Raichur Districts in Karnataka.

Table 1: Perception of farmers about meaning of organic farming

S.No.	Organic Farming means	Frequency	Per cent
1	Non use of chemicals of any type in farm production	4	40
2	Use of locally available materials which are eco-friendly in farm production	4	40
3	Preparation of compost and vermicomposting using farm materials	1	10
4	Use of improved crop varieties, higher levels of fertilizers and plant protection chemicals	1	10

The table 1 revealed that 40 per cent of the respondents considered organic farming as non use of chemicals of any type in production, 40 per cent opined organic farming as use of locally available eco-friendly materials in farm production. Substantial increase in the production of food grains is achieved through the use of improved crop varieties, higher levels of fertilizers and plant protection chemicals. Of late it has been realized that the increase in production achieved is at the cost of soil health and friendly environment. Sustainable production at higher levels becomes possible only when the factors leading to the continued maintenance of soil health are adequately taken care of. The modern farming systems aim at maximizing production through the use of increased quantities of external inputs such as fertilizers and plant protection chemicals without due consideration to their ill effects. Consequently, the traditional agronomic practices such as green manuring, use of farm wastes either as such or after composting and other soil ameliorative measures have not become part of the farming systems. This has resulted in a slow but steady decline in the productive and recuperative capacity of the soil. Indiscriminate use of fertilizers has caused several problems on the farm as well as outside the farm. A few studies shows that, plants become more susceptible to pests and diseases hence their control could be effectively done by using high potency poisonous chemicals. As a result their residue on plants their products and in the soil had lead to health hazards. In order to mitigate these health hazards and bring out natural balance and protection of ecosystem, organic farming movement has started in several parts of the world, in which no production. For one respondent organic farming was preparation of compost and vermicomposting using them in farm production, and organic farming was non use of hybrids and judicious use of water in farm production for the another respondent.

The concept of organic farming has been perceived differently by the respondents.

To most of them it means the use of organic manures and indigenous methods of plant protection as against use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Organic farming has been defined different but the description offered by Lampkin (1990) appears to be most comprehensive. Covering all essential features. As per this description, organic farming "is a production system which avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetic compounded fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives. To the maximum extent feasible organic farming system relies on crop rotations, use of crop residues, animal manures, legumes, green manures, off farm organic wastes and aspect, biological pest and disease control to maintain soil productivity and tills, to supply plant nutrients and to control insects, weeds and other pests.

Table-2: Specific features of organic farming as understood by the respondents

S.No	Features	Frequency	Per cent
1	Use of locally available inputs in farm production	3	30
2	Eco-friendly and avoidance of exploitation of natural environment	6	60
3	Increases soil fertility and microbial activity	7	70
4	Higher tolerance to biotic and a biotic stresses than that of conventional farming	2	20
5	Quality of the produce is good	2	20

Table 2 revealed slight deviation specific features or advantages of the organic farming as understood by the respondents has revealed slight deviations from each other, organic farming increases soil fertility and also microbial activity in the soil was the special feature of organic farming for 70 per cent of the respondents. Sixty per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that organic farming is eco-friendly and avoids exploitation of natural environment. Use of locally available inputs in farm production was the special feature of organic farming for 30 per cent. For twenty per cent each of the respondent's higher tolerance to biotic and a biotic stresses than that of conventional farming and quality of the produce was perceived good were the special features of organic farming. Majority of the respondents (70%) emphasized that organic farming would improve soil fertility status and microbial activity in soil. It is true that the organic wastes that are being added to the soil will certainly improve the water holding capacity of the soil and also bring about improvement in soil structure and texture. The organic manures added will also act as food material to the native micro flora. Thereby we could identify such soils as fertile. This findings in agreement with the findings of Tangaswamy (1991).

Summing up

An attempt is made to assess perception and understanding of farmers about organic farming results showed a mixed response.

The study indicates that the personal attributes towards environment quality of agro eco system and food security are the significant ecological factors which influenced and motivated the farmers to understand the unique features of organic farming where the micro-level sustainability of the farming system has been ensured.

The study confirms that, increasing global concern over environmental pollution and human health problems created by agrochemical residues in food and environment, resulting in the rising demand for organically produced commodities, assures a brighter future for such indigenous organic system. Further the results conclude that there is ample scope for expansion of organic farming depends strongly on the self-initiative of farmers.

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