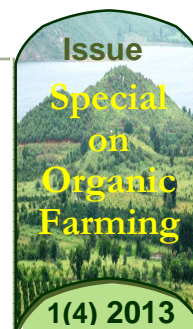


Popular Kheti

Volume -1, Issue-4 (October-December), 2013

Available online at www.popularkheti.info

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Organic Farming: Concept and Components

R. P. Meena* H. P. Meena¹ and Roop Singh Meena²

*U.G. Student (Agriculture), Government P.G. College, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan, India

¹Scientist (Plant Breeding), Directorate of Oilseeds Research, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad, India

²Asstt. Prof. (Entomology), KVK (SKRAU), Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan, India

*Email of corresponding author: harimohit2010@gmail.com

Organic farming is a production management system excluding of all synthetic off-farm inputs but rely upon on-farm agronomic, biological and mechanical methods like crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, off-farm organic waste, mineral grade rock additives and biological system of nutrient mobilization and plant protection, etc which promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and agro-ecosystem health.

Organic Farming

As per the definition of the 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*”.

In another definition FAO suggested that “*Organic agriculture is a unique production management system which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity, and this is accomplished by using on-farm agronomic, biological and mechanical methods in exclusion of all synthetic off-farm inputs*”.

Organic Farming World-Wide

More than 24 million hectares of land is farmed organically - over 40 percent of this is in Oceania and almost a quarter respectively in Latin America and Europe. However, more than half or the area farmed organically world-wide is concentrated in just three countries - Australia, Argentina and Italy - that account for the lion's share of the respective continent. In Australia alone, a share of around ten million hectares is accounted for by extensive pastureland, just like the almost three million hectares in Argentina. Owing to this high share of pastureland, less than half of the area farmed organically world-wide is cultivated arable land. Among the countries of the South,

the European champions are followed by Ecuador (3.1%), Argentina (1.7%), Chile (1.5%), Uganda (1.39%), Belize (1.3%) and Bolivia (1%). Thus they are all well above the share of organically farmed land in the USA, which is just 0.23%.

Currently, organic agriculture is commercially practiced in 120 countries, representing 31 million ha of certified croplands and pastures (~ 0.7 percent of global agricultural lands and an average of 4 percent in the European Union) and 62 million ha of certified wild lands for organic collection of bamboo shoots, wild berries, mushrooms and nuts (Willer and Youssefi, 2007). Although difficult to quantify, non-certified organic systems (e.g. indigenous models that follow organic principles by intent or by default) of several million small farmers may represent at least an equivalent share in subsistence agriculture of developing countries.

In Africa, certified organic lands cover 890 504 hectares (or 0.12 percent of agricultural lands), involving mainly permanent crops such as olives, tropical fruits, nuts, coffee, cocoa but also cotton, herbs/spices, etc. The sector employs 124 805 farmers in 24 countries and Uganda has the world's biggest number of organic farmers. The main countries with certified organic farms are: Sudan (200 000 ha and 650 farms), Kenya (182 586 ha and 15 815 farms), Uganda (182 000 ha and 45 000 farms), Tunisia (143 099 ha and 515 farms), Tanzania (38 875 ha and 43 791 farms) and Zambia (2 884 ha and 9 248 farms). Most certified organic production is geared toward export markets, mainly the European Union.

1905 to 1924 - Organic Agriculture Begins in Central Europe & India

Organic agriculture began more or less simultaneously in Central Europe and India. The British botanist Sir Albert Howard, often referred to as the father of modern organic agriculture, works as an agricultural adviser in Pusa, Bengal, (now in Bihar), where he documents traditional Indian farming practices, and came to regard them as superior to his conventional agriculture science. In the United States, J. I. Rodale begins to popularize the term and methods of organic growing, particularly to consumers through promotion of organic gardening.

1939 - First Use of the Term "Organic Farming"

The first use of the term "organic farming" is by Lord Northbourne. The term derives from his concept of "the farm as organism", which he expounds in his book, "Look to the Land" (1940). Influenced by Sir Albert Howard's work, Lady Eve Balfour did first scientific, side-by-side comparison of organic and conventional farming.