

"Advancing Organic Agriculture in India: Exploring Benefits, Challenges, and Strategies for Growth"

Anjuly Singh, Dr. Neeraj Shukla

Research Scholar

Assistant Professor

Department of Commerce

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Language University, Lucknow

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture, a tradition passed down through generations, has adapted over time to its surrounding environment, with organic farming emerging as a prominent practice in many countries today. The preference for organic products is driven by their proven advantages in social, economic, cultural, and environmental aspects compared to conventional alternatives. Dating back to the early 20th century, organic farming arose as an alternative system amidst changing agricultural methods. Organizations continue to advocate for non-chemical cultivation, utilizing organic fertilizers like compost manure, green manure, and bone meals. This strategy places emphasis on sustainable practices like crop rotation and companion planting, which offer dual benefits to the environment and biodiversity by providing support for birds and animals. While organic farming and food processing offer numerous advantages, producers face challenges. Distribution obstacles often stem from a lack of awareness, while issues like high costs, mistrust, and ineffective marketing strategies present hurdles for farmers and producers. Despite these challenges, ongoing efforts to promote organic agriculture underscore its potential for fostering a more sustainable and environmentally friendly food system.

Keywords: environment, Protection, Fertilisers, Environment, Non-Chemical Produce, Pesticides

I. INTRODUCTION

As time progresses, there is a growing acknowledgment among individuals of the manifold benefits associated with organic food products. Consumers opt for organic food items derived from carbon-based sources for a range of reasons, encompassing environmental

considerations and apprehensions regarding pesticide usage, opposition to intensive farming methods, and the perception that organic food offers superior health and safety compared to conventionally produced goods. (Williamson, 2007) India, historically known for its agrarian roots, initially relied on traditional farming methods. However, with the burgeoning population, the traditional methods proved insufficient to meet the growing demand. In response, agriculturalists turned to various chemical fertilizers to boost production. The increasing use of biochemical enhancers and pesticides became a daily practice as the soil's fertility gradually declined.

Recognizing the potential of organic farming and considering the environmental impact, many countries, including India, are gradually shifting towards organic agriculture. In India, there is a growing emphasis on promoting organic farming, with an increasing number of farmers adopting these practices. While organic farming offers numerous benefits, farmers transitioning to this approach also encounter challenges. Undoubtedly, the future holds a significant role for organic farming as a sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural method. As per Kia Ditlevsen's research in 2018, a primary factor driving the increased demand for organic food products is the growing concern for health. A growing number of health-conscious individuals are opting for organic food over conventionally grown options. Modern consumers' viewpoints are notably shaped by the rising incidence of lifestyle diseases like heart disease and depression. The trend toward embracing organic foods is increasingly prevalent in today's culture, fueled by a heightened awareness of healthy self-improvement practices. Organic animal-based

products, including dairy and meats, are sourced from animals that typically enjoy free-range conditions, allowing them to roam freely outdoors. The animals raised in free-range environments are nourished with organic diets and do not undergo any steroid treatments throughout their growth period.

This ensures that individuals consuming these products are not exposed to the effects of hormones present in conventional foods. Milk and cheese from hormone-free, free-range cows, along with organic meat and eggs from free-range birds, contribute to the appeal of organic choices. To uphold the integrity of organic standards, various agencies diligently monitor establishments that hold this form of certification. This increased understanding of the health benefits associated with organic options continues to drive the rising popularity of organic food in today's culture.

What is Organic Food?

Non-chemical nutritional products are items produced through processes adhering to the standards of organic agriculture. The global adoption of organic foods is driven by considerations for biodiversity and the environment. The promotion of organic production involves the implementation of various non-chemical techniques. Producers of organic products are regulated by bodies that restrict the use of chemical fertilizers and various pesticides. Non-chemical products typically do not undergo refinement processes involving irradiation, commercial acetone, or artificial food supplements. In the current era, producers engaged in organic farming must obtain special certification to sell their products in the market. Non-chemical foods are widely perceived as more nourishing, healthier, and environmentally friendly when compared to conventional food items. As a result, consumers are showing a growing preference for non-chemical food products and are willing to invest a premium in these alternatives (Anupam Singh, 2017).

Objective of the study

1. To outline the various advantages of organic food in India.
2. To understand the challenges encountered by producers and propose strategies for the expansion of organic food in India.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study suggests that in contemporary society, there is a preference for non-chemical food items. However, a significant issue arises from the lack of awareness among consumers regarding the

benefits of organic food products. Hence, it can be argued that by implementing effective marketing strategies and awareness programs, producers stand to significantly increase their profits in the future (A. Jafersadhiq, 2019). The study findings suggest that consumers continue to show reluctance in purchasing organic products primarily due to insufficient product information. Additionally, the research underscores the importance of building consumer trust in organic products as a crucial factor (Mukherjee, 2017).

The demand for natural and non-chemical foods in the United States has experienced significant growth over the past decade. Increased awareness of the benefits associated with non-chemical foods has led to heightened consumer interest in them. The inclination of younger individuals towards environmental sustainability, personal health, and animal welfare is noticeably higher, leading to disparities in the demand for organic food across various age demographics. Remarkably, the surge in demand for organic foods is significantly shaped by product labeling, with consumers diligently examining the information presented on labels prior to making their purchases. (Jonathan R. McFadden, 2017)

The findings of this study suggest that agronomy serves as the foundation for economic strategies, presenting numerous opportunities for creating stable rural employment. India possesses the capacity to generate a substantial quantity of organic food (Dr. M. S. DESHMUKH, 2015). Individuals who prioritize health, safety, quality, originality, and authenticity in the food choices opt for organic foods, with the term "organic" serving as a notable heuristic cue indicating superiority. Consequently, while environmental preservation remains important, it acts more as a facilitator rather than the primary motivation for purchasing organic products (vega-zamora, 2013). Non-chemical cultivation represents an ecological approach to agronomy, which abstains from synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, opting instead for methods like crop rotation and effective animal husbandry to manage pests and diseases. Consumers may choose carbon-based produce for various reasons, including environmental consciousness, concerns for animal welfare, pesticide residues, or worries about food additives (Williamson, 2007). According to the study, organic manure emerges as a renewable alternative for nutrient provision. Additionally, organic food demonstrates superiority in terms of health and safety standards (P. Ramesh, 2005). Research conducted in Greece reveals that individuals are willing to pay higher prices for organic produce

and vegetables. The market for fruits and vegetables thrives in this region, with these products readily accessible in the market (chryssohoidis, 2005).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following study is completely based on secondary data taken from multiple research publications, as well as the discovery of researchers and other reliable sources on the internet as needed. The useful input of other researchers and professors is also taken into account in the study.

BENEFITS OF ORGANIC FOOD

According to study, children who eat primarily organic foods are less likely to develop allergies. In addition to fostering immune system strength, organic foods promote enhanced overall health. They also offer advantages for skin health, encouraging a healthier lifestyle and contributing positively to overall well-being. There are severe regulations for items labelled as 100% organic. Consumers are growing more concerned about their health and the environment, and as a result, they are switching to non-chemical products. Slowly, the usage of organic goods has expanded, and so has their demand. The following advantages of organic farming are outlined:

Enhancing soil health:- is a fundamental goal of organic farming, which prioritizes techniques such as crop rotation, green manure, composting, and other natural methods to improve soil fertility. Unlike conventional practices that rely on chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides to boost yields, organic farming emphasizes sustainable approaches that nourish and replenish the soil ecosystem. Organic farming also preserves soil quality, resulting in a healthier ecosystem. Organic farmers utilize ordinary unprocessed fertilisers and soil additives such as non-chemical matter, green manures (cover crops grown expressly for mud augmentation), and animal manures (with some health limits) to generate high-quality soil. Organic agriculture depends on high-quality soil.

Environment friendly: Organic farming stands out as an environmentally friendly practice, significantly reducing harm to ecosystems. It minimizes soil pollution, conserves water, and fosters soil fertility through natural methods. The absence of artificial fertilizers allows for farming in proximity to animals, benefitting bird populations as well. Moreover, organic farming plays a vital role in preserving biodiversity, enhancing ecological processes, and supporting ecosystem

services. By promoting carbon sequestration, it effectively combats the escalation of CO₂ levels in the atmosphere. Unlike conventional agriculture, the core advantage of non-chemical crop cultivation and livestock rearing lies in its soil-centric approach, rooted in the preservation and enhancement of soil quality.

Good for human health: -Organic farming produces nutrient-rich products that benefit human health, with lower pesticide levels compared to conventional farming. Strict regulations against synthetic additives contribute to healthier food choices, promoting a healthier society. Natural farming practices enhance the safety and aroma of finished food products, translating into stronger individuals and improved nutrition for a higher quality of life.

Minimize Chemical Exposure: Choosing organic foods reduces the intake of chemical components, particularly persistent pesticides, in one's diet. Organic farming produces safe foods without the use of harmful chemicals and toxic pesticides.

Enhanced Antioxidant Levels: Organic foods, rich in antioxidants, have been scientifically proven to enhance overall health. This is attributed to the absence of foreign chemicals in organic products, which can otherwise interact with vitamins, non-chemical substances, and natural resources, diminishing the positive effects of antioxidants in food. Evidence suggests that consuming organic food rich in antioxidants provides protection against various conditions, including heart disease, cancer, vision impairment, premature aging, and cognitive dysfunction.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY PRODUCERS

Despite India's status as the country with the world's largest organic acreage, its population, comprising over 20% of the global population, consumes less than 1% of total organic products. Slow adoption persists in the Indian market due to entrenched preconceptions about the sector.

Limited Awareness: The organic food sector is in its early stages, attracting mostly "fad diet" enthusiasts. With minimal understanding and relying on word-of-mouth, many consumers choose organic options for perceived upscale qualities, leading to a surge in demand but jeopardizing long-term industry sustainability.

Affordability Concerns: In price-sensitive India, organic food, driven by taste and preferences, tends to be more expensive. Uninformed consumers hesitate to invest in organic goods due to the significant price gap compared to conventional

items, creating a negative perception of organic food.

Certification Challenges: Farmers face difficulties in obtaining organic certificates due to the lack of a straightforward certification process. Government guidelines for certification are often not comprehensible to ordinary farmers, hindering the growth of the organic farming sector.

Farmer Reluctance: Farmers resist transitioning to organic farming due to reliance on chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Fear of crop failure, risking yearly income, requires extensive sensitization and education to overcome apprehensions associated with the switch.

Expensive Storage: The costs related to storage and preservation has risen, as organic storage methods, devoid of chemical inputs, are more expensive. Organic foods, with a shorter shelf life, demand meticulous maintenance compared to conventional counterparts, contributing to higher costs.

Supply-Demand Imbalance: In India, there is an uneven production of organic goods, leading to a disparity between the high demand for fresh fruits and vegetables and their limited supply. This mismatch affects consumer preferences and hinders the growth of the organic market.

Unorganized Marketing: A lack of a structured marketing system results in limited awareness and understanding of organic products among consumers. This contributes to a slower adoption rate, reduced demand, and lower profits for farmers involved in organic farming.

GOVERNMENT SCHEME

In the current landscape, the Indian government is actively engaged in promoting the production of organic foods through a variety of initiatives aimed at incentivizing non-chemical farming practices. Notably, programs such as the Network Project on non-chemical crop cultivation, spearheaded by the India Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), alongside the National Horticulture Mission (NHM) and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), underscore the government's commitment to this endeavor. Additionally, initiatives overseen by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) play a pivotal role in facilitating the transition towards non-chemical agriculture.

Unlike traditional farm products, non-chemical crops do not fall under the ambit of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) requirement, which underscores the government's recognition of the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in

organic farming. To further incentivize non-chemical farming practices, the Indian government has instituted subsidies for growers under the NHM, providing financial support of Rs. 10,000 per hectare for a maximum area of four hectares per recipient. Moreover, additional assistance is extended through the establishment of vermi-composting units, with the government covering 50% of the cost, capped at a maximum of Rs. 30,000 per beneficiary.

Furthermore, the government endeavors to streamline the certification process for non-chemical crop cultivation, thereby enhancing market access for organic growers. Certification, which is essential for establishing credibility and ensuring compliance with organic standards, is facilitated at a nominal cost of Rs. 5,000 for groups of growers with an area of 50 hectares. This comprehensive approach not only provides financial support to farmers but also promotes sustainable agricultural practices and facilitates market integration for organic produce, thus contributing to the broader objectives of environmental conservation and food security in India.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROWTH OF ORGANIC FOOD

While many farmers in India are transitioning to organic farming, a significant number still face challenges. It is imperative for the government to extend support to organic producers by formulating dedicated policies. Efforts should be directed towards streamlining the certification process, reducing associated costs, and making the rules more lenient.

Managing the sale of farmers' organic products efficiently is crucial. Implementing an effective advertising system will attract consumers to organic produce. The government should focus on increasing farmers' profits through strategic initiatives. Traders can contribute by devising sound distribution policies that draw consumers towards organic food.

Raising awareness about the benefits of organic foods is essential. Providing information to the public about the advantages of choosing organic options will contribute to a more informed and supportive consumer base.

IV. CONCLUSION

Through comprehensive discussions, it becomes evident that organic food offers a multitude of benefits, not only for human consumers but also for animals and birds. The positive impact of organic farming extends beyond

personal health, encompassing environmental considerations as well. In the context of India, a vast and culturally diverse country, marketing organic products presents challenges due to varied consumption patterns. The advantages of organic food, including its health benefits and environmental sustainability, underline its significance. However, alongside these merits, there are challenges that need to be addressed. To bridge the gap between organic products and consumers, marketers must carefully evaluate and refine their strategies. This includes aspects such as brand creation, product positioning, marketing campaigns, and promotional activities. Raising awareness about the authenticity, availability, and benefits of organic products is essential in building consumer trust.

As India navigates its diverse cultural landscape, marketers play a pivotal role in educating and engaging consumers about the merits of choosing organic options. By aligning marketing efforts with the unique characteristics of the Indian market, there is an opportunity to enhance understanding and appreciation for organic foods, ultimately contributing to a healthier populace and a more sustainable environment.

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