

PROMOTION OF ORGANIC FARMING IN BELLARY: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT:

In this paper, an attempt was made to examine the state government efforts for promotion of organic farming Ballari, in Karnataka. Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system which promotes and enhances agro-eco system health, including biodiversity, biological cycle and soil biological activity. Organic farming is increasingly popular because products produced under organic methods are more healthy and safe besides fetching higher price premium than the products produced under inorganic farming. The present study was based on secondary data and it was found that the Karnataka government was outlined broad based organic farming policy. Initially, the state government selected villages in Ballari district and promoted organic farming on experimental basis those villages are called "Organic Village". Further, the policy was included all the stake holders of organic farming such as Self-Help Groups, Farmers Groups, organic input production and marketing channels, certification agencies etc. However, the certifications of organic produce, fee for certification, subsidies to cover the yield loss were not attractive for the farmers, lack of separate market etc are the great obstacles highlighted in the study for promotion of organic farming Ballari in the Karnataka. Finally, the study suggested that the improving the new variety of seeds, development of local authorities for certification of organic farming and organizing the training programme for famers and other stake holders encourages the organic farming in large scale across the state.

KEY WORDS: Organic agriculture, production and marketing, cycle and soil biological.

INTRODUCTION

Organic agriculture used to be a way of life in India, a tradition which for centuries has shaped the thought, the outlook, the culture and economic life of it's people. Agriculture has been playing a critical role in overall growth of the Indian economy in general and Karnataka state in particular. Despite of it, there is a structural shift towards the services sector during recent decades is visible. Although the share of agriculture in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has declined from 55.1 per cent in 1950-51 to 13.9 per cent in 2013-14, this sector remains a major source of employment for rural workers (Economic Survey, 2014-15). However, agriculture is characterized by small and fragmented holdings and high dependence on monsoon. Operating small holdings is often unviable and farming is not a profitable business or enterprise.

The Indian agricultural sector has undergone considerable changes since the advent of Green Revolution technology during the mid, 1960s. Green Revolution Technology has made the country from food deficit to food surplus country. The Green Revolution technology, which was initially focused on wheat and rice and the regions endowed with irrigation facilities, has spread to other food and non-food crops and other regions during the later decades. Over the years, the green revolution technology has led to several problems in agriculture. There is a general tendency on the part of farmers to apply overdose of chemical fertilizers and pesticides' expecting higher yields. This has raised the cost of cultivation on the one hand and also brought down the profits in farming sector on the other.

Therefore, several cases of farmers committing suicide have been reported in different parts of Karnataka over the last 10 years. According to the Department of Agriculture, Government of Karnataka 1605 cases of farmers' suicide were reported in the period 2004-07 (up to August 2007). In this juncture, it is imperative to reduce the cost of cultivation and strengthen the agricultural

infrastructure for enhancing the farm income and bring down the cost of cultivation. The lowering the costs of cultivation without compromising on the output and increase the net income of farmers are fundamental objectives of any government at this movement. There are various alternatives before us to increase the farm income and reduce the cost of cultivation. In this juncture, organic farming, low external input, sustainable agriculture' precision farming, etc. are recognized as alternatives and are being promoted with a view to reducing chemical use and encourage the farmers to use organic inputs.

Organic farming is one such sustainable farming which ensures the sustainable yield with reduction in cost of cultivation. In this context, an attempt has been made to examine the promotion of organic farming in Karnataka.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this section, review of research articles was undertaken which helps to understand the concept of organic farming, role of governments in promotion of organic farming and hence the review of past research studies are undertaken in the following section; Organic farming is a production system which avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetically compounded fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives. To the maximum extent feasible, organic farming system rely upon crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, legumes, green manure, off farm organic wastes, mechanical cultivations, mineral bearing rocks and aspects of bio logical pest control to maintain soil productivity and tilth, to supply plant nutrients and to control insects weeds and other pests”

(USDA, 1980). This definition clearly reveals that organic agriculture is one of several approaches to sustainable agriculture and many of the techniques used (eg. rotation of crops, double – digging, mulching, integration of crops and livestock) are practiced under various agricultural systems.

Further, the Codex Alimentarius Commission (1999) defined that “Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system which promotes and enhances agro-eco system health, including biodiversity, biological cycle and soil biological activity. It emphasizes the use of management practices in preferences to the use of off-farm inputs, taking in to account that regional conditions require locally adopted systems. This is accomplished by using, where possible, agronomic, biological and mechanical methods, as opposed to using synthetic materials, to fulfill any specific function within the system.

(FAO, 1999). Therefore basic rules of organic production are that natural inputs are approved and synthetic inputs are prohibited, however there are some exceptions Modern farming practices, along with irrational use of chemical inputs over the past four decades have resulted in not only loss of natural habitat balance and soil health but have also caused many hazards like soil erosion, decreased groundwater level, soil salinization, pollution due to fertilizers and pesticides, genetic erosion, ill effects on environment, reduced food quality and increased the cost of cultivation, rendering the farmer poorer year by year.

(Ram, 2003). Therefore, farmers do not find agriculture a viable proposition anymore and in fact, a large number of farmers have committed suicides.

(Deshpande, 2002). Considering all these aspects, the Government of India and many State Governments have felt it necessary to promote organic farming in a big way. Organic agriculture is developing rapidly; its share in agricultural land has been increasing. In this backdrop Government of India under 10th Five-Year Plan encouraged organic farming using organic wastes, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) practices.

(GOI, 2001). Even the 9th Five-Year Plan had emphasized the promotion of organic produce in plantation crops, spices and condiments using organic and bio-inputs for the protection of environment and promotion of sustainable agriculture. Thus organic farming depends upon the on farm inputs and sustains the yield as well as reduces the cost of cultivation.

ROLE OF STATE GOVERNMENT IN PROMOTION OF ORGANIC FARMING:

The Ministry of Agriculture is promoting organic farming in the country under the schemes like National Project on Organic Farming, National Horticulture Mission, and Technology Mission for North East and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana. Therefore, the large scale of promotion of organic farming has been taking place in many states. The states like Uttarakhand and Sikkim have declared their states as “organic states”. In Maharashtra, since 2003, about 5 lakh ha area has been brought under organic farming. The Vidarbha Cotton Growers’ Association, set up in 1994 with 135 members, has tied up with international agencies for exports. In Gujarat, organic production of chickoo, banana and coconut was found to be more profitable, though field crops and mango had both lower input costs as well as yields. In Karnataka, 1513 ha land was under certified organic farming, and 4750 ha was under non-certified organic farming by the year 2005. The reason for shift towards organic farming include sustained soil fertility, reduced cost of cultivation, higher quality of produce, sustained yields, easy availability of farm inputs and reduced attacks of pest and diseases. Most of the area in the northeastern states is being used for organic farming. In Nagaland, 3000 ha area is under organic farming. States like Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat are promoting organic farming vigorously. Farmers’ organizations such as “Chetana” have been established for the marketing of organic products.

The government of Karnataka has taken various steps to promote organic farming throughout the state and allocated Rs 5crores in 2004-2005 for initiating the organic village programme in Ballari district to develop the 100 hectares of model organic farms. Likewise, in Ballari district the department of Agriculture set up model Organic Village in Sangakallu of Ballari taluk. As per the strategy of organic farming, the district Agricultural Department has selected 100 hectares of horticultural crops and developed model organic farm. Under the Organic Village programme, a particular village has been selected and organic farming methods introduced for various crops by way of giving subsidies and other services to farmers. The present government has very enthusiastic to promote and speed up organic farming in order to reduce the dependency of farmers on inorganic inputs. In the meanwhile, Organic Farming Unit has replaced the Organic Farming Mission and is given ministry status. The commission has a chairman and members who have been appointed by the government of Karnataka. It has now taken full responsibility to encourage the farmers to adopt organic farming. The Agricultural Department has now become facilitator in organic farming so that the commission identifies the NGOs, Farmers Association, and Research Institutions etc and entrust them to promote the organic farming in the state.

STATUS OF ORGANIC FARMING IN KARNATAKA:

Karnataka state is bestowed with divergent climatic and soil types spread across agro climatic zones. The physical features of Karnataka include coastal plains, Western Ghats and plateau enabling it to grow a variety of crops. The state is also known for its excellence in horticultural crops and animal husbandry. In addition, many farmers of the state are pioneers in organic agriculture and have developed many different systems of cultivation through indigenous knowledge base. They have developed their own methods of using organic wastes and developed holistic pest control agents to control pests and diseases. In this back ground the government of Karnataka initiated the broad organic farming policy in 2004. The details are in the Karnataka State Policy on Organic Farming draft (2004).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Though the agriculture is the core of rural development, it is the backbone of Karnataka state economy in terms of employment and contribution to Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). Due to demographic and market pressures the average size of holding in the State is shrinking very fast, making large number of farm families economically unviable almost every day. The average size of

holding is 1.63 ha and the number of holdings having land less than 1.0 ha account for 42 percent of the total holdings in the State, which itself is a cause for concern (Karnataka Agriculture & Rural Development Vision 2020 Draft). Besides, land available for cultivation in the State is declining because more of such lands are put to non-agricultural purposes. Further, the stagnation of agricultural productivity has become so acute that it is now visible in the irrigated areas also due to neglect of scientific water management practices and lack of proper awareness among farmers regarding use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Therefore many farmers across the state have been committing suicides due to increase in cost and decline in crop yield under inorganic farming system. In this backdrop, the present study was undertaken to examine the Government support to organic farming system in Ballari, Karnataka with following objectives.

OBJECTIVE:

- ❖ To study Promotion of Organic Farming in Ballari, Karnataka.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

Examine the role of Karnataka state government in promotion of organic farming is the primary objective of the current study and to suggest the some measures for promotion of organic farming in state is the secondary objective of the study. The study was based on the secondary data which were collected from various research studies conducted across the state and country. Research articles published in peer reviewed journals, reports of the State and Central government, published research theses etc were collected and reviewed and hence study was based on the secondary sources.

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON ORGANIC FARMING.

The Government of Karnataka outlined broad state policy on organic farming during 2004 for promoting the organic farming in the interest of the farming community. The features of organic farming policy of the state are as follows;

OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY ON ORGANIC FARMING

The following are the important objectives of organic farming policy

- To reduce the debt burden of farmers and to enable them to achieve sustenance and self-respect
- To enhance the soil fertility and productivity by increasing life in soil.
- To reduce the dependence of farmers on off farm inputs.
- Judicious use of precious water resources and maintenance of production level.
- To improve farmer's income through production of quality produce.
- To increase the food security by encouraging traditional crops and traditional food habits.
- To increase the rural employment opportunities to prevent migration to urban areas.
- To facilitate farmer's Self Help Groups for most of their requirements.
- To make the environment safe and pollution free and also to protect health of human beings and animals.
- To bring about suitable institutional changes in teaching and research on organic farming.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTION OF ORGANIC FARMING:

Several research studies showed that the organic farming is a sustainable farming under which crop yield has been declining in the short run however in the long run crop yield will be increasing. Therefore, the government should ensure more subsidies in the initial year of conversion of farms from inorganic to organic farming which will motivate the farmers for adoption of organic farming in a large scale across the country. Crop yield depends on the pattern of inputs used in farming operations and hence it is very urgent for promotion of research in development of improved seeds, organic plant protection measures, green manure, organic manures bio fertilizers etc. Further, organizing the training programme for production and marketing organic inputs beside subsidy on

organic inputs promote the organic farming. If state ensures the availability of adequate quantity of organic inputs, it is not only motivating the farmers but also encourages them to switching over from inorganic farming system to organic farming system.

Fundamentally there are three ways in which income of farmers may be enhanced, viz., increasing the gross income, reducing the costs, and stabilizing the income. Increase in yield or productivity of crops and other enterprises is the single most important factor that can increase the income. Since the area cannot expand much, either through increase in net sown area or through increase in cropping intensity, enhancing the productivity is the only route available to enhance production.

CONCLUSION:

Agriculture in Karnataka is facing several challenges which together manifest into sustainability issues. Reckless use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has made the soil lifeless and unfit for cultivation which largely contributed to increase in cost of cultivation and reduction in crop yield. Recently, organic farming is increasingly becoming popular not in India even all over the world as result of it many farmers in the country switching over from inorganic farming to organic farming. The State and Central government have been making constructive efforts to convince the farmers for adoption of organic farming through the various kinds of subsidies. However, it is evident that in short period crop yield under organic farming is declining as a result; it discourages the farmers to adopt the organic farming. Therefore, the government should increase the subsidies on yield loss according to year-wise and hence farm income will be increasing. The organic farming policy includes all the stake holders including SHGs and NGOs besides stringent certification process and highly expensive certification discourages the farmers. Thus it is necessary to bring down the cost of certification and bringing the amendments for certification of organic farming would certainly encourages the farmers to switch over from inorganic farming system to organic farming system.

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