

New vistas in organic agriculture – prospects for the future

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Key words : Organic farming, New vistas, Economy of Country

Organic agriculture plays an important and growing role in Indian agriculture. Emerging research in organic agriculture is showing that organic agricultural systems provide a comprehensive strategy for mitigating and facilitating the effects of climate change. Organic agriculture has opened new vistas in research field of soil fertility management with more impetus to soil biodiversity studies, management of weeds, insects and diseases by following minimum tillage practices, crop rotation principles and cover crops, biological methods of weeds, insects and disease management besides breeding and genetics aspects. The main impact benefits of organic production systems make organic agriculture an effective vehicle for achieving national economic and environmental goals. By this way organic agriculture presents a catalogue of new vistas in organic research, so that the research will help organic farmers to improve the agricultural, environmental and economic performance of their production systems.

Organic Farming is gaining more popularity on the global arena with increase in health and environmental awareness due to the ill effects left behind on soil and health by practicing conventional farming. Today's world knows the benefits embedded in this system are multiple and manifold, addressing the ecological, economic and social sustainability. Although the term 'organic farming' is getting popularity in recent times, but it was initiated in 10,000 years back when our ancient forefathers started cultivation depending on natural sources only (Bhattacharyya and Chakraborty, 2005). Organic farming has great linkage with sustainability in agriculture as organic farming is one of the several approaches found to meet the objectives of sustainable agriculture (Narayanan, 2005) and organic agriculture claims to be sustainable in long run (IFOAM, 2002, 2004).

Organic agriculture is defined in India's National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) as "a system

of farm design and management to create an ecosystem, which can achieve sustainable productivity without the use of artificial external inputs such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides". Lack of full fledged scientific cultivation practices is the main bottleneck for whole farm conversion of conventional to organic farm. In this article, the new vistas abundant in organic agriculture are reviewed and the research needs in organic farming are pointed for future prospects and sustainability of organic agriculture.

Current relevance of organic agriculture in India:

India's advantage is its diverse agro-climatic zones, where the rainfed and hilly regions of the country are practicing subsistent agriculture for a long period. These areas are organic by default. With the launching of National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP) by the Ministry of Commerce during 2001 and National Project on Organic Farming (NPOF) by the Ministry of Agriculture under Department of Agriculture and Cooperation were the two important interventions by the Indian government. During the last five years, organic agriculture has grown many folds and large numbers of farmers have adopted this low cost on-farm resource based agriculture. From 76,000 ha of organic farm land certified in 2005, it has increased to 1.2 m ha as on march 2009 under certification process (Yadav, 2009). Twelve states have defined organic policies and two states Uttaranchal and Sikkim have declared their states as organic. Karnataka has typical composition of the most of the Agro-Climatic conditions in the country. State has brought out Agriculture Policy of Karnataka 2006 which has addressed the main issues related to Karnataka agriculture especially organic farming. Recently on 26th January 2009, Government had set up the Karnataka Organic Agriculture Mission and drawn an ambitious plan to promote organic agriculture with impetus on value

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