



## ORGANIC FARMING

“THE BASICS YOU SHOULD KNOW”







# DEFINITION

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Organic refers to foods that adhere to strict growing protocols, including no use of prohibited synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Organic farming maximizes farm resources, putting emphasis on soil fertility and natural processes.

In organic farming, farm plants are used to feed animals or birds, and animal / bird manure is used to feed plants in the garden.

Organic farmers avoid inorganic fertilizers and pesticides, which are harmful to the environment and humans. Organic farming is more labor intensive than conventional farming, that is why organic products are sold at a higher price than conventional products.



# CONTROL OF PESTS & DISEASES



Organic farmers control pests and diseases by using a combination of natural methods.

They stop pests and diseases by use of pesticides made from local plants, such as: chili, onions, lantana, marigold and papaya leaves. Some add, cow urine and wood ash to make stronger pesticides.

They plant pest repellants like onions and neem. Rotate crops regularly in their gardens to stop attacks from pests and diseases. Organic farmers remove sick plant material as soon as they see it. They clean farm tools and their boots regularly to stop diseases from spreading on their farm. This mix of practices is sometimes called **Integrated Pest Management [IPM]**.



# SOIL & WATER



All farmers stop soil erosion and conserve water in order to grow crops well. Organic farmers use terraces and bunds to stop water run off, which may eventually carry away the useful top soil.

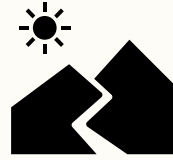
Terraces and bunds help to increase the soil's ability to absorb water, and which helps plants to access both water and nutrients from the soil.

Organic farmers do also plant trees or shrubs to bind soil together and stop wind erosion. They use mulch to add organic matter, stop splash erosion and conserve water.





# SOIL FERTILITY



Soil fertility is the capacity of the soil to supply plants with nutrients. Organic farmers improve soil fertility by adding organic matter, preventing nutrient loss, and adding the lost nutrients.

Planting legumes, such as: beans, ground nuts or calliandra and the use of green manure or improved fallows adds nitrogen to the soil. They also plough crops into the soil, so that their nutrients are used by the next crops in the field.

And, when liquid manure is used, nutrients are being added back to the soil. When compost is dug into the soil, the crops are given the best food they can get from the soil.



# BIODIVERSITY



Biodiversity refers to the variety of life in an area. Organic farmers keep a large number of species of plants, animals, birds and insects on their farm. Each has a role it plays on the farm: birds eat the insects; hedges provide shelter for useful insects that help organic matter to decompose and pollinate plants.

Indigenous local species are helped not to become extinct, while burning is avoided as it destroys life on the farm, and yet each crop has several uses or by-products.



# QUALITY



Crop quality starts right from the seed. Planting healthy seeds and using nursery beds gives a farmer healthy plants right from the beginning. Later, careful harvesting ensures that a farmer gets the best price from the organic produce.

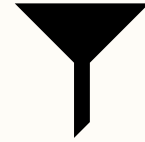
After harvesting - proper drying adds value, and careful storage stops any loss of produce. Buyers pay different prices for different grades. For example: bigger and clean coffee beans fetch a higher price.

The higher the grade of the produce, the better the price for the organic farmer.





# SEPARATE HANDLING



Organic farmers protect their produce from contamination. Both organic and conventional fields are separated by buffer zones or natural barriers of grass or a live hedge of shrubs.

Processing and storage of produce is separated to avoid contamination.

Buyers of organic produce check regularly for traces of inorganic chemicals in the produce, and the discovery of non permissible chemicals can easily result in a shipment returned to its exporter and a sale contract terminated.





# DOCUMENTATION



In organic farming, the use of documents helps with organic certification. Inspection forms are used to ensure farming remains organic. These also help the organic field officer to show the farmer how s/he can improve:

- ✓ The organic growers' list is used to record information about the fields of all the farmers in the village.
- ✓ The farmer contract is a guide for farmers to ensure high standards in organic farming.
- ✓ Maps are used to show fields, boreholes, roads and houses in a village.



# CERTIFICATION



A certificate is a written guarantee that the product meets the required organic standards. Independent agencies certify organic farmers to ensure neutrality. Most farmers convert to organic farming over a period of 2 – 3 years, although this can be shortened to 1 year.

Internal Inspections and trainings for a producer group are part of an Internal Control System. The system keeps the organic farming group in line with the expected organic standards.

External inspections occur when individual farmers are checked to ensure their Internal Control System is working and that the farmers' group is indeed practicing organic farming.





# MARKETING



Certified organic products earn a premium price for their unique quality and safety from poisonous chemicals. The price is higher because organic farmers consider several environmental factors on their farms. This is emphasized in the process of marketing their organic products.

Good packaging is also used to add value, and goods are mainly exported to get a higher price.

Organic farmer groups often encourage training and monitoring of farmers, this helps to produce big quantities and ensures a constant supply of products for the export market.



# ROLE OF THE FAMILY



Buyers choose organic products because they believe that the farmers are looking after the land in a sustainable way. They want the extra money they pay for the organic produce to benefit the lives of the families of the organic farmers.

Husbands and wives are expected to work together to manage the farm better. Children are expected to be educated, and the family should have good health care, and live in a clean environment.

These should eventually improve household income, food security, family health and deter any form of violence in the family.





# ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY



Buyers choose organic products because they believe that the effort of the farmers on their farms, supports the land in entire community to be managed well. They want that extra money they pay for the organic produce to benefit the farmers and develop the whole community.

That is why organic farmers avoid the use of forced labor on their farms. Instead, farmers in the community work together to share information and encourage each other.

Community members who work together respect each other, and a lot of attention is paid to the vulnerable persons, such as; children, the elderly and those with physical and mental challenges.

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