



Organic Farming: Boon or Bane

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The introduction of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides has brought drastic changes in the agricultural productivity and has boosted the economy among different sections of people. It has also caused beneficial changes in food security and decreased the incidences of different types of diseases that are supposed to be caused due to insufficient food among people all over the globe. However, this has damaged different ecosystems and has caused different health effects among people at the same time. Many of these diseases were not initially recognised by the scientific community and were not linked with contamination of pesticides. With due course time, a dozen of diseases were identified and were associated with different pesticides that may find their way into the human body via water and food and farming community may inhale traces of pesticides while spraying them in their orchards and fields. The process of eutrophication that is enhanced by synthetic fertilizers significantly damages the water bodies and most of them have vanished from the earth. Hence, a shift towards organic agriculture is seen a way to avert these disasters.

Organic agriculture may not only reduce the burden of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides but may improve the quality of environment by and large. This may also enhance the entrepreneurship among different communities as well if diverted into a better direction. The new economic theory of development today is 'Environmental-Economics' which advocates for judicious balance between 'economy and ecology' in all developmental programs including agricultural development and combination of 'economic development' programs with 'ecological conservation' strategies to promote sustainable development. The cost of production of organic fertilizer is simply insignificant as compared to chemical fertilizers. Organic fertilizers can be produced from a 'cheap raw material' (community wastes including farm wastes) which is in plenty all over the world and is growing in quantity with the growing human population, the chemical fertilizers are obtained from 'petroleum products' which are not only very 'costly raw materials' but also a 'vanishing resource' on earth. While vermicompost can be produced 'on farms' by all farmers, big and small, the chemical fertilizers has to be produced in 'factories' at a high economic and environmental cost. This means organic fertilizers can be afforded by all farmers. In vermicompost, worms itself becomes an economically valuable products for the farmers to be sold to fishery, poultry, dairy and pharmaceutical industries.

The prospects of organic farming are attractive and healthy but the bottle necks in this sector are hindering the process and need to be removed by healthy policies and strategies. The different organisations have recognised some bottlenecks in this sector Viz., Centralized agency that will meet and cater the needs of consumers, No systematic and coherent policy for the overall development in the area, weak and political biased policies without uniform standards for organic inputs, The adulteration of organic products due to insufficient standards and clarifications with poor labelling and certification system. Further, lack of willingness on the part of key trading partners to sign equivalence arrangements without proper organic supply chain mostly in far flung areas, hilly, and tribal areas. The promotion of organic farming requires setting of short term and long term targets taking into account sustainable development goals and agricultural practices. The improvement of soil quality and ensuring food safety and consumer health on which organic farming rests is the need of hour. It will be very fruitful to provide subsidies to compensate farmers for yield losses during the conversion period from conventional to organic farming and promotion of organic clusters and agri-zones from which global buyers can source of organic produce. In short, the key to successful organic farming resides in continuing to develop the scientific and engineering work and simultaneously in explaining and justifying the valid reasons which allow scientists and engineers to actually use these technologies for the welfare and safety of a public which is more and more concerned about the environment and its protection. The shift towards organic farming should not be "so rapid and so slow" that it will hit both sides of the development but must be in equilibrium with the race.

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