



“Aspeculative Study Of The Procedural Mandates For Organic Farming Certification In Maharashtra”

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Abstract:

Health, immunity, nutritional food, and hygienic habits these words are no fancier but a necessity, everybody will agree after the outbreak of Covid-19 Pandemic. Importance of healthy eating has become an integral part of life no matter what life style consumers are following to stay fit and fight with the health hazards like pandemic. When we say healthy and nutritional food organic food products are best choice. Organic products are chemical free, naturally grown products using organic farming procedures. On global level the awareness of organic product has significant benefit behind the growth of this sector. When it comes to India agriculture contributes as second largest profitable sector after service sector being on first position. The role of farmers and farming practices plays a very crucial role in the growth of organic food sector as food grows on farms only. Proper certification of organic farming from authorities will help farmers as well as organizations to build trust and credibility in customers mind. The study focuses on the status of total organic certified farmers and the major crops under organic farming in Maharashtra India; this paper investigates the mandates of organic farming certification in Maharashtra India.

Keywords: Organic Farming, Organic Certification, Organic Crop, Maharashtra.

1. Introduction:

Agriculture is as old as human civilization, in India it started around 9000 BC with wheat and barley as a major cultivation. Later during Indus Valley Civilization the crop choices increased to fruits, cotton, rice and vegetables (Knowindia.gov.in). From this time onwards agriculture has always been an important part of Indian culture and economy. Along with technological advancements and changes in civilizations agriculture has also witnessed lot of changes. Modern so called agriculture soon fell for overuse of fertilizers, chemical based formulas to grow crops more than its normal capacity, overuse of pesticides to avoid losses, genetically modified formulas to enhance the color and taste if food and the list goes on, all of this soon resulted in bad health, immunity issues, environmental issues, soil quality problems. Organic

farming is indeed a sustainable solution for all these issues if followed honestly. Organic farming is no new to India but a forgotten treasure. Organic farming eliminates the use of hazardous agricultural practices, grows crops in a natural and eco-friendly environment. When a product is labeled "organic," it means it was created using a procedure that followed certain rules established by certification authorities. Synthetic pesticides and fertilizers are not used in the production of organic food. As a result, it is free of these substances' residues. Maharashtra state has a Gross Cropped Area of 225.56 Lakh hectares and a net Cropped Area of 174.73 lakh hectare. The Cultivable waste, current fallow and other fallow land account for 11% of the state's total land area. The total irrigated area is 44.19 lakh hectares with rain fed irrigation accounting for 80% of the total. (farmech.dac.gov.in)

2. Literature Review:

Waykar K., Yadav D., Shendage P., Sale Y. (2006) in Nasik district for farmers of organic Grapes study observed the risk of low productivity in organic grape farming during the early period, due to complexity in the use of diverse organic agricultural inputs, and the high cost of vermin-compost, bio-pesticides, and vermin-culture have all been cited as key issues in organic grape production. Organic farms continue to fall short of per hectare production by 59% and net returns by 97% (organic farms have earned no net returns). Yadava A. et al (2020) concluded that the organic farming if applied and followed properly can give impactful benefits to farmers as well as it can act as major contributor in economic growth of the nations. Zaware N, (2020) elaborated that, in the India market, marketing achieve a principally urban presumption. Therefore, there were particularly fewer efforts from industries to make goods and services obtainable to accomplish country marketplace supplies.

Panwar R. et.al., (2010) in the research published they mention the various benefits of adopting organic farming practices and advantage of having organic certification to farmers. They further added that in the primary investigation on farmers they found out that farmers under organic certificate were in more profit as compare to non certified farmers, this happened mainly due to the premium pricing of organic products and demand, in long run along with monetary benefits farmers observed the health of soil is better if they follow organic farming procedures. Zaware N, (2016) elaborate that, changing consumption pattern of the Indian consumer has been undergoing a significant transformation over the years. Improvement in the economic conditions, exposure to International media, foreign travel, degree of urbanization, education levels, emergence of new job opportunities in the service sector such information technology, call centers and retailing that influences lifestyles are some of the drivers.

Jadhav M., Kamble B., Yadav D, (2006) studied the economic benefits of organic farming mainly for sugarcane. After their investigation they found out that the organic farmers were getting more net profit over the regular one even after the cost of production was higher in organic

farming and also the yield were less, the reason behind the increased profit in organic sugarcane farming is the end product which is Jaggery. The organic farmers of sugarcane used to make organic jaggery out of it in result they use to get good price in market. Zaware N, (2015) explained that, increasing the media impact will optimize consumer awareness towards environmental problems, and hence, influence positive attitudes, as media plays an important role in shaping consumers attitudes and their levels of participation in environmental actions and behaviors.

Rajib Roychowdhury et al (2013) Organic farming is solution to many wicked problems of farmers like lack of income, greater investment; not all but few issues can have solution in organic farming like getting good prices for organic products as compare to conventional products, organic farming does not allow to use hazardous not to mention high priced fertilizers or pesticides which will reduce the total costing on crop. Zaware N, (2013) study enables to come to the conclusion that; there is indispensable to build assurance and trust about product quality, service support, and company credentials in the minds of consumers.

Patidar, Patidar, (2015) In their primary investigation to find out the farmers perception about organic farming they recorded positive perception from more than sixty percent of farmers, they also concluded that farmers from Madhya Pradesh where they conducted the investigation are found more attracted towards harvest and monetary benefits when it comes to selecting the agricultural practices. Kharate S, Zaware N (2020) examined that organic agriculture is booming in India these days. Increase in the family income, increase in educated population, health consciousness has led consumers to shift their preferences from conventional to organic food products. Due to its purity and health benefits, organic food products are gaining popularity in the Indian market. The availability of organic products is increasing at malls, specialty stores, and local market places. This paper focuses on the organic food product segment and the business challenges for this segment. Nimbhore S, Zaware N (2019) examine that service quality has become the basic tool for retailers to create competitive advantage in the present day of retailing and to enhance shopping skill.

Biswas (2010) in the paper published mentioned some challenges and issues with organic farming, they recorded that the crop economics figures were a bit of a mixed bag. Organic farming, in general, is a production system that has poor productivity due to no use of chemical fertilizers, requires more work because of pure procedures, uses fewer energy inputs, and has fluctuating net income levels and selling prices.

3. Research Methodology: The papers is based on the secondary data mainly collected from government agencies and authorities as the intension is to investigate the detail procedural mandates for organic farming certification, agencies and authorities providing the certificate

and overview of total crop under organic farming in Maharashtra. Study comprises of following objectives:

1. To study the procedure and requirement for organic farming certification
2. To analyze the major crops under organic farming in Maharashtra
3. To examine the status of organic farming in Maharashtra

4. Organic Farming in Maharashtra:

In India, organic farming is still in its infancy. According to the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, about 2.78 million hectares of cropland were under organic cultivation in March 2020. This represents 2% of the country's total net disseminated area of 140.1 million hectare. Maharashtra is in top three states having organic cultivation of 1.6% of their net propagated area under organic farming (downtoearth.org.in)

Table No. 1 Organic Farming in the major States

States	Total Organic	In-conversion	Total area in hectare	No of farmers	Major Crop
Madhya Pradesh	322863	140689	463553	167141	Cotton
Maharashtra	129077	148703	277780	213456	Cotton, rice, wheat, soybean
Orissa	60006	21554	81560	43852	Cotton
Gujarat	23559	27367	50927	17057	Cotton
Andhra Pradesh	7377	25072	32450	34185	Tea

Source: https://ofai.s3.amazonaws.com/Why%20Organic%20Food_English.pdf

5. Major Crops under Organic Farming in Maharashtra State

According to pgsorganic.in website there are 1872 organic farmers registered through 138 farmer's local groups in state. Major crops under organic farming are fruits like Papaya, Pomegranate, Guava, Banana, Orange, Grapes, Mango, Carrot, Cucumber, Groundnut, Turmeric, Pulses, grains like Wheat, Rice, Vegetables like Egg Plant, Tomato, Chili, Cauliflower, Oil seeds, Millets, Spices, sugarcane, strawberries. The cultivation takes place according to the climate and rain conditions of particular area, like in few districts like Kolhapur, Ratnagiri, Sangli grows Rice, Mahabaleshwar grows strawberries, Sangli and Satara along with Kolhapur districts top the list of Sugarcane cultivation.

6. Organic Certification

Organic certification is a process that certifies organic food and other organic agricultural products producers. Any firm directly involved in food production, such as seed providers, farmers, food processors, merchants, and restaurants, can be certified. Various certificate issuing agencies are there. The NPOP standards for production and accreditation system have been recognized by the European Commission and Switzerland as equivalent to their country standards," says APEDA. "The NPOP standards for production and accreditation system have been recognized by the European Commission and Switzerland as equivalent to their country standards." (msleglassociates.in) Organic cultivation brings many benefits to society and nature. Because organic farming uses local resources it helps local community in economical growth, use of organic compost keeps the soil quality at best and also illuminates the pollution. An organic food product helps to keep human health at its best.

7. Procedural Mandates for Organic Farming Certification

There are many organizations in a state that can provide organic certification to farmers after inspecting but the entire system is governed by "National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)" under the "Ministry of Commerce and Industry. NPOP is responsible for setting up standards and process of grants and approvals of certification organizations. A farmer interested in acquiring organic certification can submit his application through a form and fees after assurance of his agricultural land's confirmation of fulfilling organic standards given by NPOP.

NPOP has given many standards regarding organic farming which includes annual organic making plan which has to be updated every year, cooperation for on-field inspections and visit from authorities for the same, responsibility regarding the updates of any types of changes if ever made in organic certified processes or agricultural production. The on-field investigation by the certification issuing authorities takes details of soil, animals, processes, water and other resources involved in organic farming whether they are a per the predefined standards of NPOP or not. The proposal of farmer containing organic plan, KYC, details of organic certification authority shall submit along with standard fees. The certification issuing authorities assess the proposals and take the final decision of approval or rejection, any decision which is final is informed to proposer with reasons for so. After the final approval from NPOP the organization authorities will provide organic certificate to applicant. All the organic certifications have limited validity period of one year so each year the farmer shall update it.

8. Organic Certification Providers in Maharashtra

8.1 Natural Organic Certification Association

Also known as NOCA is situated in Pune Maharashtra. NOCA provides organic certification and investigation services to agriculture, food production, animal husbandry, aquaculture etc. NOCA is having APEDA, NABCB certification and it works according to ISO 65:1996 and NSOP standards.(NOCA AGRO, 2021)

8.2 Bureau Veritas Certification India Pvt. Ltd

Bureau Veritas is global leader in providing accreditations and training. They provide various services like audit, testing services, training facilities and organic certification to food and agriculture sector. They are providing this certification throughout India for various functions like value chain, manufacturing and service sector. (Bureau Veritas, 2021)

8.3 Ecocert India

Ecocert India is an expansion of parent company Ecocert group having more than 50 employees and various offices in India including one in Mumbai Maharashtra. Their core products are certification services for organic farming to farmers, organic labels for other food and agro related products, so the certified person can take advantage in local as well as international market to attract the demand of organic products. They provide different certificate as per the demand of customer. Ecocert being an international certification provider has variety of organic certificates which are valid in many countries. “Organic agriculture India” certificate is issued under NPOP which allow farmers and organizations to sell and promote products in EU and Switzerland, “Organic agriculture USA” is another type of organic certificate which helps certificate holder to promote and sale their products in united states of America, “Organic agriculture Europe” certificate is valid in Europe for product promotion and selling purpose which comes under EC 834/2007 standards. Organization or farmers interested in international market can take help of Ecocert to get the organic certification for international approval. (Ecocert, 2021)

8.4 Control Union Certifications, Mumbai

Control Union has been serving organizations all over the world since the inception of regulated organic certification. Their global presence in approx 70 countries, operations under the accredited Dutch head office, allows them to make certification more efficient and cost effective while adhering to the same stringent procedures. In Maharashtra their branch is available in Mumbai.

The National Accreditation Body (NAB) of the Government of India has accredited Control Union Certifications in India. NPOP (National Program for Organic Production)also supports this scheme which does the verification and certification of various stakeholders involved in farming and food sector like farmers, owners of food processing businesses, owners of poultry

farms. Agricultural products exported as organic must have an organic certificate issued by an accredited certifying agency, according to DGFT notifications. The India Organic logo can be used if you are certified. The India Organic certification mark attests that an organic food product meets NPOP standards. They provide organic certificates, training, consulting and other supportive services for food and agriculture sector. (Controlunion 2021)

8.5 Maharashtra Organic Farming Federation

The federation is nonprofit organization having group of farmers and likeminded people who support organic farming practices. They are mainly work to promote and spread awareness of organic farming practices by joining hands with small farmers, researchers, domain experts from the organic agricultural field. Maharashtra Organic Farming Federation has a approval of participatory Guarantee Scheme also known as PGS, which provides alternative method to acquire organic farming certification. The farmers and food businesses having certification form PGS can use organic label and logo of PGS on their products.(MOFF India 2021)

8.6 APOF Organic Certification Agency (AOCA)

AOCA is one of the reputed organic certification issuing agencies working in all over India. They have the approval of NPOP; they have accreditation from NAB which is known as National Accreditation Body. They providing their services to various states like Andhra Pradesh, Bangalore, Karnataka, Telangana, Haryana and now in Maharashtra at Pune to serve their current customer base. (AOCA 2021)

8.7 Green Cert Biosolutions

Situated in Pune city at Maharashtra state, GreenCertBiosolutions is a national certifying agency that offers a wide range of services. NAB (National Accreditation Body of India) certifies it in accordance with the National Program for Organic Production (NPOP). A range of organic certification schemes are available through GreenCert. GreenCerthas a large team of consultants and personnel with background in farming, ecology m biotech who have a thorough understanding of what organic farming is all about, and how to implement it. For the tiniest organic farmer in India, GreenCert believes in delivering cost effective expert services. Its existing client's base has a variety of groups including individual farmers, small group owners, traders, food processors who use the company's services for certification and inspection. (GreenCertBiosolutions)

9. Conclusion:

Government has taken lot of efforts to encourage organic farming production in India. When it comes to organic certification process it has become very easy for farmers to get such a certificate from any authorized agencies. In Maharashtra state many certification issuing

agencies are situated in cities like Pune and Mumbai. These agencies provide consultation and guidance along with organic certificate so that it will be easy for farmers to understand the rules and procedure which they have to follow during organic farming. It is very easy to reach to these agencies for their services and assistance; they can be contacted over a phone call or from their official website. Educated farmers are adopting organic farming due to the cost benefits and huge market demand for organic products but still promotion and awareness of organic farming is required in Maharashtra state as many small village farmers are not aware of it. Government schemes related to organic certification should reach to all those small village farmers along with detail information so that they will be benefited by such agricultural practices.

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