ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER
Volume - 11 | Issue - 02 | February - 2022 | PRINT ISSN No. 2277 - 8179 | DOI : 10.36106/ijsr
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC FARMING

Commerce

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KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Organic Farming System in India is not new and is being followed from ancient time. It is a method of farming system which primarily aimed at cultivating the land and raising crops in such a way, as to keep the soil alive and in good health by use of organic wastes (Crop, animals and farm wastes, aquatic wastes) and other biological materials along with beneficial microbes (Bio-Fertilizers) to release nutrients to crops for increased sustainable production in an Eco Friendly pollution free environment and the subsystems of organic farming are show in figure 1

As per the definition of the United States Department of Agriculture Study team on Organic Farming, "Organic Farming is a system which avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetic inputs (such as fertilizer, pesticides, hormones, feed additives etc.,) and to the maximum extent feasible, relay upon crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, off-farm organic waste, mineral grade rock additives and biological system of nutrient mobilization and plant protection".

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) suggests that "organic agriculture is a unique production management system which promotes and enhances agro – ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity, and this is accomplished by using on – farm agronomic, biological and mechanical methods in exclusion of all synthetic off-farm inputs".

Figure 1 Organic Farming

Agriculture also called farming or husbandry is the cultivation of animals, plants fungi and other life forms of food, fiber, and other products used to sustain life. Agriculture was the key development in the rise of sedentary human civilization, whereby farming of domesticated species created food surpluses that nurtured the development of civilization.

Arun (2005) defines Organic Farming as 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 possible, organic farming system relay on crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, legumes, green manures, off-farm organic wastes, and aspects of biological pest control to maintain soil productivity and tilth, to supply plant nutrients, and to control insects, weeds and other pests. The concept of the soil as a living system that develops the activities of beneficial organisms is central to this definition.

Concept of Organic Farming

Organic farming concentrates on building up the biological fertility of the soil so that the crops take the nutrients they need from the study turnover within the sol nutrients produced in this way and are released in harmony with the needs of the plants. Control of pests, diseases, and weeds are achieved largely by the development of an ecological balance within the system and by the use of bio-pesticides and various cultural techniques such as crop rotation, mixed cropping and cultivation. Organic farmers recycle all wastes and manures within a farm but the export of the products from the farm results in a steady drain of nutrients. In a situation, where conservation of energy and resources is considered to be important, community or country would make a every effort to recycle all urban and industrial wastes back to agriculture and this the system would require only small input o new resources to "top up" soil fertility.

Principles of Organic Farming

The four principles of organic agriculture as show in figure 2 are explained.

Figure 2 The principles of Organic Agriculture

Principle of Health

Organic Agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible. This principle points out that the health of individuals and communities cannot be separated from the health of ecosystems- healthy soils produce healthy crops that foster the health of animals and people. Health is the wholeness and integrity of living systems. It is not simply the absence of illness, but the maintenance of physical, mental, social and ecological well – being. Immunity, resilience and regeneration are key characteristics of health. The role of organic agriculture, whether in farming, processing, distribution, or consumption, is to sustain and enhance the health of ecosystems and organisms from the smallest in the soil to human beings. In particular, organic agriculture is intended to produce high quality, nutritious food that contributes to preventive health care and well- being. In view of this it should avoid the use of fertilizers, pesticides, animal drugs and food additives that may have adverse health effects.

Principle of Ecology

Organic Agriculture should be based on living ecological system and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them. This principle rots organic agriculture within living ecological systems. It states that production is to be based on ecological processes, and recycling. Nourishment and well – being are achieved through the ecology of the specific production environment. Organic Farming, pastoral and wild harvest systems should fit eh cycles and ecological

balances in nature. These cycles are universal but their operation is site – specific. Organic management must be adapted to local conditions, ecology, culture and scale. Inputs should be reduced by reuse, recycling and efficient management of materials and energy in order to maintain and improve environmental quality and conserve resources. Organic agriculture should attain ecological balance through the design of farming systems, establishment of habitats and maintenance of genetic and agricultural diversity. Those who produce, process, trade or consume organic products should protect and benefit the common environment including landscapes, climate, habitats, biodiversity, air and water.

Principle of Fairness

Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities. Fairness is characterized by equity, respect, justice and stewardship of the shared world, both among people and in their relations to other living beings. This principle emphasizes that those involved in organic agriculture should maintain human relationships in a manner that ensures fairness at all levels and to all parties – farmers, workers, processors, distributors, traders and consumers. Organic agriculture should provide everyone involved with a good quality of life, and contribute to food sovereignty and the reduction of poverty. It aims to produce a sufficient supply of good quality food and other products. This principle insists that animals should be provided with the conditions and opportunities of life that accord with their physiology, natural behavior and well – being. Natural and environmental resources that are used for production and consumption should be managed in a way that is socially and ecologically just and should be held in trust for future generations. Fairness requires systems of production, distribution and trade that are open and equitable and account for real environmental and social costs.

Principle of Care

Organic Agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well – being of current and future generations and the environment. Organic agriculture is a living and dynamic system that responds to internal and external demands and conditions. Practitioners of organic agriculture can enhance efficiency and increase productivity, but this should not be at the risk of jeopardizing health and well – being. Consequently, new technologies need to be assessed and existing methods reviewed. Given the incomplete understanding of ecosystems and agriculture, care much be taken. This principle states that precaution and responsibility are the key concerns in management, development and technology choices in organic agriculture. Science is necessary to ensure that organic agriculture is healthy, safe and ecologically sound. However, scientific knowledge alone is not sufficient. Practical experience, accumulated wisdom and traditional and indigenous knowledge offer valid solutions, tested by time. Organic agriculture should prevent significant risks by adopting appropriate technologies and rejecting unpredictable ones, such as genetic engineering. Decisions should reflect the values and needs of all who might be affected, through transparent and participatory processes.

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