

18th Organic World Congress

Written inputs from panelists of the Main Track Session

6A: [Organic Agriculture for development](#): Potentials and challenges for improving rural livelihoods (Fish bowl)

Tuesday, 14 October 2014 (11:30-13:00)

Organic Agriculture for Development: Potentials and challenges for improving rural livelihoods

Background

Organic Agriculture has an inherent potential to improve several aspects of rural livelihoods: lower production costs and therefore lower debts, higher incomes, more resilience to market fluctuations and climate change, more food security and better nutrition, sustainable management of soil fertility, water resources, biodiversity, fewer health hazards etc. Nevertheless, many efforts to make use of this potential on a large scale have failed.

Session Objectives

This session will aim to garner a better understanding of why the potentials of Organic agriculture for poverty alleviation and livelihood improvement are not utilized on a larger scale. It will seek to identify the main challenges to achieving these goals and explore how can they be addressed.

Leading Questions

- How can agricultural systems be designed to substantially improve incomes and livelihoods?
- Should the focus be on price premiums, self-sufficiency or ecosystem services? What structures for organizing smallholders should we prioritize?
- How can we best renew, apply and transfer traditional knowledge?
- What are the main lessons that can be learned from present Organic Agriculture projects?
- What are common pitfalls, and how can we avoid them?
- How can we better use the potentials of Organic Agriculture for development and assure impact?
- How can we scale up and replicate successes for livelihood development?

Methodology: Fish Bowl with 4 panelists and 2 open chairs.

Moderator/Rapporteur: Mathew John/Thomas Cierpka

Speakers

- Mohammad Al-Oun, Jordan National Centre for Research and Development, Jordan
- Willy Douma, Hivos International, The Netherlands
- Mehmet Ozokumusoglu, Dogan Organic, Turkey
- Bhola Shreshta, Helvetas Nepal, Nepal
- Melody Meyer, United Natural Foods, USA

Mohammad Al-Oun

(2013) When Organic Farming Blooms at the Jordanian Desert: A Vulnerable Bedouin Community Adopting Organic Farming.

Summary:

Adoption of organic farming is perceived a complex issue surrounded by uncertainty and not easy to practice. However, this paper shows that organic farming has the potential to be adopted even in vulnerable areas with limited resources. It aims to show a practical experience (lessons-learned, achievements and challenges) of a vulnerable Bedouin community adopted organic farming as a farming approach and was to produce about 15 organic vegetable. It also shows how the community worked to overcome barriers such pests, soil fertility and marketing. It suggests that organic farming can be a vital solution for vulnerable communities to produce their food and sustain their resources.

Bhola Shrestha

Context of Nepal:

Nepal has a wider range of agro ecology, ranges from plain Terai to high hills. 65% farm families are engaged in agriculture and contribute 33% of national GDP. More than 84% small holder are in rural area with less than 0.5 ha and are practicing integrated farming system (livestock and crops) which is of subsistence in nature and by default organic.

Government of Nepal has emphasized on organic agriculture through formulating national organic accreditation board; developed organic agriculture production and processing guideline, ICS and PGS guideline. It also initiated to provide subsidy for organic certification and organic fertilizer company, developing organic pockets / zone. Organic Apple and, Coffee have positive influence to livelihood improvement.

Of the total cultivated land, organic certified farm land about 10,000 ha and wild collection is about 25000 ha. 40,000 farmers involve in production and processing. Tea, Coffee, Big cardamom, Ginger and Herbs (wild collection) and are the major crops certified and exported to almost 26 countries. About 30 % production of Tea, and coffee are organic certified. But all coffee and herbs are by default organic. Europe, America, Korea, Australia, Japan, India, china and Taiwan are major export destination. Only one national certification body: Organic Certification Nepal (OCN), a member of Certification Alliance is providing certification service. External certification agencies: ACT, NASAA, IMO, One- Cert, Eco-Cert and Control Union.

Potentials:

- Diversified agro-ecology: higher comparative advantage; niche market with special brand. Like Jamaican Blue Mountain
- Low conversion period due to by default organic production practices: 5 cow produce 1 kg Urea pre /day. Will be sufficient for 0.5 ha (SSMP)
- Government has developed policies and plans in favor to Organic agriculture
- High demand of Himalayan coffee: About 10 fold more than production (418 ton).
- Increasing consumer's willingness to pay more for organic products at domestic market: 20-30 % more (NPG 2011).
- Organised farmers in groups and cooperatives and trade through coop with better income and social premium:
- Trader (National + International) and NGO collaborating in promotion of organic production: **coffee**

Challenges/ Pitfalls:

- Policy: Lack of clear vision from government sector, ambiguity, weak implementation of policies and plans; still green revolution mindset dominates OA.
- Lack of proven special package of practice based on the ecological region and need of the farmers.

- Serious problem of youth migration hit hardest in the agricultural sector in the village.
- Compliance to organic certification system: Building Trust, multiple standards, expensive, difficult in setting up quality management systems (documentation): CCU Lalitpur discontinued coffee export to Korea due to changed standard.
- Knowledge gap in value chain actors and service provide / extension worker due to limited course and activities in school and universities.
- Access to Finance: No or less access to small holders to loan due to existing collateral system
- Security **and Insurance**: Crop insurance scheme at elementary stage.

Way Forward: Designing Agricultural system for improving incomes and livelihoods:

- Develop strong advocacy group: CoPP facilitates Coffee producers Association/Cooperatives and working group.
- Research on; scientific validation of traditional farming practices that could increase land productivity and resource sustainability, identify location specific technology and selection of suitable crops.
- Trade is better than Aid: Promote Small holder friendly production and marketing systems: M4P, Cooperative marketing.
- Institutional capacity development of farmer's organization (groups, cooperatives, associations) with special education e.g. CoPP supports for Farmers Business School/ Business plan development.
- Develop complementarity and bring synergy among the stakeholders: CoPP collaborated with traders-improved in quality of coffee, developed human resource on coffee cup tasting.
- Promote ecosystem based farming with Fair Trade model of marketing to increase premium
- Incorporation of courses related to organic production in education programs: CoPP Developed Coffee Local Resource Person (LRP): collaborated for National Skill standard, and certification of LRP with Center for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT).

Policy review and formulation

- Create enabling environment for implementation of policies and plans to mainstream OA.
- Develop small holder friendly financing policies to access loan.
- For best renew, apply and transfer traditional knowledge: need to document and, disseminate with local validation with scientific reasoning.

Ways to scale up and replicate successes for livelihood development:

- Mainstreaming OA into policy and plans. Implement Public Private Partnership model
- Involvement of private sector in service delivery through capacity building of the farmers and their organization: Local Resource Person development at group/cooperative level.
- Coordination among research, education and extension e.g. Nepal Agriculture Research Council CTEVT/ Agricultural University and MoAD...

- Involvement of private sector in value chain and research

Main lessons that can be learned from present Organic Agriculture projects are:

- Knowledge intensive approach: requiring more design and management not 'just in time' approach of chemical agri.
- Diversified source of income for livelihood: Integrated Coffee farm (livestock, fodder and forest generate 50% + income)
- Organic certification system: Localised certification system gives better benefit to small holder: OCN OACT providing service in reduced cost and local language
- Development of LRP greatly helps in extension and rural livelihood improvement □

Melody Meyer

How can agricultural systems be designed to substantially improve incomes and livelihoods?

Growers (especially small and medium) need to organize themselves around a collective model. This model can share resources of knowledge, inputs, technology, transportation and infrastructure.

Should the focus be on price premiums, self-sufficiency or ecosystem services? What structures for organizing smallholders should we prioritize?

The focus should be on self-sufficiency. This will in turn create market advantages and help the eco-system.

Collective ways of organizing around their farms and businesses including access to International markets.

How can we best renew, apply and transfer traditional knowledge?

Educate Youth on Organic Farming Practices and organic policy.

Create educational forums that are regionally based with organizational guidance from IFOAM partners.

What are the main lessons that can be learned from present Organic Agriculture projects?

More funding is needed for research on technical as well as biological practices.

A mechanism for self-funding for research projects needs to be built into the trade.

What are common pitfalls, and how can we avoid them?

Restrictive regulations that prohibit organic production.

Access to land for organic farmers is an issue that must be addressed in all regions.

Teaching new and emerging farmers to produce organically.

How can we better use the potentials of Organic Agriculture for development and assure impact?

Create measurable outcomes for organic production internationally.

How can we scale up and replicate successes for livelihood development?

Create a common framework that can be applied locally and regionally to develop organic agriculture.