

Stakeholders' Consultation Report Green Action Week Campaign-2016

Hotel Jaipur Palace, Jaipur

October 20, 2016

CUTS International in partnership with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation has implemented a month-long project entitled '**Green Action Week Campaign 2016-Organic Food & Farming for All**'. The project was initiated in September 2016 and concluded in October 2016. Globally the week is celebrated during October 01-09 every year.



The Green Action Week (GAW) Campaign-2016 aimed to facilitate awareness generation among consumers of Jaipur city of Rajasthan about organic food, specifically vegetables and fruits that would encourage consumers to shift towards sustainable pattern of consumption. The campaign was specifically targeted to women, youth amongst consumers.

With the rationale of influencing consumer behaviour in favour of organic food, various activities in the form of workshops with school children, cottage meetings, street plays, signature campaign and stakeholder consultation were held in various parts of Jaipur city. CUTS collaborated with several civil society organisations, consumer and producer groups, policymakers and media to lead towards enhanced availability, affordability and consumption of organic food products.

To mark the conclusion of the GAW Campaign, a State Level Stakeholder Consultation on the theme 'Organic food and farming for all' was organised at Jaipur, on October 20, 2016. The aim of the consultation was to advocate for a shift in policy towards organic consumption and production.

Proceedings

The event commenced with **Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Project Officer, CUTS** welcoming guests and participants. He briefed the participants about CUTS and its various interventions in the field of sustainable development.

This was followed by opening remarks given by **George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS**. He said that India holds a unique position among 172 countries practicing organic agriculture: it has 6,50,000 organic producers, 699 processors, 669 exporters and 7,20,000



hectares under cultivation. But, with merely 0.4 percent of total agricultural land under organic cultivation, the sector has a long journey ahead. An increase in this percentage is only possible when it becomes a people's movement involving all stakeholders. Farmers are afraid to shift to organic farming because of the fear of loss in yield and income during the transition period. The government needs to have a clear policy in place to financially support farmers during the transition period. He cited the example of Sikkim, which is 100 percent organic farming state, while Kerala is going to achieve that status soon with the mutual support of the government and farmers. If Rajasthan has to achieve progress in organic farming cultivation, then it needs integrated efforts from both the government and farmers' side and massive awareness campaigns.

Varidhi Singh, Project Officer, CUTS made a presentation on 'Organic Food and Farming for All' by providing a brief overview of the campaign and responses generated during its course. She brought to light the impact of consumerism on organic farming. She highlighted the importance of creating awareness among key stakeholders, viz., producers, consumers and decision makers, and the need for coordinated efforts amongst them to support and promote organic food, which will, in turn, accelerate shift at the level of policy making and consumption patterns. She stated that the aim of campaign was to bring out problems associated with the use of pesticides in farming and drive consumer awareness in favour of organic farming and food.

She apprised the audience that the reach of the campaign this year was extended to women and children by conducting “awareness *chaupals*’ in cottage industries, B.Ed colleges, schools, and households. Steps to promote kitchen/roof top gardens were also undertaken. She emphasised on the need of government interventions in promoting and training people on growing kitchen gardens. Under the campaign, street plays and signature campaign were organised as a means of inclination of all for pro-organic food and farming. She pointed out that accessibility and affordability are key challenges in the mission towards Pro-organic food choice and sustainability as a whole.



Shital Prasad Sharma, Director, Rajasthan State Institute for Agriculture Management, Jaipur laid emphasis on the need of integration of work amongst the *Krishi Vibhag* (Agriculture Department) and other stakeholders, including but not limited to

farmers and related government authorities. While unequivocally supporting the mission towards pro-organic, he stressed on challenges in way of it, such as hunger, lack of nutrition and of course, need of paradigm shift from conventional to organic farming methods. Explaining the difference between conventional and organic farming, he said that organic farming is a process involving conventional farming with a scientific approach. He cautioned farmers and other stakeholders of the misconception about earthworm as sole organic input. He advised that earthworm as a relatively short life up to 2 years and thus there is a need to recognise and develop other organic inputs. In this direction, he recognised the efforts of CSWI in R&D on developing organic input from left over wool.

Pro-organic is a way to achieve sustainability and it hinges on consumers’ trust and honesty towards organic food and farming. In this regard, he appreciated CUTS for being sole organisation for reaching out to farmers and consumer councils advocating policy on domestic production of organic, for domestic consumption.

A K Gupta Prof. & Head, Rajasthan Agriculture Research Institute, Jaipur applauded CUTS for organising the consultation on such a topical theme in the field of sustainable development. He laid stress on healthy soil which gives healthy food and can be achieved with the help of integrated farming



methods by adopting organic farming. He underlined the need to make organic inputs available and accessible. The stubbles of crops should not be burnt rather be utilised as an organic input. The dependence on pesticides needs to be contained. Also, there is a need for location-centric research.

Speaking on sustainable development, Gupta stated that production increased but not sustainability. Soil pollution, ground water depletion, reduction in forest wealth, reduced water per capita availability, global warming and climate change affected farming. He opined that with the arrival of 'Green Revolution' India has achieved food security but the focus has been shifted towards the issue of food safety in the present context. Lack of employment opportunities to farmers has reduced agriculture. He also pointed out the need of alternate employment of farmers in dairy, poultry etc.

S Mukherjee, Professor of Horticulture, RARI, Durgapura, Jaipur apprised the audience of the fact that only 0.4 percent of the total food production is organic. It is thus necessary that through awareness and availability the production of the organic food can be increased for domestic consumption.

Satyaveer Beniwal, Deputy General Manager, Morarka Foundation gave a presentation on 'Organic Certification', its procedures and implementation. He shed light on various certifications available around the globe and said that National Organic Programme (NOP), National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP), European Union (EU) norms are common certificates. The certification is of two types 'grower group' for farmers and 'process unit' for produce. He informed that till 2004, there was no system of group certification, due to which the cost of certification is high. He elaborated on the procedure for obtaining the certificate and details, such as *Khasra* and *Aadhar* number etc.. He also dealt with the non-compliances and its correctional methods in his presentation. In processing unit certification, there are four levels depending on the year of conversion, 1C, 2C, 3C and 4C. Shedding light on the 'traceability system', he stated that the system ensures end-to-end track points, such as who grows what, purchase of product till end user, processing subsequent marketing, and likewise.

Open Discussion

The panel discussion was followed by an open session where participants shared their views on consuming organic products. While the participants unanimously expressed the desire and need for shift from conventional to organic food, the shortcomings in the way, such as lack of availability of organic input especially seeds, accessibility and high rates of organic food were also pondered upon as a major stumbling block.



The government interventions both at level of policy and grassroots implementation and support for training farmers with led out examples on inputs and techniques is indispensable in this regard. He opined that *Parmparagath Krishi Vikas Yojana* (Traditional Farming Improvement Programme), has been launched by the Government of India to develop farmer's inclination towards organic farming. In view of this, the government should enact major policy changes in order to make organic food easily available, accessible and affordable. Participants emphasised that there should be regular awareness generation regarding the accreditation and certification of organic products.

Recommendations

- The outlook of government towards organic food should be oriented towards domestic needs and production
- There should be augmentation of government policies



- and policy implementation through integrated approach to enhance availability and accessibility of organic farming inputs and awareness and training of farmers about benefits of organic farming
- Increased number of retail outlets of organic products will provide ease of access and affordability of organic food to consumers. More consumers should be engaged in organic production and consumption in form of kitchen garden

Vote of Thanks

Rajdeep Pareek, Project Officer, CUTS summarised discussions and delivered vote of thanks to all participants. It stated that GAW, a complimentary programme of Pro-Organic, touched upon the urban population and its level of awareness and need for organic food. He informed that presently 150,000 hectare of agricultural land in Rajasthan is under organic farming and further emphasised on need for campaigning among all stakeholders to promote organic food and farming at all levels. The consultation generated a good response from participants.