

Stakeholders' Consultation Report Green Action Week Campaign-2014 Hotel Jaipur Palace, Jaipur October 16, 2014

CUTS International in partnership with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation has implemented a two month long project entitled “Green Action Week Campaign 2014- *Organic Food and Farming for All*”. The project was initiated in the month of September, 2014 and concluded in October, 2014 with the majority of the activities taking place in September.

The Green Action Week Campaign-2014 aimed to facilitate awareness generation among the consumers of Jaipur city of Rajasthan about organic food, especially the vegetables and fruits that would encourage consumers to shift towards sustainable pattern of consumption. The campaign was specifically targeted to women and youth amongst the consumers.



With the rationale of influencing consumer behaviour in favour of organic food, various activities in the form of cottage meetings, street plays, signature campaigns and stakeholder consultations took place in various parts of Jaipur. CUTS collaborated with several civil society organisations, consumer groups, producer groups, policy makers and media to lead towards enhanced availability, affordability and consumption of organic food products.

To mark the conclusion of the ‘Green Action Week Campaign’, a State-level Stakeholder Consultation on the theme “Organic food and farming for all” was organised on October 16, 2014 at Hotel Jaipur Palace, Jaipur. The aim of the consultation was to advocate for a shift in policy towards organic consumption and production. More than 70 representatives from civil

society/consumer organisations, farmers' group, media and government departments actively participated in the consultation.

Proceedings

The event commenced with Deepak Saxena, Senior Programme Coordinator, CUTS welcoming the guests and the participants. He briefed the participants about CUTS and its various interventions in the field of sustainable development.



This was followed by introductory remarks given by George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS. Cheriyan while welcoming the guests cited some examples saying that there are 140 percent more pesticides than the allowed limit in fruits, such as Apple and Orange. He said that locations such as *Amanishah Nallah* are supplying vegetables with toxic components which constitute 20 percent of consumption in the city and the continuation of the same even after the High Court's order. It was also pointed out that the consumers as individuals can

play their role well by doing 'kitchen gardening' or 'backyard farming' of organic produce.

Varidhi Singh, Project Officer, CUTS through a presentation provided a brief overview of the campaign and the response generated during the course of campaign. She highlighted that the aim of the campaign was to bring out the problems associated with use of pesticides in farming and to generate consumer awareness in favour of organic farming and food. She further brought out the various details regarding the various activities undertaken, such as Cottage Meetings, Signature Campaign, Street Plays which were organised in the city during month of September.

R. A Mishra, General Manager, National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development, applauded CUTS for organising the consultation on such a topical theme in the field of sustainable development. He shared his experience of working on the issue of organic farming through 'Farmer Clubs' and briefed about the initiatives of NABARD, such as credit schemes for organic cultivation.





During the consultation, Sheetal Prasad Sharma, Additional Director Department of Agriculture, Government of Rajasthan who was invited as the special guest, briefed about the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture and Sub-Mission under Organic Agriculture. He also shared that the department had received the first installment of Rs125 Crore for promotion of organic farming and emphasised that gaps in the organic value chain need to be

addressed.

K Ram Krishna, Director of Research, **SKN** Agriculture University, Jobner through a presentation conveyed that there are serious health concerns due to polluted environment, unsafe drinking water and food, thus calling for an immediate action in favour of organic farming and consumption.

Sanjay Jhala, Dy. Director, Department of Food and Consumer Affairs, linked the need of organic farming and consumption with the traditional values and emphasised on adopting good moral values.



As part of the event, a technical session was also held in which panel discussion took place. This session was moderated by Amrat Singh, Assistant Director, CUTS. The panellists were experts from different agencies viz., S Rathore from *Krishi Vigyan Kendra*, Chomu, A C Shivran, Prof. of Agronomy from SKN University of Agriculture and Satyaveer Beniwal, Deputy General Manager of Morarka Foundation. Rathore explained that the natural means of carrying out agricultural

practices without the use of chemicals and pesticides is extremely indigenous to Rajasthan and therefore the farmers should shift towards growing and producing by organic mode. Prof. Shivran specifically discussed about the techniques of organic cultivation and various methods through which crops could be protected without the use of pesticides and other chemicals. Beniwal from Morarka Foundation mentioned about the certification procedure of organic food products.

Open House Session

The panel discussion was followed by an open session where participants shared their views on the consumption of organic products. Almost all of them had expressed in unison that the major deterring fact against consumption of organic products is their exceptionally high market rate. Thus in view of this the government should enact some major policy changes which would make organic food easily available, accessible and affordable. The participants also shared that there should be regular awareness generation regarding the accreditation and certification of organic products.



Recommendations

- Mass awareness programmes with the farming community as well as with the consumers
- Government should promote training programmes for organic farming
- Rewards and subsidies to those who are engaged in organic production and sale
- Reduction in market price of organic products
- Increased number of Retail outlets of organic products
- More and more consumers should engage in organic production and consumption in the form of kitchen garden

Vote of Thanks

Amarjeet Singh, Project Coordinator, CUTS summarised the discussions held and delivered vote of thanks to all the participants. The consultation generated a phenomenal response from the participants and was able to secure adequate coverage in the media as well.