

Developing a Culture of Sustainable Consumption and Lifestyle through Organic Production and Consumption in the State of Rajasthan (ProOrganic-II)



A Communiqué-VI

ProOrganic' project was initiated in November 2013 to promote organic consumption in the State of Rajasthan. The objective of this phase of the project was to create demand among consumers for organic products and sensitise farmers for shifting towards organic farming and advocacy on issues related to organic farming. The phase was concluded in March 2017, with major activities getting accomplished in a span of three years like Awareness Generation Campaigns, Organic Fairs, Farmer's Training and Exposure Visits and Consultations apart from research components in the project area.

This phase of the project had a deep impact as a remarkable increase in the area of organic farming was observed in the State. In addition, there was also a hike in demand for organic products by the consumers. Looking at the success of Phase-I, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) further agreed to extend its support for another four years to implement phase-II of the project entitled, 'Developing a Culture of Sustainable Consumption and Lifestyle through Organic Production and Consumption in the State of Rajasthan (ProOrganic-II)' from April 01, 2017 to March 31, 2021 in 192 gram panchayats (in ten selected districts of Rajasthan). One of the basic ideas of the project is promoting sustainable consumption and production, which are important aspects of sustainable regime. This is largely consistent with the environmental and social factors and education and empowerment of consumers.

ProOrganic-II project mainly focuses on the aspect of sustainable food and farming, and to formulate an agenda to achieve the same. This will be acquired through promoting organic production of farm products, on the one hand, and promoting organic consumption, on the other. Consequently, this will also lead to sustainable development in Agriculture and Environmental sector, as a whole. The target group of the project comprises entire population of the selected ten districts namely: Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, Dausa, Jaipur, Jhalawar, Jhoshpur, Kota, Pratapgarh, Sawai Madhopur and Udaipur; 96 blocks; and selected 192 gram panchayats of the districts covered of Rajasthan. Details about the project can be accessed at: <https://cuts-cart.org/developing-a-culture-of-sustainable-consumption-and-lifestyle-through-organic-production-and-consumption-in-state-of-rajasthan-proorganic-ii/>

Heading Towards New Year 2020-21

With an objective to set a direction to promote organic farming and consumption, project activities start with an orientation to district and block level partners every financial year. In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic resulting into complete lockdown all over the country, the project team did try to remain connected with the district partners through virtual mode and the first formal virtual orientation meeting was organised on May 8, 2020, which discussed the ongoing and the future activities for 2020-21. In a run up to this, another virtual meeting was organized on June 26, 2020. This was followed by two more meetings on July 15 and August 6, 2020 seeking information on the status of programmes that got started and plan of action for upcoming months. Ultimately, the physical mode of Partner's Orientation Meeting for district and block level partners of Jaipur district was organized on October 28, 2020 at Jaipur. The purpose of orientation meeting was to not only orient the partners on the proposed activities of that particular year within the prescribed time frame, target groups, areas and set direction but also to brief all the field team to implement the activities with an objective to bring changes through the intervention at the ground level.



Lessons to Villagers on Hygiene, Physical Distancing and Safe Food Practices



A set of fifty awareness programmes on 'Hygiene, Physical Distancing and Safe Food Practices' in select villages of 11 target districts (ten of ProOrganic II and Banswara) was planned. This standalone activity with a set of 50 awareness meetings kick-started on July 1, 2020 and got over on July 15, 2020. In all, 10 out of 50 meetings were monitored in person by the project team in different places. Rest was directly supervised by the district partners. IEC on Covid-19, which includes posters and pamphlets, etc., and kits, which includes masks, washing soap and hand sanitisers, were distributed in all the 50 awareness camps. HUL, India office, also provided soaps for free distribution, which served as an additional material for distribution along with our kit during the camps. Sarpanch (Head of village government), medical staff, ANM (Auxiliary Nursing Midwives) and teachers participated in most of the meetings, who also served as important resource persons on physical distancing, wearing of masks, use of sanitizer and related issues, etc.

Strengthening ProOrganic Voice at the Grassroots

With an objective to take forward the movement and to make consumers/farmers aware of organic products and to influence their buying/farming habits, Village & Block Level Awareness Campaigns have been an important and continuous activity. The activity was conducted at 192 villages (gram panchayats)



& 96 Blocks. Despite pandemic situation, there was a big curiosity towards participation in the camps. Covid-19 protocol was followed religiously with masks wearing, social distancing and sanitizing, etc.

Initially, the participation was restricted to 30-35 participants due to protocol and later, when it eased, it was around 50 participants on an average were permitted to participate in each camp, which included farmers, village level traders, elected representative, people directly/indirectly involved in agricultural, consumers, local officials, experts, youth groups, SHGs, local CSOs, etc. A total 9628 participants have attended these activities during the reporting period in VLAMs, out of which, nearly 46 percent of them being women participants. After a long time, the camps in this year were brought to block level.



In blocks, the total number of participations of 5719 with nearly 52 percent being women farmers has shown a good response. As usual, media played a vital role for wider outreach.

Building Capacities, Inspiring Farmers

Ten farmers' training and exposure visits were organised in each of the targeted districts during the year to build capacity and inspire farmers to take up organic farming. The trained farmers further acted as a catalyst at local level for imparting the knowledge and information they have gained out of the trainings among fellow farmers, including farmers from neighbouring villages and those who could not attend the trainings due to some reasons. In all districts, efforts were made to ensure participation of farmers, especially women farmers representing all blocks of the district. Total 415 farmers of ten districts with forty percent of women participants were benefited from these trainings and exposure visits. All trainings and exposure visits were successful in terms of geographical coverage of participation, gender involvement, media coverage and overall conduct.



Compost Pit Developers – A Perfect Example of Community Sharing

Compost pits development worked has been proving a perfect example of community sharing. Fifty compost cells (five in each district) were set-up during 2020-21 as a novel activity to address the problem of scarcity of organic manure and to motivate farmers for shifting from chemical to organic farming. This activity helped in motivating the farmers starting from smaller level. They were supplied with readymade kits, worms and cow dung, etc., required for compost cells. Through this, these farmers are being benefited in terms of not only using the vermi-compost from these units but these units also help them in pulverising the wastes around their farms. Besides, these farmers benefitted other farmers as well by sharing vermi-compost. So, that way, the concept of sharing was also addressed to a large extent through the activity.



Community Seed Cell Management Concept Further Consolidates



This was the second year in succession of this unique activity with the purpose of protecting, preserving and promoting different indigenous seeds, which are existing in our country in organic farming. This year, the main purpose was only to consolidate the existing seed cell, which were established during last year, so the initial 'Knowledge Sharing Meetings' in all the targeted ten districts with the selected farmers focused on their experience and knowledge-sharing with

new farmers, who have just joined the cell. Later in the 'Feedback Meetings' at same places with group leaders and other farmers, the discussions focused on mainly the progress and the future strategies for taking this work forward. These consolidated seed cells are anticipated to be another activity of addressing community sharing in future.

Organic Fairs – A Merry Time for Organic Producers and Consumers

The purpose of the fair is to provide a platform and guidance to the farmers for selling their organic products and make them further aware about the importance of the issue and also make the consumers aware about the available organic products and its benefits by bringing both farmers and consumers on the same platform. These fairs have helped not only the producers but also retailers and consumers to share their thoughts and experiences at a common platform. During the year, a total of ten organic fairs were conducted in ten targeted districts.



A Perfect Platform for Sharing Experience and Achievements – Stakeholders' Consultation



Before embarking on the decisive stage of a project, it is quite apt to discuss the boons and banes of the activities done at the previous stage so that the most efficient route to achieve the targets in an optimum way can be identified. The State Level Stakeholder Consultation was held on March 15, 2021 at Jaipur. Total 55 participants comprising of districts and block partners including their farmers, all the stakeholders like government officials, Agriculture

University, Agriculture Research University, Agriculture Science Centre, NGOs, CSOs and media participated. The highlight of this year's consultation was the exhibition, which was showcased by selected progressive farmers at the venue itself and then honour by way of an award to selected progressive farmers by the guest speakers for contributing in organic farming in their respective areas. These farmers were the farmers who were motivated through CUTS efforts and changed the mode to organic from chemical.

Awareness for Urban Population – Green Action Week, Rajasthan

Sharing Community was the theme for the campaign in 2020. Since 2018, the campaign had focussed on encouraging cultures of sharing and collaboration among urban consumers. This year, the campaign discussed and implemented ways to bring equal and sustainable access to goods and services to benefit the people and the planet through sharing and collaboration. This campaign helped create a network of organisations working on sustainable consumption and strengthen the collective advocacy for rebuilding recovery plans that will reverse current trends and change the consumption patterns towards a more sustainable future. Consumers were trained to imbibe the habit of sharing and kitchen gardens were developed in four different target communities of Jaipur. A 'Wall of Kindness' was set up in each community, where people can put their used and unused household items like clothes, crockery items, books, etc., to share with other community members. Setting up of Community libraries was another key activity to learn and disseminate information among urban consumers. On the occasion of Stakeholder' Consultation, the best women kitchen gardeners were awarded with a token of appreciation and memento during the campaign.



Message of Sharing Goes Wider – Green Action Week, India Campaign



With the purpose of spreading the campaign, CUTS has been implementing GAW activities in other parts of India with the support of state-level networking organizations since last few years. Total 143 organisations had applied for this year's GAW, India. Out of these, 11 organisations were shortlisted after rounds of scrutiny. A WhatsApp Group was created for incorporating all the 11 partners and project team to share event reports and media coverage and regular interaction. Out

of the total 11 organisations, activities in six states were physically monitored by CUTS project team, mainly their state-level stakeholder's consultations. With the purpose of evaluating the campaign of the year and to present the highlights of the campaign, as usual, a partners meeting in Jaipur was organised on December 22, 2020 with the participation of representatives of all the partner organisations, where the partners showcased their performance in the respective areas through presentations. George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International, welcomed all the participants and said that COVID-19 had thrown travel plans worldwide into disarray and appreciated the courage that participants have shown. He explained about Green Action Week, which is a global campaign to promote sustainable consumption.

Sustainable Consumption & Production – A Consumer Perspective

Five years into the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the assessment of the progress in India shows it is doubtful that India will achieve any of the targets of SDG-12, which is 'Responsible Consumption and Production.' In addition, the status of many of the indicators may further worsen by 2030, compared with 2015, due to the negative impact of the pandemic and various other reasons.

This was one of the major findings of a study done by CUTS International on SDFG-12 entitled "Sustainable Consumption and Production – A Consumer Perspective". The study mainly looked at SDG-12 from a consumer perspective based on The United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP). The importance of studying and analysing the achievement of a country's progress under SDG-12 than any other goal was felt because of its interlinking nature with other goals. Almost all other goals are connected with SDG-12, thereby underlining that any progress in meeting Agenda 2030 by a country cannot be achieved without carefully approaching and addressing the concerns under SDG-12.

The key findings of this study by CUTS on SDG-12 were discussed and deliberated in the National Consultation organised by CUTS International in partnership with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) in New Delhi on March 18, 2021.

During the inaugural session, Rene Van Berkel, UNIDO Representative, Regional Office in India, said, "SDGs are very interconnected". George Cheriyan expressed concern about how neglected

SDG-12 is when compared to all other goals. Archana Datta, SWITCH-Asia RPAC Coordinator for India, UNEP, spoke on efforts, which are being currently taken under SWITCH Asia Programme to address this concern.

The consultation underlined the need for the centre to take the lead in adopting a green public procurement policy to send a strong message to the business community and create a solid thrust to expedite the not-so-active national ecolabel 'Ecomark'. Apart from sharing best practices from the project states, this consultation deliberated on various other topics like food loss, sustainable tourism, natural resource efficiency and many more.



Capacity Building Programme for CSOs

The main purpose of this assignment is to conduct capacity building programme on planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME) for CUTS team and other selected CSOs. Like in other SSNC supported assignment/projects, this work also got delayed due to the pandemic and was extended to 2021. In the year 2020, the team shortlisted the probable participants for the training and also the probable trainers for the PME. It was mainly focussed on conducting capacity building programme for CUTS team and other selected CSOs with follow up activities. Later, on February 1-2, 2021, the PME workshop could finally be conducted. Dr. Kaustuv Kanti Bandhopadhyay, Director, along with his



colleague Yashvi Sharma were the trainers. Total 23 participants, who were finally shortlisted, attended the workshop, including 13 CUTS staff from different centres and 9 partner representatives from 7 states in India.

Growing Trend of Organic Food Consumption Amid Pandemic: A Random Perception Survey

A random perception survey by CUTS International in Rajasthan on growing trend in organic consumption and sale in Rajasthan during initial pandemic period of ten months targeting consumers and sellers with 200 samples of consumers from each of the ten targeted districts of ProOrganic and 20 samples of organic sellers were taken from each district. The results of the survey have been overwhelming and encouraging. Ninety-one percent organic sellers and 89 percent consumers have confirmed that there has been a substantial growth in both sale and the consumption of organic products during the pandemic. Media has covered it very well.

An Overwhelming Response from Consumers and Farmers – Endline Survey

CUTS work under ProOrganic II project has shown impact with tremendous results through an endline survey done among the same stakeholders and in the same area. The purpose of the end line research was to gauge the level of impact, which has been created in the last four years of intervention as part of project outcome in the targeted ten districts. The key findings with regard to comparison of this endline survey with baseline survey of 2017 shows that awareness level among consumers on ill-effects of chemical input-based food products rose from 86% to 97.4%. Similarly, awareness about organic products has enhanced to 94.7% as compared to baseline's 84%. More important is that the percentage of consumers buying organic products has gone up to nearly 66.8%, which was earlier only 39% during the baseline. The percentage of consumers reported difficulty in buying organic products in the market has reduced to 40% from earlier 68%.

From the farmer's angle, awareness on ill-effects of farming-based chemical inputs, there is a slight increase, which is 97% as compared to earlier 94%. 26.1% of farmers, who earlier had reported during the baseline for doing chemical-based farming has reduced to 13.3 during four years of period. Around 51% of farmers have reported getting higher price from the market as compared to earlier baselines' 32%. Based on the learnings and CUTS's efforts and initiative to expand organic production and consumption, now 98% of farmers have agreed to motivate and help other farmers to convert to organic mode, which was only 91%.



Additional Activities/Initiatives

- **50th Anniversary of 'Earth Day' on April 22, 2020 Celebrated Virtually**
Earth Day was observed by organising a webinar on April 22, 2020. It was attended by 32 participants mainly representatives of civil society organisations across the country and CUTS staff from India, Lusaka, and Nairobi.
- **Virtual Celebration of 'World Environment Day' on June 5, 2020**
World Environment Day was observed by organizing a webinar using a virtual platform of Zoom on Friday, June 05, 2020. It was attended by more than 65 participants, mainly representatives of civil society organizations across the country. George Cheriyan moderated the webinar. Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International; Anubha Prasad, National Coordinator, Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), UNEP, New Delhi; Maria Rydlund, Senior Policy Advisor (Tropical Forest), Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), Stockholm, Sweden; Naomi Scott-Mearns, Sustainable Consumption Manager, Consumers International, London and Dr. Balakrishna Pisupathi, Chairperson, FLEDGE & Regional Vice-Chair of IUCN Commission on Education and Communication, New Delhi, were the speakers, who all spoke and deliberated on different aspects of the World Environment Day 2020 theme 'Biodiversity–Time for Nature', which describes the variety of life on Earth.
- **Virtual 4th International SCORAI Conference on June 10-12, 2020**
George Cheriyan and the team attended the 4th International SCORAI (Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative) conference on June 10-12, 2020 with the theme 'Sustainable Consumption & Social Justice in an Urbanizing World', which was jointly organized by Northeastern University (School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs) and the KTH Royal Institute of Technology. George appeared in the first rank in the SCORAI leaders' board as a result of interactions and uploading on the online platform. The pre-conference session was attended by George Cheriyan and Amar Deep Singh on June 8, 2020 with other Think Tank members of SSNC.
- **A Webinar on 'Role of Organic Products/Organic Farming in Dealing with the Pandemic' on August 21, 2020**
A webinar on 'Role of Organic Products/Organic Farming in Dealing with the Pandemic' on August 21, 2020 was organised by CUTS team. The main speakers were Dr. S. K. Sharma, Zonal Director, Research, MPUAT, Udaipur; Dr. A. K. Sharma, Principal Scientist, CAZRI, Jodhpur; Virendra Parihar, Programme Producer, DD Kisaan Channel, Doordarshan Kendra, Jaipur and Rohit Jain, Secretary, OFAI. Deepak Saxena moderated. Nearly 103 participated, which included farmers from project districts, NGO representatives, government officials and students of agriculture universities.
- **SDG: Will the Pandemic Slowdown the Progress of Meeting the Target' on August 26, 2020-A Webinar**
A webinar was organised on the topic 'SDG:12 Will the Pandemic Slowdown the Progress of Meeting the Target' on August 26, 2020. Archana Datta, Project Coordinator for India for SWITCH-Asia (RPAC), UN Environment Programme India Office; Eva Eiderström, Director, Department of Ecolabelling and Green Consumption, SSNC; Dr. Usha Titus, Principal Secretary, Department of Environment, Kerala, and Dr. Joy Elamon, Director General, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, were the main speaker of webinar and shared their thoughts on SDG12 and its progress. George Cheriyan moderated the discussion. More than 100 participants from 23 states of India and 12 countries, including representatives of UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-ESCAP, and ASEAN secretariat, civil society organisations and academics attended the webinar. Webinar got good media coverage as well.
- **Virtual Meetings of the Think Tank in June, September and December, 2020**
George Cheriyan attended a virtual meeting of the Think Tank on September 8-10, 2020, which was in continuation to the meeting held on June 9, 2020. The meeting focused on moving beyond discussion to action on the priorities the group had identified in the June meeting. George made a presentation on the 'Impact of the Pandemic on the Sustainable Consumption'. The third meeting of the Think Tank Group was held December 8-9, 2020. In addition to reviewing the decisions taken during the meeting in September, 2020, day one of the meeting mainly discussed about the design of the Anthology and day two discussed about the opportunities for advocacy on SDG12 during 2021, including UN HLPF.
- **Manifestation for Environmental Defenders "Light4Defenders" on December 10, 2020 – A Virtual Celebration**
December 10 is earmarked as the anniversary of the Universal Human Rights Declaration. To honor the hundreds of environmental defenders, who are killed every year, we have organised a small manifestation by lighting candles and joined in a digital manifestation by loading up a photo of lighting a candle in social media under the joint hashtag #Light4Defenders.

