

HAS PANDEMIC REALLY HELPED IN PROMOTING ORGANIC CONSUMPTION: A RANDOM PERCEPTION SURVEY IN RAJASTHAN

Background

In the midst of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, with no vaccine in sight or still in the making stage, an intriguing development occurred at the global as well as the national level, which is a remarkable surge in the sales of organic products in the country over last ten months or so, which has encouraged several organic retailers to come up overnight. This change has occurred because of the changing eating habits of consumers, who are turning to organic foods in order to enhance immunity against Covid 19.

In order to take better cognizance of this development, CUTS International surveyed the sellers and consumers of organic food products.

Objective Behind Surveying Consumers

The main objective behind getting the survey done is:

- To ascertain the factors that drove the consumers to buy organic food products.
- To ascertain the specific organic food products that were preferred by the consumers.
- To become aware of the consumer's experience, while purchasing organic food products.
- To ascertain the consumer's perspective on organic food products.

Objective Behind Surveying Sellers

- To ascertain the demand of organic food products in the market.
- To ascertain the source of procurement for organic food products supplied in the market.
- To ascertain consumer preferences regarding specific organic food products.
- To ascertain whether consumers prefer to buy organic food products through physical contact or electronic means.
- To ascertain the effect of the increasing demand of organic food products in the market, on farmers and retailers.
- To ascertain the difference between the demand of organic food products and non-organic food products in the market.

Geographical Area Covered

In order to gather adequate empirical data for making substantiated deductions, rural and urban consumers from ten districts of Rajasthan have been surveyed at random. Similarly, retailers selling organic food products exclusively or inclusively across the same each of the ten districts of Rajasthan were surveyed. These targeted ten districts are the districts, where CUTS has already been intervening through its ongoing project ProOrganic II, which is been supported by Swedish Society of Nature Conservation (SSNC).

CUTS Initiatives in Promoting Organic Consumption

'ProOrganic' project was initiated in November, 2013 to promote organic consumption in the State of Rajasthan. The objective 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 project 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, Consultations apart from research components in the project area. 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 10 selected districts of Rajasthan, India).

One of the basic idea 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. In 'ProOrganic II' project, focus is on the aspect of sustainable food and farming, and to formulate an agenda to achieve it. (More details at <https://cuts-cart.org/developing-a-culture-of-sustainable-consumption-and-lifestyle-through-organic-production-and-consumption-in-state-of-rajasthan-proorganic-ii/#3>)

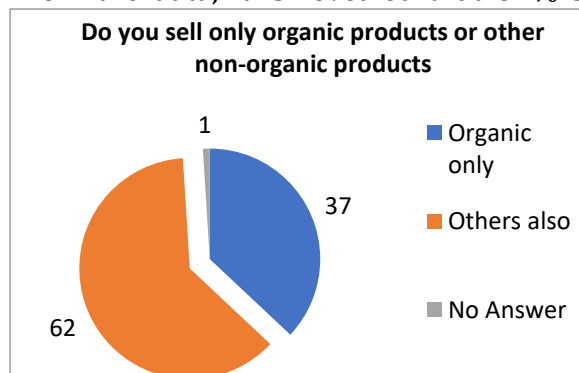
Synthesized Summary of the Survey

A. Survey with Organic Shopkeepers on Sale and Consumption of Organic Products

The total number of samples received from sellers from ten districts and the summary of responses received from these respondents is as:

1. Do you sell only organic products or other non-organic products as well?

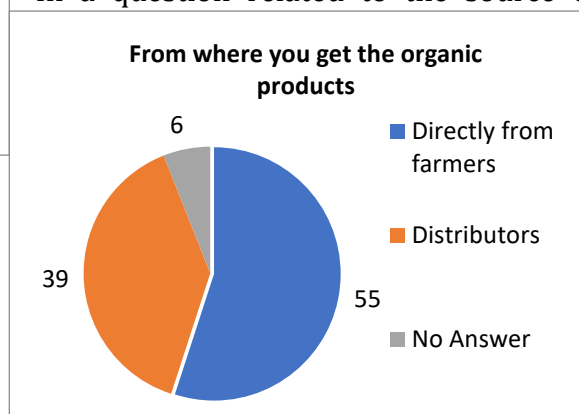
From the data, it is revealed that 62% shopkeepers have admitted confirmed selling organic food products along with other products and 37% responded that they do not sell.



getting the products, out of the total respondents, 55% respondent sellers have confirmed procuring their organic food products directly from the farmers, while 39% of the them have admitted procuring their organic food products directly from the distributors.

2. From where did you get the organic products?

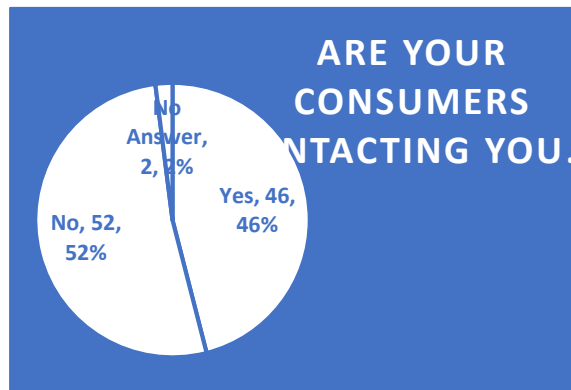
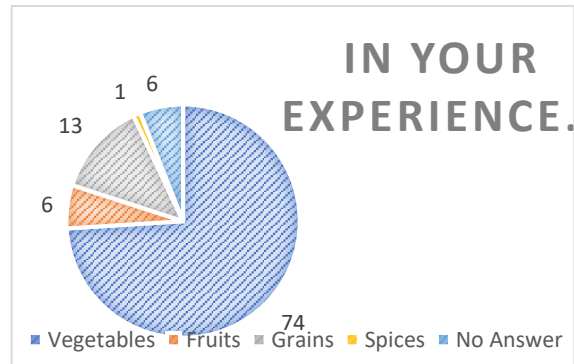
In a question related to the source of



3. In your experience, which organic product are on high demand during the pandemic?

In another question related to kind of organic product in demand from the consumer's side, 74% shopkeepers believe organic vegetables are on high demand, 6% believe organic fruits, 13% for grains and only 1% believe that organic spices are on high demand.

4. Are your consumers contacting you directly to buy organic products online

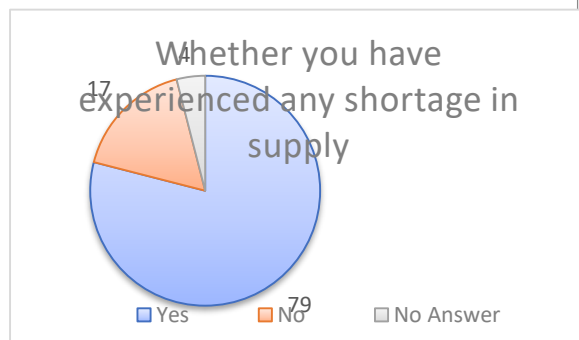
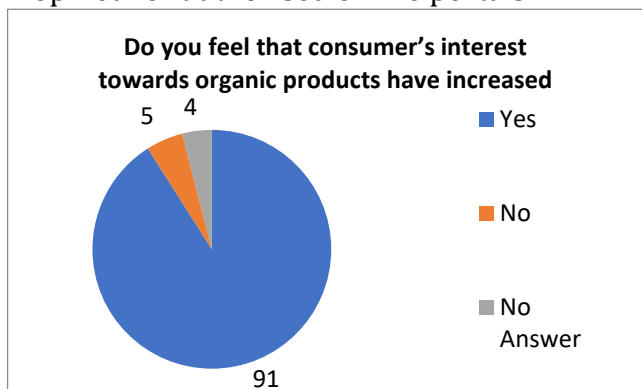


during this pandemic? If yes, then what mode, do you prefer to sell to them?

In a response to the above question, 46% sellers are being contacted directly to buy organic food products online, while 52% shopkeepers affirmed that they are not being contacted directly to buy organic food products online. In the second part of this question, majority of 46% respondents opined for authorised online portals.

5. Do you feel that consumer's interest towards organic products have increased during the Corona pandemic?

In the most interesting and relevant question of the survey, 91% shopkeepers believe that consumers' interest towards organic food products has increased enormously, while 5% shopkeepers believe negative to this.



6. Whether you have experienced any shortage in supply?

In continuation to the previous question, 79% shopkeepers have experienced shortage in supply, while 17% sellers have confirmed to not experience any shortage in supply.

7. In the era of enhanced interest towards the organic products, do you insist farmers to grow more organic in order to balance the demand and supply chain?

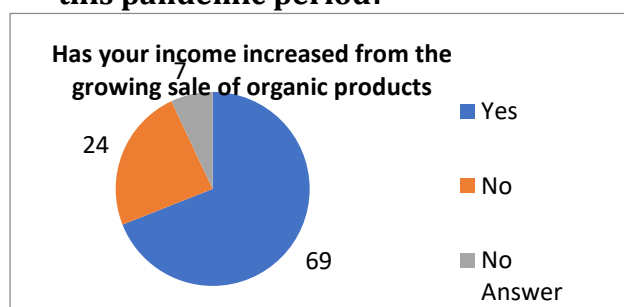
In continuation to another relevant question, as many as 77% shopkeepers have agreed to insist farmers to grow more organic food products in order to maintain the supply chain, while 21% shopkeepers did not do so.



8. Whether there is a difference in prices of organic products comparing with normal products?

In another very relevant descriptive question, as many as 90 percent of shopkeepers opined for higher prices as compared to normal rates, which they said that it is due to shortage in supply from the producer's side but in the context, they also asserted that if this flow of high demand, which has been created during the pandemic continues for ever in future, then in no way, anyone can stop them in reducing the prices of organic products even lesser comparing to non-organic in future. Only 8 percent responded negative and the rest 2% did not respond to this question.

9. Has your income from the growing sale of organic products increased during this pandemic period?



In this question, which is important from the shopkeeper's angle, 69% sellers claim that their income has increased from the growing sale of organic food products, while 24% claim that their income has not increased.

10. If yes, how do you think that this growing demand from consumers will help boosting morale of farmers to grow more and more organic?

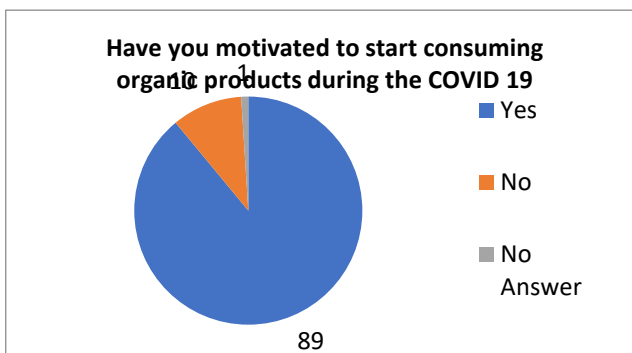
In the last question of the survey with sellers, which is descriptive again and is in a run up to question 8 and 9, the shopkeepers (90%) as responded in question 8 proclaimed that the present running trend will help in establishing the interest among consumers towards organic consumption, which will further contribute in boosting morale of producers as well and ultimately help in equating the market channel of farmer (producer)_retailer-consumers (end user).

B. Survey with Consumers on Sale and Consumption of Organic Products

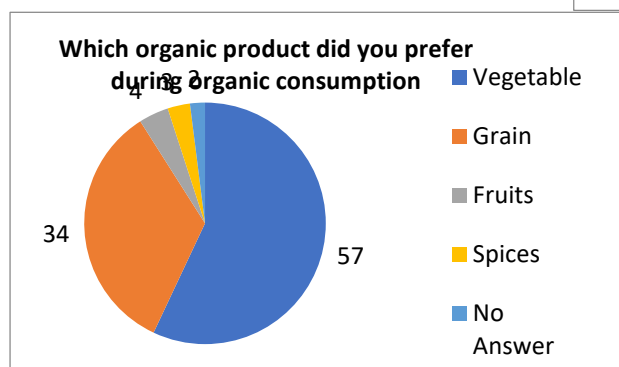
The analysis of responses from rural and urban consumers belonging to all the districts of Rajasthan is as below:

1. If you were not consuming organic products earlier, then have been motivated to start consuming organic products during the pandemic situation?

In a response to this, as many as 89% consumers are motivated to start consuming organic food products during the COVID-19 pandemic, while 10% consumers responded negative to it.



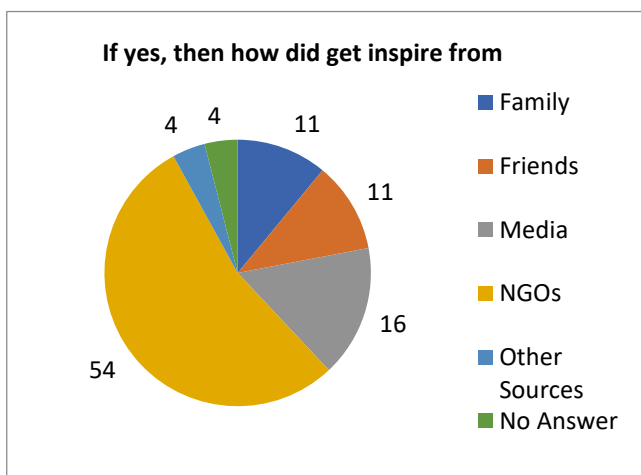
2. Which organic product did you prefer during organic consumption?



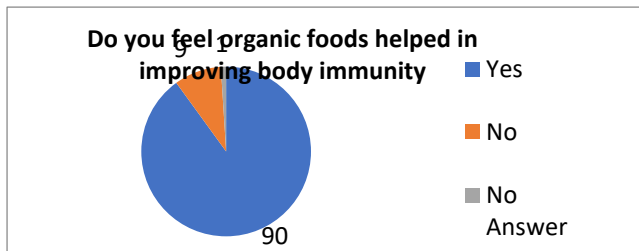
57% consumers prefer vegetables during organic consumption, 34% consumers prefer grains, 34% consumers prefer fruits, 4% consumers prefer spices and 3% of the total surveyed consumers prefer spices during pandemic period.

3. If yes, then from where did you get inspire?

In an interesting question, as many as 11% of the total surveyed consumers have received their motivation to start consuming organic food products from their family, while equal number 11% of the total surveyed consumers received such motivation from their friends, 16% of them from the media, 54% of them from NGOs and 4% of the total surveyed consumers have received such motivation from other sources.



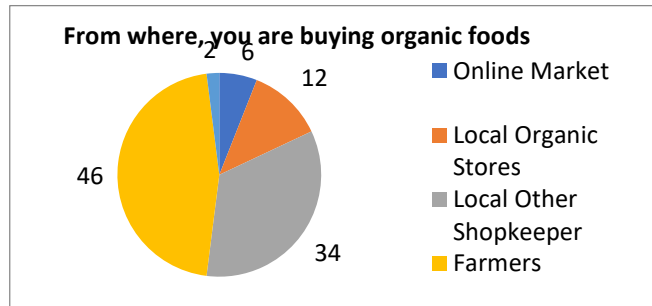
4. Do you feel a change in your health status after consuming organic food or do you feel better than before or has these organic foods helped in improving your body immunity?



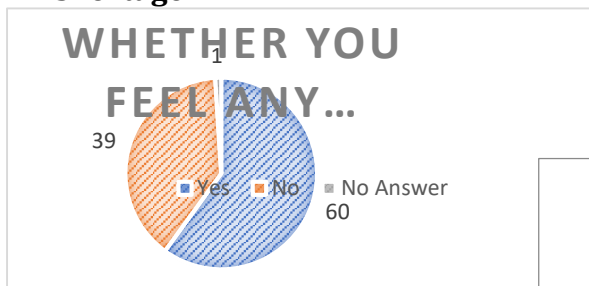
In one of the most relevant question of the survey, 90% of the respondent consumers believe organic food products help in improving body immunity, while 9% believe organic food products do not help in improving body immunity.

5. From where, you are buying organic foods?

Regarding the place, from where the consumer often purchases organic food, 6% consumers said that they buy organic food products from online market, 12% buy organic food products from their local organic stores, 34% consumers buy organic food products from their local shopkeepers and 46% consumers buy organic food products directly from farmers.



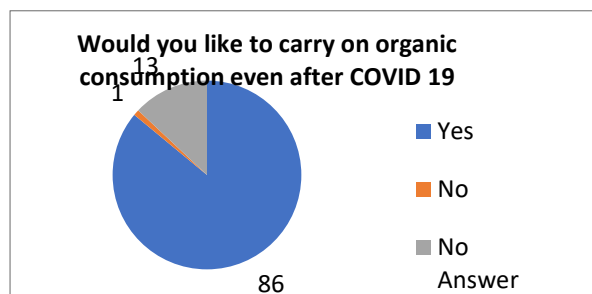
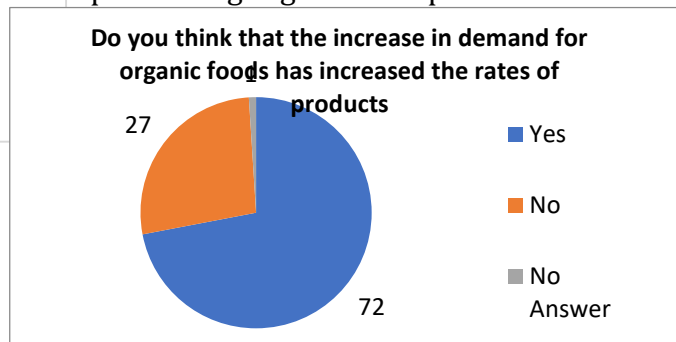
6. Whether you feel any difficulty in getting the organic products and face any shortage?



60% consumers face difficulty in purchasing organic food products, while 39% consumers do not face difficulty in purchasing organic food products.

7. Do you think that the increase in demand for organic foods has increased the rates of products?

72% consumers believe that increase in the demand of organic food products has increased the rates of such products, while 27% consumers believe that increase in the demand of organic food products has not increased the rates of such products.



8. Would you like to carry on with organic consumption even after the pandemic gets over?

In the last question of this perception survey with consumers, 401 consumers would like to carry on the consumption of organic food products even after the

COVID-19 pandemic is over, constituting 86% of the total surveyed consumers, while 6 consumers would not like to carry on the consumption of organic food products even after the COVID-19 pandemic is over, constituting 13% of the total surveyed consumers.

Conclusion

Organic products are not just all hype. Not only does organic production help reduce public health risks, mounting evidence shows that food grown organically are rich in nutrients, such as Vitamin C, iron, magnesium, and phosphorus, with less exposure to nitrates and pesticide residues in organically grown fruits, vegetables, and grains, when compared to chemically grown food.

A strong metabolism and immunity is needed to sustain the body strong and to deal with diseases. To boost immunity in a natural way is to ensure that your body has everything to combat the external harshness. Fibrous foods actually help in giving the body essential nutrients for strengthening immunity. Anti-Inflammatory foods are actually fundamental in reinforcing resistance levels in the body. Foods like Turmeric, tomatoes, olive oil, ginger, fish oil, walnuts, blueberries and foods rich in Omega-3 help in improving immunity and prevents from various ailments.

Given the above mentioned importance, and in the context of current pandemic situation in the country, which ran for almost the whole of 2019 and still people waiting for vaccine, demand of organic food products is increasing as more and more people realize its numerous advantages, which not only can protect their health but also help in developing immunity against pandemics like the prevailing Covid 19 and many more such. Besides, the other advantages include money circulation within the local economy that goes directly to the farmer, instead of the things like marketing and distribution and lesser dependency on preservatives as organic food is harvested, when ripe and thus fresher and full of flavour.

Looking to all mentioned aspects, indicators of the increased consumption of organic food products, can be deduced from the results of the above survey, which highlights over 90% sellers believing consumers have become more interested in organic food products during the pandemic period and as such, 70% shopkeepers asking farmers to grow more organic food products.

Though, majority of surveyed consumers feels that it is difficult to purchase organic food products and the shopkeepers also face shortage in supply of such organic food products. This shortage is illustrative of a vacuum present between the farmers, middleman and consumers of organic food products, which must be promptly investigated and rectified, or else, the very long term demand of organic food products in the market may be hampered.

So, looking to all aspects and the opportunity, which the pandemic has given by default to both the stakeholders i.e. the consumers and the sellers, the trend towards organic consumption, which sees a growth during the pandemic period must continue even after the Covid 19 gets over as no one can assure that there will not be any more similar pandemics in the world in future. Rather, it should become a habitual routine among the end users and if this gets converted into truth, then we can hope to be fully organic converted nation by next few years.

Media Release

Organic Consumption and Sale: A Growing Trend Amid the Pandemic

A Random Perception Survey by CUTS International in Rajasthan

91 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

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- CUTS International surveyed the sellers and consumers of organic food products in ten districts of Rajasthan.
- 2000 samples of consumers (200 per district) and 200 sellers, which includes retailers and distributors but producers (farmers) not included. 20 sellers per district. The districts are Jaipur, Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, Pratapgarh, Udaipur, Jhalawar, Kota, Sawai Madhopur, Jodhpur and Dausa.
- Around 62% sellers have confirmed selling organic products along with other non-organic products.
- 86% consumers feel that the changing pattern of organic consumption must carry on in future as well.

In the midst of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, with vaccine still in the testing/making stages, an intriguing development occurred at the global as well as the national level in the form of a remarkable surge in the sales of organic products in the country over last ten months or so, which has encouraged several organic retailers to come up overnight. This change has occurred because of the changing eating habits of consumers, who are turning to organic foods in order to enhance immunity against Covid 19.

The above findings were revealed while taking a better cognizance of this development, CUTS International surveyed the sellers and consumers of organic food products in ten districts of Rajasthan with an object to ascertain the factors that drove the consumers to buy organic food products, specific organic food products that were preferred by the consumers, gaining experience, while purchasing organic food products and seeking consumer's perspective on organic food products. Similarly, for sellers, to ascertain the demand of organic food products and source of procurement in the market, seeking to know the consumer preferences regarding specific organic food products and getting to

know the preference to buy organic food products through physical contact or electronic mean etc.

For reference:

<https://www.timesnownews.com/health/article/organic-food-products-consumption-is-a-growing-trend-in-rajasthan-amid-pandemic-survey/707073>

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<https://www.theweek.in/wire-updates/national/2021/01/14/nrg5-biz-organic-survey.html>

<https://www.freepressjournal.in/business/sharp-rise-in-consumption-of-organic-products-during-covid-19-pandemic-survey>

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जैविक उत्पादों की बिक्री एवं उपभोग: कोरोना महामारी के दौरान बढ़ते रुझान से नई जीवनशैली की
शुरुआत के संकेत

‘कट्स’ इंटरनेशनल द्वारा राजस्थान में एक महत्वपूर्ण सर्वेक्षण

जयपुर, 13 जनवरी, 2021

91 प्रतिशत जैविक उत्पाद विक्रेताओं और 89 प्रतिशत उपभोक्ताओं ने इस बात की पुष्टि की है कि पिछले दस महीनों में महामारी के दौरान “जैविक उत्पाद की बिक्री और खपत दोनों में पर्याप्त वृद्धि हुई है।”

जहां वैश्विक स्तर पर कोरोना वैक्सीन के बनने एवं परीक्षण का दौर अभी चालू ही है, वहीं उसके साथ राष्ट्रीय एवं अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर लोगों के खानपान के तरीकों में बदलाव होने के संकेत मिले हैं जो कि जैविक उत्पादों की बिक्री में उल्लेखनीय वृद्धि के रूप में सामने आए है। महामारी के दौरान बहंत से खुदरा जैविक उत्पाद विक्रेताओं की अच्छी बिक्री हुई है जो कि कोरोना महामारी के चलते उपभोक्ताओं के खाने की बदलती आदतों में बदलाव के कारण है। कोरोना काल में उपभोक्ता अपनी रोग प्रतिरोधक क्षमता बढ़ाने के लिए जैविक उत्पादों की ओर रुख कर रहे हैं।

इस बदलते परिवेश को और अधिक समझने के लिए 'कट्स' संस्था ने उपभोक्ताओं और विक्रेताओं के मध्य एक व्यापक सर्वेक्षण के माध्यम से अनुभवों को जानने का प्रयास किया है। ये सर्वेक्षण राजस्थान के दस प्रमुख जिलों में किया गया। इससे यह जानने का प्रयास किया गया कि उपभोक्ताओं ने इस कोरोना काल में कौन-कौन से जैविक उत्पादों की मांग विक्रेताओं के सम्मुख रखी और विक्रेताओं की कौन-कौन से उत्पादों की ज्यादा बिक्री हुई। साथ ही सर्वेक्षण में यह जानने का भी प्रयास किया गया कि कोरोना महामारी के दौरान उपभोक्ताओं ने किन-किन माध्यमों से जैविक उत्पाद खरीदें।

सर्वेक्षण के दौरान कुछ मुख्य जानकारी विक्रेताओं की ओर से निकल कर आई, जिसमें करीब 62 प्रतिशत विक्रेताओं ने यह स्वीकार किया है कि अन्य गैर जैविक उत्पादों के साथ-साथ वे जैविक उत्पाद भी विक्रय कर रहे हैं। इस 62 प्रतिशत में से 55 प्रतिशत विक्रेताओं ने कहा कि जैविक उत्पाद वे सीधे ही किसानों से खरीदते हैं। जबकि 45 प्रतिशत ने कहा कि वे वितरकों और अन्य स्रोतों से जैविक उत्पाद खरीदते हैं।

कोरोना काल में जैविक उत्पादों में उपभोक्ताओं की पसंद के संबंध में 74 प्रतिशत विक्रेताओं ने बताया कि ज्यादा जैविक उत्पादों में सब्जियों की मांग अधिक रहती है। जबकि 6 प्रतिशत फलों, 13 प्रतिशत अनाज और 1 प्रतिशत जैविक मसालों की मांग रही है। 46 प्रतिशत विक्रेताओं ने कहा कि उपभोक्ता विभिन्न जैविक उत्पाद खरीदने के लिए विभिन्न ऑनलाइन प्लेटफॉर्म का उपयोग करते हैं, जबकि 52 प्रतिशत विक्रेताओं का कहना है कि उपभोक्ता जैविक उत्पाद खरीदने के लिए सीधे ही विक्रेताओं के पास आते हैं। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न जैविक उत्पादों में बिक्री में वृद्धि के जवाब में 91 प्रतिशत विक्रेताओं ने कहा कि पिछले दस महीनों में कोरोना महामारी के दौरान जैविक उत्पादों की बिक्री में वृद्धि हुई है। 69 प्रतिशत विक्रेताओं ने बताया कि आय में आंशिक वृद्धि हुई है, जबकि 74 प्रतिशत विक्रेताओं ने कहा कि कई बार ऐसी स्थिति आई जब उपभोक्ताओं की ओर से अधिक मांग आने पर जैविक उत्पाद के स्टॉक में कमी महसूस की गई। 74 से 77 प्रतिशत विक्रेताओं ने कहा कि किसानों को अधिक जैविक उत्पाद उपलब्ध करवाने के लिए दबाव बनाना पड़ा।

उपभोक्ताओं के सर्वेक्षण के दौरान कुल सर्वेक्षण में से 89 प्रतिशत उपभोक्ताओं ने कहा कि उन्होंने जैविक उत्पादों का उपभोग करना प्रारम्भ कर दिया है। इन 89 प्रतिशत में से 54 प्रतिशत उपभोक्ताओं ने कहा कि स्वयं सेवी संस्थाओं के जागरूकता अभियान से जैविक उत्पाद उपभोग करने के प्रति जागरूकता बढ़ी है। बाकी उपभोक्ता अन्य तरीकों से भी जैविक उत्पादों के प्रति जागरूक हुए हैं।

इसमें सबसे महत्वपूर्ण यह है कि करीब 90 प्रतिशत उपभोक्ताओं ने कहा कि कोरोना महामारी के दौरान स्वयं की रोग प्रतिरोधक क्षमता बढ़ाने की दृष्टि से जैविक उत्पाद उपभोग की प्रवृत्ति बढ़ी है। जबकि, 60 प्रतिशत उपभोक्ताओं ने यह महसूस किया कि जैविक उत्पादों की दुकानें/आउटलेट्स की खोज करने में बड़ी परेशानी आई, विशेषकर लोकडाउन के दौरान। इसके साथ ही सर्वेक्षण में 72 प्रतिशत उपभोक्ताओं का कहना है कि जैविक उत्पाद गैर-जैविक उत्पादों की अपेक्षा अधिक महंगे होते हैं।

सर्वेक्षण में सबसे महत्वपूर्ण जानकारी यह प्राप्त हुई कि कोरोना महामारी के बीच में जैविक उत्पादों की आमद भी अधिक रही है और खपत भी अधिक हुई है। सर्वेक्षण के दौरान एक प्रश्न के जवाब में 86 प्रतिशत उपभोक्ताओं ने कहा कि भविष्य में जैविक उत्पादों की खपत और उपभोग दोनों ही बढ़ेंगे। हालांकि सर्वेक्षण में शामिल अधिकांश उपभोक्ताओं को लगता है कि जैविक खाद्य पदार्थ खरीदना मुश्किल है। विक्रेताओं को भी ऐसे जैविक खाद्य पदार्थों की कमी महसूस होती है।

सर्वेक्षण से प्राप्त सभी बातों से यह संकेत मिलते हैं कि हम अब खानपान के मामले में एक बड़े बदलाव की तरफ बढ़ रहे हैं जो कि जैविक उपभोग एवं बिक्री दोनों में ही बढ़ोतरी से इंगित होता है। हालांकि जैविक पदार्थों की खरीद एवं उत्पादन, दोनों के बीच सामन्जस्य बेहद जरूरी है। अभी किसानों का सीधे

उपभोक्ताओं से सम्पर्क नहीं हो पा रहा है। उपभोक्ता अक्सर बिचौलियों के माध्यम से जैविक उत्पाद खरीदते हैं।

सभी पहलुओं एवं अवसरों को देखते हुए कोरोना महामारी ने एक मौका दिया है कि विक्रेताओं एवं उपभोक्ताओं, दोनों के लिए यह प्रक्रिया कोरोना महामारी के बाद भी आगे बढ़ती रहनी चाहिए और जैविक उपभोग की आदत उपभोक्ताओं में बढ़ती रहनी चाहिए।