The Role of Organic Farming in Sustainable Food Systems

Dr. Ayesha Ali
Institute of Horticultural Sciences, University of Karachi ,Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Organic agriculture has emerged as one of the focal means of confronting the pressing problem of world food security, ecological degradation, as well as human health. Although the conventional agriculture continues to require synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and monocultures, it is a significant contributor to the loss of biodiversity, degradation of soil and global warming. Organic agriculture, which is founded on ecological concepts, is concerned with natural health of soil, crop diversity, and reduced use of chemicals, therefore, it is very important in sustainable food systems. The article talks of the history of evolution, principles, environmental implications and economic factors and policy backgrounds of organic agriculture. It also brushes over the issues of the scaling of organic agriculture including yield gaps, certification barriers, and market restrictions. By integrating case studies and current literature, the article reveals the significance of organic farming to the achievement of ecological balance, safeguarding of human health and long-term food security. The findings show that organic farming alone will not be able to fully substitute conventional systems but it is important to include it in the overall agricultural policy and practices to reshape towards sustainability in the world food production.

KeyWords: Organic farming, sustainable food systems, soil health, biodiversity, climate change, food security, agroecology.

Corresponding author: Dr. Ayesha Ali
Email: aali@uok.edu.pk
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INTRODUCTION

The world food system is under increasing pressure to fulfill the dietary requirements of the increasing population while, at the same time, dealing with the imminent problems of environmental degradation and climate change. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that the world population is expected to increase to 9.7 billion by 2050, requiring a huge increase in food production (FAO, 2018). Conventional farming practices, which have been a feature of the 20th and early 21st centuries, have been able to drive productivity through the use of industrial-scale monocultures, chemical fertilizers and synthetic pesticides. These have however generated far-reaching environmental consequences such as soil erosion, water pollution, greenhouse gases and loss of biodiversity (Reganold & Wachter, 2016).

Organic agriculture has emerged as a suitable option that is compatible with the broader vision of sustainability in this case. Defined by its non-reliance on man-made agrochemicals and reliance on the processes of nature, organic agriculture is not only a system of practices, it is a holistic system for the production of food that seeks to harmonize the operations of the farm with the environment outside the farm (IFOAM, 2020). In comparison to traditional farming, organic agriculture focuses on the long-

term health of soil, natural methods of pest control, variety, and animal welfare needs (Willer & Lernoud, 2019).The value of organic farming is not just in its environmental characteristics.

Increasing evidence says organic produce contains less pesticide residues, less heavy metal contamination and in some cases had better nutritional content (Srednicka-Tober et al., 2016). In addition, the market for organic food globally has experienced dramatic growth, which is an indication of increasing consumer recognition and preference for more healthy and environmentally sustainable food (FiBL & IFOAM, 2022).

Organic farming is not without challenges however. Yield gaps in comparison to conventional farming, challenges in certification and premium retail prices at the consumer level make scaling as well as access difficult (Seufert, Ramankutty, & Foley, 2012). Policymakers and scientists disagree as to whether organic agriculture can feed the world, or if it must be integrated with other and more innovative styles, such as agroecology, precision farming and regenerative agriculture.

This research article examines the many ways that organic farming plays a role in sustainable food systems. It looks at its history and evolution, its principles, the impact on the environment and health, the economic implications and regulatory frameworks. Additionally, the paper examines the challenges that organic farming encounters and the contributions that it may make to future global food security. Through the synthesis of available literature and case studies, the paper aims to provide a comprehensive appreciation of the ways in which organic farming can provide a basis for developing robust and sustainable food systems.

Development of Organic Farming Over History

Organic agriculture, as it is practiced today, is a synthesis of traditional knowledge of agriculture and modern-day ecological science. Its origins are to be found in older forms of farming, well before the discovery of the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, when farmers relied upon natural processes, crop rotation, and biological materials to insure soil fertility and the productivity of crops. The development of organic farming from the last century was created by these native practices to become an international accepted and legislated agricultural practice.

Early Agricultural Customs

For centuries, agricultural populations across Asia, Africa and Europe practiced sustainability methods that were compatible with nature. Crop rotation, composting, intercropping and irrigation control were some of the methods the early civilisations, such as the Egyptians, Chinese and Mayans employed in order to sustain yields without depleting natural resources (Conford, 2001). In China, as a case in point, farmers used to recycle organic material such as animal manure and crop residues into the soil, leaving intensive food production closed-loop nutrient cycles lasting thousands of years (King, 1911/2011). Likewise, Indigenous peoples across the Americas made use of polyculture systems - such as the "Three Sisters" planting of maize, beans and squash - that enabled biodiversity and healthy soils (Altieri & Nicholls, 2017).

Industrial Agriculture and Organic Reaction

The start of the Green Revolution in the middle of the 20th century led to a sensational change in world agriculture. The use of synthetic nitrogen fertilizers, chemical pesticides and high yielding crop varieties was implemented across the world, which led to a remarkable increase in food production and has resulted in a dependence on external inputs (Pingali 2012). Although the revolution was successful in

ending hunger in many parts of the world, it also made ecologic imbalances, degradation of soil, and water pollution inevitable.

Responding to this, leaders of the organic movement began to promote farming systems that would restore the harmony of the ecology. Sir Albert Howard, sometimes considered as the "father of modern organic agriculture", drew the attention of the crucial role of the health of soil and composting in his seminal book An Agricultural Testament (1940). Scientific and philosophical arguments for ecological agriculture methods were expressed by Lady Eve Balfour's The Living Soil (1943) in Europe. These initial works formed the basis for increasing criticism of industrial agriculture and the plea to go back to biologically based farming systems.

Institutionalization of Organic Farming

The institutionalization of the formal organic agriculture bodies took place during the mid 20th century. In 1972 the standardization and the lobbying was offered by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) (IFOAM, 2020). Meanwhile, other countries, such as Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom, began to develop organic certification programs in order to provide a way to provide credibility and consumer trust to organic produce.

The 1980s and 1990s were characterized by very high growth rates and increasing conscientiousness about food safety, environmental conservation and health placed pressure on organically produced foods. The governments of Europe, North America and Asia, then began to put in place policies, subsidies and regulatory models in favour of organic farming. As an example, the European Union Organic Regulation (1991) was the first to state a legal standard on organic farming in Europe, and followed by others.

Organic Agriculture Growth in the World

Nowadays in the 21st century, organic farming has been incorporated into the routine of conventional farming and not merely an alternative movement. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and IFOAM (2022) state that in 2021, there were over 190 countries with organic agricultural land area of 76.4 million hectares. Oceania and specifically Australia has the largest share in the organic agricultural land, however, Europe and North America has the largest market share and consumer markets.

Organic industry has experienced a very high increase in its development, with the amount of 120 billion USD in its sales in 2020 worldwide (FiBL & IFOAM, 2022). Growth informed by consumer demand in safe, sustainable and responsible products. Moreover, organic farming has been increasingly featured in the agendas of international organisations e.g. the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to achieve sustainable food production and sustainable consumption (UN, 2015).

Organic Farming in Modern Times

These days, organic farming is an amalgam of traditional and modern innovations such as new developments in ecological pest control, soil biology and certification technologies such as blockchain to ensure transparency of supply chains (Armanda et al., 2019). Related Other practices such as agroecology, regenerative agriculture and permaculture have also been introduced with a similar ethos of sustainability and ecological balance as organic.

Despite its growth, there are still questions as to whether or not organic farming can be scaled up and has the capability to address the food security issues facing the world. Its opponents argue that it yields less and is more costly than conventional agriculture but its supporters argue that organic agriculture is

a sustainable system that optimizes the benefits of the ecosystem. These issues continue to be a framework through which organic farming is practiced in sustainable food systems.

Principles and Practices of Organic Farming

Organic agriculture is built off an ethic of environmental and moral values that point towards a long-term sustainability, environmental protection and human health. Organic agriculture is less directed to produce as much as possible through the use of artificial inputs like pesticides, fertilizers etc. but more to the preservation of natural processes, biodiversity and soil fertility. As stated by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, IFOAM, organic agriculture has four fundamental principles; health, ecology, fairness, and care (IFOAM, 2020). These are the pillars, where the approved and certified practices globally under the organic farming standards, are based.

Principle of Health

Organic farming improve and maintains the wellbeing of soil, vegetation, animals, humanity and environment as a compound. It does not presuppose the use of synthetic pesticides, synthetic fertilizers and GMOs, which further decrease the number of chemical residues on food and safeguard ecologies (Willer and Lernoud, 2019). Soil health is the cornerstone of this philosophy since it is the fertility of the soil that has a direct impact on the nutritional quality of crops and the integrity of the ecosystem.

Principle of Ecology

This principle gives a high priority to the fact that agriculture should be guided by ecological processes and cycles. Organic systems incorporate natural components such as soil fauna, plants and animals into agricultural systems instead of using exogenous chemical inputs. By preserving biodiversity and ecological balance in nature, organic farming minimizes the threat of pests, soil destruction and nutrient drainage (Altieri & Nicholls, 2017).

Principle of Fairness

Equity means, equity between farmers, workers, traders and consumers. The aim of organic farming is to provide farmers with decent returns, secure working conditions and healthy eating to everyone. The principle is also concerned with social justice, animal welfare and ethical treatment of the resources (IFOAM, 2020).

Principle of Care

Organic farming should be done in a cautious and prudent manner in order to ensure the health of the current and future generations and environment is maintained. It simply means to avoid things that could have unwanted or unreparable results such as excessive usage of artificial chemicals or placing too much reliance on genetically modified plants (Scialabba & Hattam, 2002).

Principles Underpinning Organic Farming

Soil Fertility Management

Organic agriculture is all about ensuring that the soil is healthy. Organic agriculture does not practice the use of synthetic fertilizers and relies on such strategies as:

Composting: Recycling of organic materials and additional of soil organic matter and microbial activity.

Green manures and cover crops: Planting legumes and other prone-to nitrogen-fixing crops to restore soil fertility.

Crop rotation: Changing the crops in a pattern to avoid loss of nutrients and suppress the accumulation of pests.
Scientific research shows that organic soils have greater organic matter content, more microbial biomass, and greater water holding capacity than conventionally managed soils (Reganold & Wachter, 2016).

Pest and Disease Management
Organic farming forbids the use of synthetic pesticides but uses the ecological practices of pest and disease control such as:

Biological control: Controlling pests with the introduction of their natural enemies (e.g., ladybugs or parasitic wasps).

Cultural practices: Intercropping, trap crop and friction crop and cultural diversity of crop management of pest episodes.

Botanical pesticides: Conservation in the use of pesticides of plant origin like pyrethrin, and neem oil. It has been proved that these practices not only help to reduce chemical contaminates on food but also save useful insects and pollinators (Gomiero et al, 2011).

Crop Diversity and Rotation
One of the principles of organic agriculture is the belief in diversification of crops as a strategy to reduce risk or as a strategy to build ecosystem well-being. Polycultures and crop rotation decrease the spread of pests and diseases, improve soil fertility and promote healthy farming systems. Intercropping patterns such as legumes and cereals increases the amount of nitrogen, as well as reducing the need for external inputs (Altieri, 1995).

Organic Animal Husbandry
Livestock in organic production systems also observes harsh conditions for animals. Some of the important practices include:

- Granting animals access to open air, sunlight, and pastures.
- Prohibition on prophylactic antibiotics and artificial growth hormones.
- Sustenance of livestock using organic feed that is made without artificial chemicals or GMOs.

These practices can be used to enhance animal welfare and health with reduced environmental impact of livestock farming (Hovi & Sundrum, 2001).

Weed Management

Organic farming does not allow the use of synthetic herbicides and weeding becomes a serious problem. Farmers use mechanical and cultural controls such as weeding by hand, mulching, crops rotation, and flame weeding. Moreover, mulches and cover crops help to suppress weed as well as to improve soil fertility (Bond & Grundy, 2001).

Water and Resource and Sustainability Management

Organic systems are concerned with conserving water and use. Methods include drip irrigation, mulching and rain water harvesting. Organic farms also prevent contamination of water resources because they prohibit the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and hence reduce threats to aquatic

environments (Scialabba & Muller-Lindenlauf, 2010).

Certification and Standards of Practice

Organic agricultural practices take form in the form of the rules for certification and are governed under national and global authorities. The USDA Organic Certification in the United States, the EU Organic Regulation, India National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) are some of the prominent ones. They enforce the use of strict rules manifested by the inputs, cattle husbandry, and processing techniques (USDA, 2021).

Certification for consumer confidence, however, comes with costs and bureaucratic demands of certification to farmers, especially to smallholders in developing nations (Garcia-Yi, 2015). To counter this, some trust and local network based alternative mechanisms of certification have arisen-participatory guarantee systems (PGS).

Organic Farming and Environmental Sustainability

Organic farming has traditionally been promoted as a farming system with reduced environmental cost of industrial farming. Through the avoidance of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and GMOs, organic farming aims at serving ecological processes, biodiversity and natural resource management. Its contribution to the environment is approached through various spheres, such as soil health, biodiversity, water conservation and climate change mitigation. Although the degree of benefit varies from region to region and depending on context, more and more scientific evidence supports the argument that organic farming makes a significant contribution to environmental sustainability (Reganold & Wachter, 2016).

Soil Health and Fertility

Soil is the foundation of agriculture and organic systems of farming are specifically designed with the intent of maintaining and enhancing the health of the soil. Standard farming based on the use of artificial nitrogen fertilizers, which can impair the construction of the earth and reduce its long-term fertilizers. Organic farming, on the other hand, is a way to improve the soil quality by use of compost, green manure, rotation of crops, and reduced tillage.

Organic enrichment: Studies have shown that organic soils have higher organic carbon content, greater structure, aeration and water holding capacity (Leifeld & Fuhrer, 2010).

Microbial diversity: Organic farming encourages a diverse and healthy microbiome, beneficial for the soil health and increases levels of nutrient cycling and plant resistance to disease (Hartmann et al., 2015).

Long-term fertility: According to comparative long-term studies such as the Rodale Farming Systems Trial in the USA, the soils of the organic systems build up fertility and have yields as stable and as high as those of the conventional systems in the long-term (Rodale Institute, 2011).

Organic farming is therefore in favor of the renewal of the soil, to the detriment of the soil erosion and degradation tendencies which are a menace to global food security.

Biodiversity Preservation

Biodiversity is essential to the stability of the ecosystem and to farm productivity. Monoculture and intensification of chemical use in industrial agriculture have contributed to the speed of loss of biodiversity around the world. Organic agriculture on the other hand, encourages a higher diversity of

species at a number of levels:

Crop diversity: Organic farms make use of polycultures, crop rotations and intercropping, which offer a wide range of habitat for organisms (Altieri, 1999).

Wildlife and pollinators: Studies have found that organic farms sustain 30% more species, including beneficial insects, birds and pollinators than do conventional farming (Bengtsson, Ahnstrom, & Weibull, 2005).

Habitat conservation: Organic standards help prevent habitat loss, which promotes buffer zones, hedgerows and agroforestry systems that encourage biodiversity.

Conservation of biodiversity is not only making the ecosystems robust and resilient, but in agricultural production, biodiversity ensures pollination and natural pest control.

Water Conservation and Quality

Water is one of the most important inputs in agriculture. Conventional agriculture also pollutes water through fertilizer runoff, pesticide leaching and sedimentation. Organic farming, by not having to use synthetic agrochemicals, has a reduced effect.

Low nutrient runoff: Studies show that less nutrients are leached (nitrates) in organic systems which lowers the risk of eutrophication in fresh water environments (Tuomisto et al., 2012).

Effective use of water: Organic soils retain more water due to the higher amount of organic materials in them, thus they are more drought-resistant (Lotter, Seidel, & Liebhardt, 2003).

Pure water bodies: Organic farming through banning synthetic pesticides reduces the contamination of ground and rivers, which will prevent contamination of aquatic life.

Organic farming hence, helps in sustainable water management, particularly in water scarce areas.

Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change

Agriculture is a cause and a victim of climate change. Conventional farming provides a major source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, from both the use of synthetic fertilizers, and the emissions of methane from livestock, and from land-use change. Organic farming has numerous advantages in this regard;

Carbon sequestration: Soil carbon sequestration is enhanced under organic management because of the increase in organic matter content and decrease in the application of chemical input (Gattinger et al., 2012).

Fewer energy inputs: Organic agriculture tends to have lower energy inputs (i.e. fossil fuel energy) due to the lack of necessity to produce and apply synthetic fertilizers and pesticides (Pimentel and others, 2005).

Climate resilience: Organic farming systems are grounded on soil and biodiversity and therefore are more resilient to climatic shocks such as floods and droughts (Scialabba & Muller-Lindenlauf, 2010).

Although skeptics have argued that organic systems use more land per quantity of food produced, environmental benefits per hectare, most notably the storage of soil carbon and biodiversity, make

organic systems an important climate adaptation and mitigation strategy.

Less Pollution/Chemicals Exposure

Conventional agriculture is one of the main reasons of chemical pollution such as pesticide residues, synthetic fertilizer and herbicides that affect ecosystems and human health. Organic agriculture avoids or restricts to a large extent these chemicals.

Air: Reducing synthetic chemicals helps in reducing air pollution due to ammonia release and volatile chemicals.

Soil and water pollution: The use of organic farming avoids the use of persistent pollutants, such as neonicotinoids, which are contributing to the loss of pollinators (Woodcock et al., 2017).

Organic vegetables and fruits have much less pesticide residue than traditional produce (Baranski et al., 2014).

Makes Ecosystems Healthier and Food Supplies Safer.

Trade-offs and Limitations

Organic agriculture has its disadvantages. There is some indication of possible trade-offs:

Lower yields: Organic yields are on average 20-25% lower than conventional agriculture across the board; there is a difference by crop and region (Seufert, Ramankutty, & Foley, 2012).

Land use pressure: Decreased productivity may cause more land use pressure if organic farming completely replaced traditional farming (Tilman et al., 2011).

Variability of benefits: The environmental benefits of organic farming may depend upon site specific factors, managing techniques and certification programmes.

The challenges encountered create the need for continuous studies, innovations, and incentives in government policy to ensure the feasibility of organic farming to become scalable and effective without compromising its goal of sustainability.

Synthesis

Organic farming is promising in many ways to be more environmentally sustainable because of the promotion of Soil Health, Biodiversity Conservation, reduction of pollution and Greenhouse emission etc. It is through the integration of organic practice with traditional farming systems that a way to more sustainable and environmentally friendly food systems is found in spite of the controversy of the yield gap and scalability.

It is not necessary to think of organic as an alternative when it is clear that organic agriculture is a component of the approach of complementary systems of diversified and sustainable food production.

Organic Farming and human Health

Agriculture and human health is a complicated relationship, not only with the nutritional value of food, but also the exposure to chemicals in order to contaminate the environment and resistance to the use of antibiotics, as well as the impact of agricultural works on human health in general. The practice of

organic farming has been promoted as being healthier than conventional farming because of the lack of man-made agrochemicals, the use of natural inputs and the provision of improved food safety levels and animal welfare. Amidst the current conversation about the superior nutritional quality of organic food, there is much evidence that organic agriculture can have positive health effects for humans by reducing their exposure to chemical exposure, improving the quality of their food system, and improving their environmental health outcomes.

Quality of the Nutrition in Organic Produce

Whether or not organic food is more nutritious than food conventionally produced is perhaps the most contentious matter during organic farming. Many investigations and meta-analyses have tried to define these claims:

Higher antioxidant levels: Research also has found that organically produced fruits and vegetables have much higher concentrations of antioxidants such as polyphenols, which are associated with reductions in the risk of chronic disease, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer (Baranski et al., 2014).

Lower cadmium levels Organic fruits and vegetables generally have a lower level of cadmium, which is a poisonous heavy metal that is usually absorbed from artificial fertilizers (Srednicka-Tober et al., 2016).

Similar macronutrients Most research indicates minimal difference in the protein, fat and carbohydrate composition between organic and conventional produce (Dangour et al., 2009).

In general, while there are minimal amounts of differences in the macronutrients, organic produce typically has increased density in micronutrients and bioactive compounds that contribute to long-term health benefits.

Lower Pesticide Residues

It is perhaps the most universally acknowledged health attribute of organic agriculture that varies pesticide residues in food are greatly minimized:

Consumer safety: Time after time studies have proven that organic foods contain 4-5 times less residues of pesticides than conventional foods (Smith-Spangler et al., 2012).

Children's health: In a landmark trial, it was shown that a switch from conventional foods to organic foods dramatically reduced urinary metabolite of pesticide levels in children in days; this can be considered a direct reflecting of the effect of organic food intake on children's exposure (Lu et al. 2006).

Chronic disease risks: Chronic exposure to pesticides has been linked to the neurodegenerative disease, endocrine disruption, and cancers (Mostafalou & Abdollahi, 2013).

Therefore, organic farming can help to reduce people's exposure to toxic chemicals, particularly people who are vulnerable such as children and pregnant women.

Antibiotic Resistant and Organics Animal Products

The misuse of antibiotics for traditional livestock production is responsible for the world problem of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Organic livestock production restricts the preventative use of antibiotics and applies preventative health procedures such as proper feed, grazing facilities and reducing stress.

Reduced antibiotic resistance: Organic poultry and pork are found to carry reduced levels of antibiotic resistant bacteria than its conventional counterparts (Sapkota et al., 2011).

Better animal health: Organic practices require natural diet with space and access to outdoors, thus the animals are healthier and there are fewer incidences of outbreaks of diseases (Sundrum, 2001).

Health benefits for the public: Minimizing the use of antibiotics in the agriculture sector reduces the incidence of resistant bacteria finding their way into the human food supply, which poses a significant threat to international health security (Van Boeckel et al., 2015).

Therefore, organic animal production provides not only for the welfare of animals but also for human health by preventing the dissemination of AMR.

Safety and Quality Assurance of Food

Food safety as a topic is of growing concern in the global food system, as chemical contamination, adulteration, crisis of pathogens being few of the serious threat. Organic agriculture makes food safer through a number of ways:

Ban of synthetic additives: Organic regulation is responsible to restrict man-made preservatives, taste enhancers, colouring chemical lowering the consumption of food processing chemical residues by consumer (USDA, 2021)

Lower mycotoxin threats: Although some critics receive the lower pesticide application may increase the fungal threats, some research results indicate that organic grains and fruits are generally no more susceptible to higher levels of mycotoxins than non-organic crops (Magkos et al., 2003).

Assurance of quality by certification: Organic labeling involves hard certification which enhances transparency and traceability in the food chain, thereby boosting consumer confidence (Garcia-Yi, 2015).

Public Health Impacts on a Greater Understanding

The benefits of organic farming extend beyond the immediate use of products in food, for far-reaching public health benefits:

Improved air and water quality: By the use of no synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, organic farming helps to reduce the amount of pollution in the environment, reducing the occurrences of respiratory and water-borne diseases among farming communities in (Scialabba & Muller-Lindenlauf, 2010).

Occupational health Organic farmers and agricultural workers are less exposed to toxic agrochemicals, reducing risks from pesticide poisoning, cancers, and neurological disorder (Alčněv & Alavanja, 2013).

Community health equity: Organic foods are often more expensive and policy support and production can help groups gain access, making their healthier choices more available to communities that are vulnerable to poor health.

LIMIT Andrew and NUM Limitation And Controversies

Although most definitely organic farming reduces chemical exposures, there are some health effects controversies around organic farming:

Nutritional variations are modest: Certain reviews contend that although organic foods would be more antioxidant-rich, the variations wouldn't be always of clinical importance (Dangour et al., 2009).

Foodborne pathogens: Organic animal foods have in some studies been reported to have higher risks of bacterial contamination (e.g. Campylobacter, Salmonella), though cooking and handling will mitigate such threats (Smith-Spangler et al., 2012).

Accessibility: The higher prices of organic food may lead to limited access to organic foods for low-income consumers, which may be a challenge to equity in public health benefits.

These arguments are meant to focus on the need for further studies to be conducted on the health effects of organic food and policies by which the food is made affordable to everyone since it is health-related.

Dietary improvement in nutritional quality, preventing antibiotic resistance and the general reduction in exposure to toxic chemicals, is an overall positive impact of organic farming on human health throughout the world. In spite of the controversies related to superior diet, general health beneficial outcomes from the cleanliness of food, better animal systems, and lessening of environmental pollution are important benefits of having organic farming, including building stronger and more sustainable systems of food production.

Economic Impact of Organic Farming

Organic farming does not only have environmental and health implications, it has far-reaching economic impacts at national, regional and global levels. As there is growing demand for healthy, safe and environmentally sustainable food on part of the consumers, organic farming has emerged as a dynamic industry that is promoting rural development, creation of employment and foreign trade (Willer & Lernoud, 2019). The economics of organic production are, however, multifaceted, and present opportunities as well as challenges for farmers, markets and governments.

Market Demand and Willingness to Pay of Consumers

Demand by consumers for organic products is one of the significant economic drivers of organic agriculture. Global sales of organic food have demonstrated an exponential growth to over $120 billion in 2021, with consumption mostly confined to North America and Europe (FiBL & IFOAM, 2022). Consumers are likely to pay a premium if their purchase is organic because of perceived health benefits, environmental concerns and ethical issues. The willingness to pay offers farmers the opportunity to take home extra revenues from selling in niche and export markets (Pearson et al., 2011).

Profitability & Income Stability of Farms

While organic agriculture usually leads to lower yields than conventional agriculture (on average 10-30% lower depending on the crop and region), it can be a profitable sector as a result of price premiums and lower input costs (Seufert & Ramankutty, 2017). Organic farming reduces reliance on expensive synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, which reduces costs of production over time (Reganold & Wachter, 2016). Organic farms are also more diverse than conventional farms, including practices such as mixed cropping and integration with livestock, which reduces the risk on the market and make their income more stable. But profitability is greatly dependent on the degree of scale of production, accessibility of certification, and market infrastructure (Crowder & Reganold, 2015).

Generating Employment and Rural Development

Organic farming is usually more labor intensive than regular farming (due to extensive use of manual weeding, composting, crop rotation, and integrated pest management (Pimentel et al., 2005). Consequently, it creates more jobs in the countryside, particularly for smallholders and the farmers of developing nations. Organic farms in some countries, including India and Kenya, have been found to employ 20-30% more labour than conventional farms (UNCTAD, 2017). Aside from employment, organic is supporting the growth of rural economies through local value chains, agro Bettourism, and CSA.

Global Trade and Export Possibilities

Global trade has been being contributed to by organic farming. Developing countries such as India, China and other African countries are key exporters of organic produce such as spices, tea, coffee, cocoa and fruits (Paull & Hennig, 2016). Organic exports are used to meet the foreign exchange and to grow new markets for smallholder farmers. Barriers such as certification fees, high international standards and lack of infrastructure typically prevent small producers from accessing good export markets in order to export to lucrative markets (Nelson et al., 2016).

Certification Costs and Rising Markets in the Way

Apart from the fact that organic farming can be profitable from a financial point of view, there are hurdles in certifying and complying with organic practices. Certification fees vary from $500 to several thousand dollars per year, being out of reach for small farmers (Veldstra et al., 2014). Additionally, farmers in the poorer nations may not have certifying agencies to use or fight with lengthy bureaucratically driven procedures. A solution is being promoted to alternative certification systems, such as Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) which reduce costs and involve more farmers (IFOAM, 2013).

Government Policies/Subsidies/ Incentives

The viability of organic agriculture is greatly dependent on government policies. Within the European Union, there have been immense contributions of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in adopting organic farming as a form of agricultural practice through subsidies (European Commission, 2020). Likewise, in the U.S.A., the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides organic certification programs on a cost-sharing basis. In other developing countries, lack of policy support prevents expansion in contrast to growing demand. Increased investment in infrastructure, research and incentives to financial investments can make organic agriculture competitive with conventional approaches (Scialabba & Hattam, 2002).

Economic Challenges and Criticisms

In spite of its expansion, organic agriculture is economically limited. Detractors argue that this will lead to lower yields and higher labour costs that can limit mass adoption and even become unable to feed the world's growing population (Connor, 2013). Organic products also have a tendency of staying unaffordable for poor households due to high premium prices, thus, locking food injustice (Lockie et al., 2002). Market saturation is also a threat in developed economies where demand will be at its peak, then price premiums (Dimitri and Oberholtzer, 2009).

Long Economic Benefits

Organic farming holds in the long-term the potential for real economic benefits through the internalization of externalities of conventional farming. These are health expenditure that are related to

use of pesticides, expenses of environmental clean-up, and loss of biodiversity (Niggli et al., 2008). If one takes on the ecological and social advantages of internalizing them, one can see that organic farming can help construct a more sustainable and resilient economy.

Summary

Diverse economic impacts of organic farming are contextual and situation-specific. Although organic farming does have possibilities for profitability, employment and trade, technical barriers to certification and intensive labor requirements as well as inadequate government incentives exist. Still, the industry is continuing to grow worldwide, demonstrating the economic feasibility of, and sustainable role for, the organic industry as an element of food systems.

Organics, Farming and Food Security

Food security is when everybody has physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that is adequate for their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2019). Faced with threats such as climate change, population increase, soil loss and excessive use of chemical inputs, organic agriculture comes up more and more as a measure that can be taken to help achieve sustainable food security. Organic farming has different roles in ensuring food security such as productivity, resilience, nutritional value and socio-economic equity.

Productivity and Yield Issues

Arguably the most controversial topic area in regards to organic agriculture and food security is yields. Conventional farming is more likely to have more to offer in the short-term, especially where monoculture production systems are made possible through the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers (Seufert et al., 2012). Organic farming is emphasized on the health and biodiversity of the soil which can result in greater long term yields owing to greater resilience to pests, disease and variation in climate. While there are yield differentials between organic and conventional systems, as well as research has confirmed that in drought and stress conditions, organic systems will outperform conventional systems due to the fact that soil resiliency is greater in organic systems and it will hold water better (Ponisio et al., 2015). This means that organic agriculture can provide a hedge for food production for regions highly susceptible to climate variability.

Nutritional Quality of Organic Foods

Food security is not only concerned with the caloric intake but the access to clean and wholesome food too. Organic produce is commonly reported to contain higher levels of some vitamins, minerals and antioxidants than normally grown produce (Srednicka-Tober et al., 2016). Organic meat and milk, for instance, are known to be more enriched in omega-3 fatty acids that are essential for human health. By minimising exposure to pesticide residues, organic farming also means better food systems, especially for the most at-risk groups such as children, women of child-bearing age and farmers (Mie et al. 2017). Organic farming therefore contributes to the quality dimension of food security.

Climate Resilience and Adapting

Resilience provides one of the pillars of food security and more so with climate change. Organic agriculture helps build in resiliency through such strategies as crop rotation, intercropping, composting, and cover crops, which increase ecosystem services. These approaches make the soil more fertile, more water is absorbed and more biodiversity is built up to its robustness with respect to its ability to withstand the disaster of weather (Altieri et al., 2015). Organic systems cut down on the use of expensive

chemical inputs by smallholder farmers in low- and middle-income countries, as well as food production processes which are more accessible and economically viable. This resilience is essentially the contribution towards food system stability.

Socio-Economic Aspects of Food Security

There is also a socio-economic aspect of food security. Organic farming encourages local food systems and short supply chains which reduce food miles and open up to small-scale farmers (Scialabba & Muller-Lindenlauf, 2010). Organic farming helps maintain rural livelihoods and also enhances the power of marginal communities by providing market opportunities. Women especially benefit from organic farming because of its tendency to promote traditional knowledge and diversified farm systems where women hold a key position in (Parrott & Marsden, 2002). This socio-economic inclusivity is accompanied by improved equity and access to food.

Organic Farming in the Global Food Security Policy

Worldwide, the debate over whether or not organic farming will feed the world remains controversial. The organic farming has its yield low, according to the critics, which may hinder its scalability in terms of mitigation of world hunger (Connor, 2013). On the other hand, the supporters point out that hunger and malnutrition have more to do with unequal distribution, poverty as well as food wastage (IAASTD, 2009). Organic agriculture addresses these structural issues through local food sovereignty and increased nutrition and reduced reliance on outside sources. Incorporation of organic agriculture in overall sustainable agriculture policies can help to ensure that food systems are ecologically sustainable and socially equitable.

Challenges and Opportunities

As much as organic agriculture has potential, its contribution to the world's food security is limited due to challenges such as yield gaps, certification challenges, as well as poor access to organic markets, limiting levels of adoption in low-income areas. Nevertheless, there are possibilities in government incentives, new approaches through research and domestic market demand for sustainable and healthy food. Technology advancements such a organic authorized bio-pestecides and bio-fertilizers can bring productivty levels to maintain nature (Reganold & Wachter, 2016).

Challenges and Limitations To Organic Farming

Although organic farming is being promoted for its share in promoting sustainable food systems, there are considerable obstacles and restrictions. Agronomic, economic, environmental and sociopolitical factors are all in play in these limitations. To ensure that organic agriculture can expand and make a major contribution to environmental sustainability and global food security, it is imperative to overcome these obstacles.

Reduced Yields Compared to traditional agriculture

The comparatively diminished production potential of organic farming in comparison with conventional agricultural systems is one of the most often heard detractions of this production practice. According to studies, based on the crop, climate and soil fertility management, organic yields are usually 20-25% lower than normal (Seufert et al., 2012). Restrictions on using synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, reduced nutrient release due to use of organic amendments and greater susceptibility to diseases, weeds and pests are responsible for this production gap. Although more efficient organic management techniques may reduce the yield gaps, the problem is particularly severe in areas of high food demand.

Soil Fertility and Nutrient Management

To maintain a high level of fertility in soils, organic farming also uses abundant composting, crop rotation, green manure, and recycling of organic waste. However, it is difficult to achieve nutritional adequacy in areas with limited access to increased inputs such as manure, compost or crop residues (Reganold & Wachter, 2016). Furthermore, nutritional deficiencies, particularly in nitrogen, phosphorus and Potassium, have an impact on yield reduction in organic systems.

Pests, Weeds and Disease Control

To avoid pests and diseases, organic cultivators use biological control, cultural controls, and organic-approved inputs instead of synthetic chemical inputs and pesticides (Crowder & Reganold, 2015). Neither are these techniques typically as efficient as their traditional alternative, and require more work. For the organic farming, weed control is also a constant challenge because the use of crop rotation and mechanicalweeding are not always effective in weed control. Less output and more work may be the result of this.

Increasing Costs of Labour and Production

Organic production requires more labor and demands more work in terms of weeding, composting, caring for soil and pest control. Certification activities impose additional financial as well administrative costs, particularly to smallholders farmers (Willer & Lernoud, 2020). Rising production costs has a tendency to take the form of rising market prices of organic products which make them unaffordable to the low-income consumers.

Market and Certification Market Barriers Certification Barriers

Organic certification is necessary if one wants to access high-value markets but it is costly, time consuming, and bureaucratically intensive. Low- and middle-income country (LMIC) small-scale farmers either do not have the funds or capacity of their institutions to attain certification, even if their practices have been primarily organic practices by default (Parrott & Marsden, 2019). In addition, the fact that there are many different certification schemes based in different countries has led to variability, causing confusion among the public and hindering international trade.

Inadequate Research and extension to the support

Organic agriculture is not funded for as much research and extension as conventional agriculture. With very few exceptions, most of the innovations in seed breeding, pest management and mechanization are developed for high-input conventional systems, which are at the disadvantage of organic farmers (Reganold & Wachter, 2016). Limited possibilities for context-specific training and transferring of knowledge also limit the upscaling of organic practice.

Environmental Trade-offs

While there is much documented evidence of environmental benefits to organic agriculture it does involve trade-offs. Lower yields, for example, could result in needing more land to produce comparable amounts of food, and deforestation and loss of biodiversity if organic agriculture is to continue to spread with no limit (Searchinger et al., 2019). Furthermore, use of some organic pesticides such as fungicides based on copper can enter into soil and pleases ecological harm.

Consumer Awareness and How They Can Be Accessed

Despite the increasing demands for organic food, awareness, trust, and affordability remain problematic. Organic food is likely to be seen as elitist, only for the wealthy in urban areas. Misinformation and lack of labelling transparency, however, makes it difficult for consumers to have confidence in organic certification schemes (Hughner et al., 2007).

Global Inequalities and Food Security Issues

Organic agriculture potential to increase global food security has been questioned due to the lower productivity. Critics have suggested that organic agriculture alone will not solve the nutritional needs of growing populations in regions where there is already a food deficit (Connor, 2013). Organic farming operation would not be niche and not a mainstream option without policy intervention and complementing other sustainable agricultural practices.

Policy and Institutional Inefficiencies Barriers

Agricultural policies in most countries favor conventional farming systems with excessive subsidies for genetically modified crops, pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. Organic farmers are not given access to similar institutional support and so the environment is less favourable for the competitive situation (Scialabba & Muller-Lindenlauf, 2010). Policy incoherence and lack of policy-coordinated policies also limit the development of organic agriculture (Scialabba & Muller-Lindenlauf, 2010).

Organic Farming's Future

Organic farming is at a turning point in the history of world agricultural advancement, which not only symbolize returning to old ways of farming wisdom but also progressive ways of addressing important issues of sustainable development, global warming, and food security. As consumers are looking for healthier, environment-friendly, and ethically-produced food, the future of organic farming looks bright. However, to realize this potential requires some innovation, supportive policies and global cooperation. This part discusses the future outlook of organic farming by exploring the trends in the market, underlying technological developments, policy developments, consumer behavior, and the incorporation of organic farming into global food systems.

Increasing Global Demand for Organic Products

The worldwide organic market has experienced steady growth during the last three decades. Evidence exists which shows that consumers in general are increasingly willing to pay a premium for organic products due to reasons around health and environmental concerns (FiBL & IFOAM, 2023). With the rise of middle-class populations in emerging economies and therefore a growing demand for organic food, market opportunities will arise for small-scale farmers as well as agribusinesses. Increased international trade in organic products will tend to increase organic exports from developing countries, in particular, the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Support in Institution & Policies

Government policy will play an instrumental role in whether or not organic farming will have a future. The European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for example, provides significant funding to support organic farming as part of their 'Farm to Fork' policy (European Commission, 2020). For example, the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) of India fosters adoption of cluster-based organic farming by establishing a policy intervention, as the effort clearly shows how specific policy interventions injected promote adoption. In future year(s), driving policies related to sustainable practices, carbon sequestration and soil health improvements will make organic systems more

appealing.

Linking to Climate-Smart Agriculture

While the climate change is gaining strength, organic agriculture will probably be an integral component of large-scale climate-smart agriculture systems. In terms of inputs, organic farming reduces the need for inputs generated from fossil fuel such as chemicals and fertilizer; it maximizes soil organic matter; and it maximizes resilience to disasters. In the future, a symbiosis of organic production methods, precision farming, agroforestry, and regenerative agriculture can give rise to hybrid systems, in which the yield is optimal and the ecology is maintained (Gomiero, 2018).

Technological Innovations on Organic Farming

Though organic farming avoids synthetic inputs, there is nothing inside its boundaries when it comes to innovation. Improvements in biotechnology, biofertilizers, biopesticides, and the application of digital technologies such as artificial intelligence and remote sensing will change the practices of organic farming. For example, drone technology can be applied to track the level of pests in organic crops, while blockchain will optimize the traceability and realness of organic supply chains (Rejeb et al., 2022). Incorporation of such innovations ensures that the organic agriculture might scale well to meet the future food needs.

Consumer Trends and Ethical Consumption

The future of organic agriculture will also be determined by the shift in consumer values. In addition to health, ethical issues such as fair trade, welfare and conservation of biodiversity are affecting purchases. This means that organic agriculture might be getting closer and closer to overlapping with other certification programs, such as Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance, and the regenerative agriculture certifications. Consumers' growing demand for local and seasonal organic foods may also help increase stronger urban-rural connections, farmers' markets, and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.

Scaling up Organic Agriculture in the Developing Countries

Its greatest potential for growth is in the developing world, where indigenous low-input agriculture is generally consistent with organic practices. If given appropriate training, facilities and certification support, the small farmers can tap into the premium organic markets, and this will lead to increased rural incomes and poverty alleviation (Scialabba & Muller-Lindenlauf, 2010). Translating organic farming to developing countries requires investment in supply chains and certification infrastructure as well as education in order to compete globally.

The SDGs of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Synergies

Organic farming has a high level of congruence with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, in particular those related to zero hunger (SDG 2), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) and climate action (SDG 13) and life on land (SDG 15). Organic agriculture may truly become a cornerstone of the strategies formulated to end hunger, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030 (United Nations, 2015).

Challenges in Expansion in the Future

The growth of organic farming may be hindered by some obstacles, despite its futile future. These

include yield differences from conventional farming, high cost certification, and global competition from industrial agriculture. Furthermore, organic farming will have to adapt without losing sustainability in order to feed the world's 9.7 billion people by 2050. Integrating organic systems with technological advancements and sustainable intensification paradigm may be the solution of the future.

Vision for the Future

In the long run, organic agriculture is also supposed to become a widespread agricultural paradigm. Organic farming has the potential to greatly contribute to sustainable food systems with the aid of technology, supportive rules, awareness among consumers, and international collaboration. By adding organic principles into wider agroecological and regenerative principles, farming will be able to feed human populations, whilst feeding the ecosystems of the planet.

CONCLUSION

Sitting squarely at the intersection of agriculture, environment, human health and economic development, organic farming is a holistic food production strategy compatible with the vision of sustainable food systems. The evidence accumulated in the framework of current paper shows that organic farming has a number of advantages such as lower consumption of chemicals, improved soil health, protection of biodiversity and environmental degradation. It also brings in healthier and safer food in addition to providing better markets and jobs to the rural economies. Other than that, organic agriculture results in better food security in the long-term, through robust agroecosystems relying on less external inputs.But then again, this research has also showed that organic agriculture is not immune to adversities. The ability to scale-up outputs of organic agriculture could be constrained by increased costs of production, lower yields, difficult access to organic certification and uncertain demand in the market. In addition, debates on the ability of organic agriculture to supply adequate food for the increasing world population highlight the need to combine organic agriculture with other sustainable agricultural innovations.

Looking into the future, organic agriculture can not exist as a model on its own but must be included in an integrated diversified and sustainable food system. The advances in agroecology, practices for biocontrol, use of renewable energy in agriculture as well as innovative certification practices can reduce some of the current constraints. Facilitation of policies, awareness of consumers and investments in research will be important in upscaling the organic farming systems without losing their efficacy in the environment.

Finally, organic farming isn't simply the method of food production, but is a philosophy of stewardship with an emphasis on ecological parity, human health and long-term sustainability. Though it can by no means solve the world food crisis, its contribution towards healthier, more sustainable and more resilient food systems cannot be questioned. By embracing organic farming, in conjunction with other sustainable farming methods, the world can be closer to achieving the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and one way to guarantee a healthier planet for future generations.

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