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POLICY ARTICLE



Organic production is the way forward in Indian dairy

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India has good potential to produce all varieties of organic products because of its various agro climatic regions. Tradition of organic farming is inherited in our farmers. Organic producers are growing steadily in the domestic and export market. There is a national policy in the year 2001 for the growth of organic products in India. The Government of India announced a national policy on growth of organic products. With the available statistics (2018), India's ranks 9th in terms of World's Organic Agricultural land and 1st in terms of total number of producers.

A relatively small percentage (0.9%) of global market for certified organic milk reported by Global Organic Milk Production Market Report. Cost of production of organic milk is 1.3-1.6 times higher than conventional production. Consumer demand for organic products is increasing and this, together with the premium price for organic products, has prompted an increase in organic production. In addition, organic products makes biodiversity and human and animal health and welfare.

Organic dairy products

When we say organic milk and milk products, they must be under continuous organic management for at least one year prior to the production of the milk or milk products

Organic way of dairy farming

Rearing of animals with the organic and biodegradable inputs viz., feed, medicines and breeding is called organic dairy farming. It should avoid the use of chemical drugs, feed additives and genetically engineered breeding inputs.

Dairy cows or buffaloes should not be kept tied in shed all through the day. Similarly locally adopted native breeds are to be maintained. Good bedding, natural light and ventilation should be provided to the animals. All the feed resources are to be

procured as 100% organic in nature. Fodder land used for organic dairy farm should be at least three (3) years prior to the first organic harvest. vitamins and minerals are approved in this organic programme.

With regard to calves, synthetic milk replacers are prohibited. Calves must be fed on organic milk only. All animals must be allowed to graze naturally. Essential health care products can be used if they are approved. Antibiotics should be used when it is in urgent health care with strict guidelines.

Animal slaughter house by-products and urea and other similar products should not be used. Record maintenance for an organic farm is highly essential to meet out the standards and it makes easy to inspection and audit procedure which happened every year.

- To maintain the stock level of the farm, brought-in conventional animals are allowed in organic farming with the following age limits:
- 4 weeks calves which are received colostrums and full milk diet
- If it is breeding animal, the stocking percentage should not be exceeded 10 and the same breed only will be allowed.

In the reproduction, natural breeding is always encouraged in certification and artificial insemination also allowed within the same breed. Whereas embryo transfer techniques, hormone treatment and induced birth are not allowed. Genetically engineered/modified species or breeds are strictly not permitted.

Fodder preservatives like bacteria, fungi and enzymes can be used. In special weather (specified in certification programme), industrial by products like molasses, plant based products and synthetic chemical fodder preservatives are allowed.

Weaning should be done as specified in the account the natural behaviour of the relevant animal species. Medicines and management practices should be provide to the welfare of animals to achieve maximum resistance against disease and preventing infections. Ailing animals and animals in urgent care like injury are to be attempted immediately and care and treatment should be given immediately. Ethno veterinary medicines and procedure are to be adopted to avoid the chemical drugs.

Where conventional veterinary medicines are used, the withholding period shall be at least double the legal period. Synthetic growth promoters, hormones for heat induction and heat synchronisation are to be avoided. Legally required vaccinations are allowed. Genetically engineered vaccines are prohibited.

Challenges in adopting organic farming

Transition from conventional to organic farming requires 3-5 years. This can create a time lag between costs and rewards and can be a barrier to conversion to organic farming.

- Low yields, higher costs per production unit
- Non availability of organic supplements, bio fertilizers, local market for organic products and poor access to certification and guidelines.
- Poor and resource less farmers who can't afford high cost of certification and also time lag of years for conversion period

- Lack of sufficient knowledge about RMPs (recommended managerial practices) like intercropping, crop rotation, grazing management etc. to the farmers.
- Lack of indigenous lucrative markets for organic products in developing countries

Superior quality of organic milk

Omega-3 fatty acid : Organic milk is rich in Omega-3 fatty acid which is an essential fatty acid which is required for healthy growth and deficiency of this leads to various health problems viz., heart disease, inflammation (in skin diseases like eczema), cancer, and arthritis.

Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA) : levels in organic milk are higher because these cows eat greater amounts of grass, hay and silage.

Chemical free : Organic cows are grazed on pastures that are grown through organic means. Therefore, their milk is not contaminated with harmful chemicals such as the residues of pesticides, fertilizers and hormones. Organic milk will not possess traces of antibiotics, urea, hormones and GM (Genetically Modified) feed.

Antioxidants: Organic milk has a two to three times higher concentration of antioxidants like lutein and zeaxanthin than non-organic milk . Lutein is extremely important for eye health and is effective in preventing numerous eye diseases such as macular degeneration and cataracts. Zeaxanthin is also important for good eye health. It protects the eye from UV damage and the impact of free radicals. It is very helpful in preventing cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and macular degeneration.

Vitamins: Organic milk has a higher concentration of vitamins such as Vitamin A and Vitamin E than conventional milk as the cows graze on fresh grass and clover.

The National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP) was accorded equivalency by the European Union for its regulation on Organic Agriculture EC 2092/91. That means that any product certified according to NPOP can have ready access to European markets without the need for separate EU (European Union) Certification. The USDA has also recognized the accreditation system adopted by India under NPOP.

As per FSSR(2017), Organic foods are products of holistic agricultural practices focusing on biodiversity, soil health, chemical free inputs etc. with an environmentally and socially responsible approach that have been produced in accordance with organic production standards.

The unified logo created by FSSAI is an identity mark to distinguish organic products from non-organic ones supported with the tagline “Jaivik Bharat” at the bottom, which signifies Organic Food from India.

FSSR(2017) also stipulates regulations on labelling, traceability and import of organic foods as mentioned here.

Labelling on the package of organic food shall convey full and accurate information on the organic status of the product. Such product may carry a certification or quality

assurance mark of one of the systems mentioned in regulation 4 in addition to the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India's organic logo.

Traceability: Shall be established up to the producer level as applicable under the systems mentioned in regulation 4 and it shall include any other requirements prescribed by the Food Authority to maintain the organic integrity of the food product.

Import of organic food:Organic food imports under bilateral or multilateral agreements on the basis of equivalence of standards between National Programme for Organic Production and the organic standards of the respective exporting countries shall not be required to be re-certified on import to India subject to their compliance with the provisions of the Act, the rules and regulation made there under.

Conclusion

Organic dairy farming is definite income to the farmers who are doing organic farming with diversified production and supporting biological cycle within farming system. Due to increasing consumer awareness there has been an increased concern about organic milk and milk products to avoid contamination of various chemicals. There is a worldwide demand for organic dairy farming to give better alternative to the conventional dairy.

Organic dairy products are having definite scope in the global market. In our country, the rate of adaptation of organic farming is comparatively higher in farming communities due to traditional knowledge and practices. Though it is traditional way of farming, changing the trend needs little bit slow and costlier due to lack of awareness, organic inputs, high cost of certification and other shortfalls.