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Organic Farming Mandates Meeting the Complete Nutrient Requirement of the Crop Only Through Permitted Organic Inputs And Pest Management by Non-Chemical Methods- Radha Mohan Singh

**Organic Farming Need be Promoted in the Niche Areas- Shri Singh
Future Organic Farming Need to be Linked with Market Avenues and Export of Organic Products**

Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister, Shri Radha Mohan Singh today in Hyderabad addressed the National Symposium on Organic Farming for Farmers' Prosperity, organized by CRIDA and NIRD, Hyderabad. In his address Shri Singh said that the Organic farming mandates meeting the complete nutrient requirement of the crop only through permitted organic inputs and pest management by non-chemical methods. However, in view of large requirements of food in terms of cereals, legumes, oil seed, fodder, fruit/vegetables, fibre etc. organic farming need be promoted in the niche areas.

Shri Singh said that at present, it appears that the only strategy to sustain food production on long term basis in the country is to adopt integrated nutrient management and integrated pest management to meet the ever growing demand for food, while organic farming practices can be adopted in isolated and niche areas to produce quality products and minimize the adverse effects on the environment. Future organic farming need to be linked with market avenues and export of organic products

Full text of the Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister is as follows:

"In India, a tremendous growth in agricultural production was achieved during the last 40 years through input intensive chemical energy based agriculture with adoption of nutrient-responsive high yielding varieties. This has increased not only the food production but also aggravated the second-generation problems associated with 'Green revolution'. Sustaining of soil productivity has become a major issue as lands are being intensively tilled under multiple and intensive cropping systems. Such intensification in irrigated agriculture coupled with indiscriminate use of agrochemicals has resulted in many problems like, nutrient leaching and loss, widespread deficiency of secondary and micronutrients due to substantial decline in relative contribution of organic manures as a source of plant nutrients, salinity, sodicity, lower input-use efficiency and deceleration of total factor productivity.

Furthermore, indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides to control various insect-pests and diseases over the years has destroyed their many natural enemies and soil microflora. This calls for adoption of sustainable agricultural practices like integrated nutrient management (INM) and integrated pest management (IPM). Further, organic farming which does not use any chemical inputs either as fertilizers or pesticides is also suggested as a viable strategy for achieving sustainable production at least in niche areas.

One of the important emerging productivity constraint in intensive production systems with chemical fertilizers without organics is soil health deterioration. Due to declined soil health, productivity of important production systems is static despite of other available technologies. Among several strategies to improve soil health, one important strategy is large scale awareness on soil health among farmers, line departments and implementing agencies. Government of India and its Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare have successfully achieved this target on highlighting the importance of soil health cards in overall agriculture production and food security of the country. The productivity of agricultural systems is often limited by physical (e.g. shallow depth, poor structure, high mechanical impedance), chemical (high or low pH, low available nutrient content), or biological (high soil pathogen load, low populations of beneficial microflora) soil constraints. Because agriculture is a soil-based industry that extracts nutrients from the soil, effective approaches for slowing down that removal and returning nutrients to the soil will be required in order to maintain and increase crop productivity and sustain agriculture in the long term.

Organic farming has received considerable attention in India in this direction. Organic farming mandates meeting the complete nutrient requirement of the crop only through permitted organic inputs and pest management by non-chemical methods. However, in view of large requirements of food in terms of cereals, legumes, oil seed, fodder, fruit/vegetables, fibre etc. organic farming need be promoted in the niche areas. Sikkim State has made sincere efforts for agricultural products investments, various techniques of crop production and marketing of products, etc. Organic retail stores have been

started by Government of Sikkim in New Delhi and plans are there to open more in major cities of India to market the organic products of Sikkim. Nearly 25-30,000 hectares of land area out of the total 58,128 hectare of available cultivable land has been certified as organic in Sikkim. Regions of North-Eastern and Eastern states where consumption of chemical fertilizers and pesticides is already low, need to be encouraged for organic farming. Similarly some of the specific areas where there is high demand for organic products, more emphasis need to be given. Government of India and its Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare started an ICAR research institute in Eastern part of the country recently to promote organic farming in these regions.

A National Organic Farming Research Institute has been established in Sikkim to promote research and education in the country. Indian Institute of Farming System Research, Modipuram, Meerut is operating two projects – National Network Programme on Organic Farming and All Indian Coordinated Project on Integrated Farming System which collaborate with Agricultural Universities for research in this area. In addition National Centre for Organic Farming, Ghaziabad is working on promotion of organic farming through its regional Centres. This institution is working for human resource development, technology transfer, production, production of organic quality agri inputs and distribution. The analysis of bio-fertilizers, and organic manures is also being performed by this institution. The standardization of the quality of organic manures and promotion of organic farming is also done.

Mission on Organic Value Chain Development for north-eastern region has a provision of Rs.125 crores for 2015-16 with an objective to form farmers' groups and certification of organic products. Producers and consumers, collection of produce and processing, marketing and branding are the important ingredients of the scheme. APEDA is another institution which certifies the organic products and facilitates for international markets.

Organic farming practices are mostly associated with improved soil health strategies. Some of the important strategies, where government of India need to focus are ban or reduction of crop residue burning and recycling the farm waste to the soil; on-farm generation of organic matter, tapping house hold and city waste recycling, promotion of community based biogas or individual based biogas plans linked with vermicomposting. Integrated use of permitted chemical inputs or natural resources along with organic manures such as FYM, green manuring and crop residues assumes greater significance in improving the crop productivity through sustained soil fertility and overall these practices would help in contribute and help in enhancing food security of India.

It is well established that continued use of organic manure on a farm improves its organic matter content, which supports the soil micro, meso and macro fauna and makes the soil a living body. Organic matter improves soil structure and increases water-holding capacity, which is important particularly under dry farming conditions. Continuous addition of organic manure assures a regular supply of micronutrients. We need to find innovative ways of producing organic matter on the farm itself by way of bund farming (growing perennial shrubs on field bunds, adding the pruned material in the cropped field as manure cum mulch), cover cropping, use of vermi-compost, recycling of crop residues, green leaf manuring and agroforestry to meet the nutrient requirements of the crops in view of the declining availability of FYM and compost.

The present Government has laid greater emphasis on organic farming. The *Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana* (PKVY), an initiative to promote organic farming in the country, was launched by the present government in 2015. According to the scheme, farmers will be encouraged to form groups or clusters and take to organic farming methods over large areas in the country. To avail this scheme, a cluster or group of 50 farmers with 50 acres of land may take up organic farming under the PKVY. Each farmer enrolling in the scheme will be provided Rs. 20,000 per acre by the government spread over three years time. Farmers willing to do organic farming upto 2.5 acres of land may also be included in the cluster. This fund can be utilized for obtaining organic seed, harvesting of the crops, and transporting the produce to the local markets. The aim is to form 10,000 clusters over the next three years and bring about 5.0 lakh acres of agricultural area under organic farming. The government also intends to cover the certification costs and promote organic farming through the use of traditional resources. Organic food, thus produced will be linked with modern marketing tools and local markets. In order to implement the PKVY in 2015-16, an amount of Rs.300 crore was allocated. A sum of Rs. 412 crore has been allocated by the government in the financial year 2016-17. PKVY is a more focused and targeted approach towards promotion of organic farming than the earlier initiatives and is implemented in all the States.

At present, it appears that the only strategy to sustain food production on long term basis in the country is to adopt integrated nutrient management and integrated pest management to meet the ever growing demand for food, while organic farming practices can be adopted in isolated and niche areas to produce quality products and minimize the adverse effects on the environment. Future organic farming need to be linked with market avenues and export of organic products”.

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