

Challenges in Transitioning to Organic Farming in West Bengal, India

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Abstract

This paper uses a case study of small-scale rice and vegetable producers in West Bengal, India to argue that some of the same infrastructural and technical roots to problems that plague small farmers attempting to use chemically-intensive farming methods also hinder their ability to fully convert to global-style organic farming. In particular, problems in accessing knowledge and technical inputs are likely to translate into difficulties in adopting and maintaining organic production practices. This case study raises the question of whether the global organic model, which is highly dependent on specialized, knowledge-intensive techniques and expensive inputs, offers a true alternative for the developing country context. A locally developed model based on low-cost, locally available resources and disseminated through local information networks with substantial farmer participation may offer a more viable alternative.

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