

Organic Agriculture and Food Security

Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system, which enhances agro-ecosystem health, utilizing both traditional and scientific knowledge. Organic agricultural systems rely on ecosystem management rather than external agricultural inputs.



Organic agriculture supports and enhances ecologically sound systems of food production that provides food security by:

- Increasing and stabilizing yields, particularly in marginal lands
- Improving resistance to pests and diseases
- Combating desertification through decreasing erosion and improving water uptake and retention
- Combating poverty through reducing debt and increasing returns for labor invested
- Maintaining the genetic crop diversity to cope with climate change
- Maintaining and improving environmental services
- Building on local management skills and resources and so enabling local communities of farmers, fisher folk and pastoralists to be food self sufficient and combat poverty.



Access to adequate food of the quality and diversity to maintain an active and healthy life is a basic human right.

Many examples exist where organic agriculture provides economically sustainable livelihoods.

Chemically based agriculture is proving unsustainable

- Each year, over 200 million hectares of agricultural land go out of production due to salinization.
- In many parts of the world, yields are declining despite increased quantities of chemical inputs.
- Green revolution agriculture makes wasteful use of water, destroying soils and increasing the threats to biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Pesticides are a major health hazard for farmers and farm workers, particularly in developing countries, as well as to wildlife.
- Genetically modified crops generally yield 10% less than their non-genetically modified equivalent varieties and oblige the farmers using them to sign highly restrictive contracts.

There is sufficient food produced in the world to feed everyone, but more than 850 million people remain without even one adequate meal a day.

At the same time obesity is undermining the health of both adults and children throughout the developed world. This is partly due to the quality of food available.



Building a sustainable and equitable food security system for all

The proportion of organically produced crops is increasing rapidly throughout the world. Much of this in the developed world is being driven by consumers demanding healthy food without contamination from pesticides and genetically modified organisms. In developing countries, organic production is providing farmers with a means to obtain better prices for their products.

Increasingly, agriculture based on organic principles is being recognized as a major contributor to combating poverty and building food security in developing countries.

To better benefit organic agriculture's contribution to food security, focused support and appropriate policies from governments, in both the developing and developed countries are required. Donors and major development agencies, particularly the FAO, UNCTAD and IFAD should support and help hasten the uptake of organic agriculture as the main means of ensuring healthy food for all in the 21st century.

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IFOAM IS THE INTERNATIONAL UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS WORLDWIDE.

IFOAM'S MISSION IS LEADING, UNITING AND ASSISTING THE ORGANIC MOVEMENT IN ITS FULL DIVERSITY.

OUR GOAL IS THE WORLDWIDE ADOPTION OF ECOLOGICALLY, SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY SOUND SYSTEMS THAT ARE BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE.