

The rise of organic food and farming practices.

Hiren Bhavsar*

Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Tennessee State University, USA

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In the United States, the term “organic farming” first came into use around 1940s, but organic crop production really prospered as an industry until the 1970s. In the early decades, increased environmental awareness and consumer demand fueled the growth of the organic industry. However, the new organic industry suffered growing pains. Although there was general agreement on philosophical approaches, no standards or regulations existed to define organic agriculture. This changed with the passage of the Organic Foods Production Act in 1990 and the implementation of mandatory certification requirements in 2002. The adoption of a uniform standard was intended to benefit both organic growers and consumers. Today organic crop production is one of the fastest growing segments of agriculture.

Over the past 3 or 4 decades, public interest in organic food and organic farming has been increasing in the United States and rest of the world. This fact is evident by the increases observed in consumer demand for organically produced food and the number of publicly funded research and policy projects pertaining to organic food production. Consumer demand for organic products has shown exceptional growth in the United States. According to the Organic Trade Association (OTA), organic food sales have averaged 20% growth per year since 1990. This growth is remarkable considering that total food sales averaged about 3% growth over the same period. Clearly, there is merit in terms of quality, nutritional value and even economic profitability when it comes to organic food production.

As a reviewer for Organic Agriculture, I have reviewed several articles that suggests that this enthusiasm for organic production practices and organic food is not limited to just the United States.

There is significant amount of research going on regarding organic production in Africa, Europe and Asia as well. Some of my colleagues have even suggested that organic has same interest as GM crops a few decades ago. Organic may not feed the entire population for a foreseeable future, but it definitely provides alternatives for the food industry.

As someone who has researched both consumer preferences and producer's perceptions about organic farming; I believe that organic can feed the world. The production and yield of crops is not a problem as some might suggest. There is an enormous amount of food and produce gets wasted, estimated anywhere from 30-50% depending on who you ask. To feed the future generations, this waste of food must come down a bare minimum. If we can cut the food and agricultural product waste to below 20%, the world hunger issues would be very limited, if not solved completely. However, this requires everyone including producers, consumers and supply chain personnel; to rise up and be more responsible. Every individual must pledge to take better care of food products to ensure the food safety, availability and profitability. In this rapidly changing world, organic agriculture may be the new rising star of agriculture. The world of agriculture as we know it is changing fast; and it is definitely for the better [1,2].

References

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2. Organic Trade Association. U.S.A. Organic Market Analysis. 2015.

*Correspondence to
Hiren Bhavsar
Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
Tennessee State University
USA