

# SIKKIM

towards

Fully Organic State

by 2015



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# 1

## **Sikkim – Pioneer in Organic Agriculture in India**

Agriculture in hill states had always been a challenge the world over. The technological interventions added during the last five decades which have changed the face of agriculture in many developed and developing countries tremendously, failed to change the scenario in the hills. Due to physiographic and geographic reasons they were either inaccessible or unaffordable to the people or they were not suitable to the complex hill ecosystems. This led to the thinking of an alternative system best suited to these hilly terrains.

Shri Pawan Chamling, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim with world vision and distinct dream of developing Sikkim an developed state in India mooted the idea of transforming Sikkim's agrarian agriculture into a high value enterprise by converting it into a fully Organic State. Elaborating his vision, Shri Pawan Chamling stressed that "Converting to organic is an effective way to supply high-value produce within the limited land to the world population who are growing more health-conscious and seeking to ignore the chemically-treated food items across the board. While organic farming practices along the hilly states generally revolves around securing livelihood on their small rainfed farms, the approach of Sikkim Government seeks to transform every inch of the Sikkimese soil into organically-viable and sustainable land to promote Sikkim as brand entity on organic farming".

"Transformation of Sikkim Agriculture to fully organic is not only going to help the state to improve its soil quality and prevent water pollution, but will also be the key point to improve the inflow of tourists".

## **Organic Movement in Policy Planning — Sikkim's Contributions to Nation**

The futuristic vision of Shri Pawan Chamling, **Sikkim's Contributions to Nation** of converting the State to fully organic initiated a new era in the history of organic agricultural movement in the country. Organic agricultural movement, so far spearheaded by the innovative farmers and civil society organizations entered policy-planning process. Many other states started to define policies and declared their intention to embrace organic agriculture in one or the other way.

**He made a historic declaration by announcing a policy to transform Sikkim into totally organic State by passing a resolution in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly in the year 2003. With this, Sikkim became the FIRST State in the country to enact such a far sighted and visionary policy.**

Nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas, this small state of the country was untouched by developments that was taking place in the other parts of the country and the use of synthetic chemicals already minimal and much below the national average. Additionally, owing to difficult terrain and low cultivable land where agriculture was practised on a sustainance level, going the organic way was seen as an opportunity that was lying untapped so far.

With Sikkim being a trend setter in this hitherto unexplored niche sector in the country, the decision has led to far reaching consequences in all other sectors of the population including general well being, health of the populace and prosperity and Gross Happiness Index in the State. Tourism which is a priority sector of the Government was further boosted by this bold decision. Organic farms and resorts set up accross the State provided an impetus for further growth of the Tourism industry in the form of 'Organic Tourism'.

The ban of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides at local level has led to reduction in the use of fossil fuels and emmission of green house gases in addition to sequestering native soil and ecology of the State thereby playing an important albeit small role in mitigating the effects of climate change which is very significant in the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.

A biodiversity hotspot, conservation of the flora and fauna especially the rare and endangered species endemic to this part of the country has been noteworthy, a consequence of organic farming in the state.

Such historic declaration led to major policy changes at the national level and also in various states. Accordingly, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India and many other state governments took major steps for promotion of Organic Agriculture.

## Progress in Organic Movement

- Uttarakhand embraced the idea and declared its intention to convert the hill districts to organic established “Uttarakhand Organic Commodity Board” in 2004 and initiated steps for creating Organic Certification Agency.
- The Government of India under Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation launched National Project on Organic Farming in the year 2005.
- First international trade fair entitled “India Organic – 2005” launched in November 2005 at Lal Bagh, Bangalore
- Later, State Governments of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka drafted organic agricultural policies.
- Promotion of organic agriculture was included in many centrally sponsored schemes of Government of India such as National Horticulture Mission (NHM) and RKVY.
- State Governments of Nagaland and Mizoram declared their intention to go 100% organic in due course of time.
- State Governments of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh drafted and declared policies for adoption of organic agriculture.
- Rapid increase in area under organic certification process
- Growing awareness among consumers and emergence of organic food market in India.

## India in Global Organic Agriculture

A small initiative started by the visionary Chief Minister of Sikkim, Shri Pawan Chamling sparked off a movement and swiftly put the Indian organic agricultural movement on a fast track. The area under organic certification process increased by 25 folds during 2003-04 to 2009-10.

Statutory accreditation and certification system started by the Ministry of Commerce took deep roots, earning international acclaim. The number of accredited certification bodies increased from 4 to 20.

Currently, India ranks 33rd in terms of total land under organic cultivation and 80th position for agriculture land under organic crops to total farming area. As on March 2010 India has brought more than 4.5 million ha area under organic certification process. Out of which, while cultivated area is about 1.08 million ha, the remaining 3.4 million ha is wild

area under forests. About 5.97 lakh farmers are producing more than 18.00 lakh tonnes of different organic commodities, valued at Rs 5,600 crore.

The Government of India has implemented the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP). The national programme involves the accreditation programme for certification bodies, norms for organic production, promotion of organic farming, etc. The NPOP standards for production and accreditation system have been recognized by European Commission and Switzerland as equivalent to their country standards. Similarly, USDA has recognized NPOP conformity assessment procedures of accreditation as equivalent to that of US. With these recognitions, Indian Organic products duly certified by the accredited certification bodies of India are accepted by the importing countries.

India produced around 3,96,997 MT of certified Organic Products which include all varieties of food products namely basmati rice, pulses, honey, tea, spices, coffee, oilseeds, fruits, processed food, cereals, herbal medicines and their value added products. The production is not limited to the edible sector but also to organic cotton fibre, garments, cosmetics, functional food products, body care products, etc.

Indian organic products are mainly exported to EU, US, Australia, Canada, Japan, Switzerland, South Africa and Middle East.