Organic farmers joyous about PGS certification

With the finalization of the details of the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for organic farm certification (at the Goa I meeting of the PGS Organic India Council in April 2007), the decks are now cleared for its implementation among various organic farming groups in the country.

OFAI-connected farmers or members will now be able to opt for the extremely low-cost PGS procedure for the certification of their farms. The high costs for organic farm certification will now happily be a thing of the past.

As a sign of the times, the PGS Organic India meeting was hosted and financed by all the participants themselves – they made their own arrangements for travel and paid all other upfront costs including board and lodging in Goa.

One prominent invitee who stayed through the entire workshop was Dr Ashok Yadav, Director of the National Centre for Organic Farming (NCOF), Ghaziabad. Despite taking charge only very recently, Dr Yadav found time to visit Goa and contribute substantially to the proceedings. NCOF is broadly supportive of the PGS initiative.

Under PGS, the core group that certifies organic farms comprises farmers within a recognized local area. This may be either a village ward, a village as a whole or even a local group at a taluka level. Self-help groups and panchayats can also join the PGS.

The local group is the fulcrum of the entire farm certification movement. The PGS Organic India Council at its April meeting approved a numbering scheme that will ensure that each local group gets a unique 1D number that will always be associated with the group.

PGS Organic India has approved the implementation of PGS through OFAI, Timbaktu Collective, IIRD, DDS and Keystone Foundation. In the intervening period between the Goa I and Goa II meetings, these five groups had already organized local groups and set them in experimental mode. Their members stand to benefit from immediate implementation of the scheme.

Those local groups that certify their members, after following the normal procedures required under PGS, will be allowed to use a unique PGS label that will associate their product with organic farming.

The PGS basic documents are on the PGS Organic India website (www.pgsorganic.in).

Individual organizations may either copy these or create their own documents based on the model documents listed. OFAI, for example, has its own requirements under PGS. These are unique to the organization. Members of OFAI wanting to join PGS will follow these norms.

No PGS group will be allowed to dilute the basic PGS organic standards which are already available on the internet and in printed form. At present, besides English, the documents are also available in Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Marathi and Punjabi. (Copies can be obtained from the OFAI central secretariat in Goa.)

At the present moment, Joy Daniel from IIRRD functions as convener of the PGS Organic India Council. He is assisted by Mathew of Keystone and Claude Alvares and the Central Secretariat of OFAI.

PGS certified organic farmers will be getting their official logos for use before November 15, 2007. The logo was approved by the core group at its meeting at Delhi on October 5, 2007.

(See pages 2-3 for more information)

OFAI Labelling Scheme Starts

The Managing Committee of OFAI has approved the detailed Organic Labelling Scheme (OLS) which will enable OFAI organic farming members to market their produce as food grown without chemicals and poisons, if they are unable to join a local group under the PGS.

The OLS booklet is available from the central secretariat, and on the OFAI website for free download. While the booklet is free for all organic farmers who register for farm appraisal with the association, non-farmers will have to pay a fee to cover the cost of reproduction. Organic farmers who wish to avail of OLS services (including use of the label) will first have to become members of the association.

The entire scheme is based on appraisal reports made by organic farmers themselves. In this sense, the OFAI OLS is unique. The appraisals are also done in the local language, so that both farmer and apraiser clearly understand the process at work.

The OLS document also contains – for the first time – the OFAI organic guidelines. These guidelines have been formulated after intensive discussions within the organic farming community, notably Gujarat. They are also in consonance with the IFOAM 2005 guidelines. The first two organic farmers who applied for certification, have gone through the process and have been granted organic status.

OFAI is pleased to announce that its long-standing advisor, Nammalwar, green pioneer from Tamil Nadu, has been awarded a doctorate in science by Madurai Gandhigram University.

Nammalwar is one of the best known organic farming experts of Tamil Nadu. For several years now, this energetic and wise defender of a peaceful way of farming has crossed and re-crossed all the 22 districts of the state, teaching and advising farmers on how best they can practice organic farming. He has written hundreds of articles and books on organic farming, organic education and organic living. A living university of natural farming techniques, Nammalwar is widely revered by his colleagues and followers.

OFAI was therefore delighted when the news was flashed on SMS that Nammalwar would now be known henceforth as ‘Dr Nammalwar’. The doctorate was handed over to him by Mr P. Chidambaram, Union Finance Minister, at a function held on July 9, 2007.

Nammalwar made a one-minute speech on the occasion. He said: “Today in agriculture we are facing a severe crisis. If you want to come out from the crisis there is only one way, that is the Gandhian way. Gandhiji created the Indian National Congress. Congress is in power today and our friend Mr. P. Chidambaram is the Finance Minister. I have been honoured now by the Gandhian people (the senate and syndicate of the university). If INC is really a follower of Gandhiji then [Mr] Chidambaram can think and do something positively for agriculture.”

The speech got a standing ovation from the audience. Mr Chidambaram appeared shell-shocked. Every one knows the irreplaceable Nammalwar would never lose an opportunity to make the persons responsible for the present crisis squirm.

OFAI sends him its warmest congratulations. Now not just thousands but millions should listen to what he says on organic farming.
What is PGS?

The Participatory Guarantee System (or PGS, as it is known) for organic certification of farm produce, is fairly recent in its adoption and recognition all over the world. It is in active use in Brazil, the USA and New Zealand. It is now poised to become a major certification mode for India’s organic farmers who will finally be able to rid themselves of the entirely unnecessary burden of expensive third party audits.

Under the PGS, organic farmers regain control over the certification process and are able to produce a far more credible and effective system of quality assurance compared to third party certification systems which are known to be cursory, superficial, incompetent and at times corrupt.

GS Organic India Council Meets

A meeting of the PGS Organic India National Council was organized in Panaji, Goa, from April 16 to 18, 2007. Its aim was to review the pilots which individual members of the original 14-member PGS Organic India National Council had committed for completion by March 31, 2007. It also reviewed the institutionalisation of the PGS system in India.

Mathew John from Keystone Foundation made a presentation on the PGS system worldwide, and its strengths and limitations. He also spoke about how PGS operated within the work area of the Foundation. (Both these power point presentations can be directly sourced from Mathew John; he can be contacted at mathew@keystone-foundation.org.)

The PGS has several important advantages over third party systems – which is why organic farmers have taken to it enthusiastically wherever it has been introduced:

1. The procedures are simple. The documents are basic. All the documents are in the language of the farmers concerned.
2. Where farm inspectors are not literate, PGS offers the option of conducting the inspection on video, with oral recording of answers, written to CD.
3. The farm visits are conducted by people who have a day-to-day knowledge of, or acquaintance with, the farm, and farm inspectors come also from the area where the villages are situated.
4. The costs of PGS are extremely marginal and all farmers, particularly small and marginal farmers, can afford these without any problem.
5. Farm certification is back in the hands of the farmers themselves and not in the hands of certifiers (mostly non-farmers) based in cities and who demand costs for their services.
6. The entire system is based on personal trust and knowledge. Hence paper work – which is required when the certifier does not have personal knowledge of the farm – is greatly reduced in PGS.

For reasons, PGS is the preferred system of organic farm certification emerging out of the experience of the organic farming moment worldwide. PGS is now recognized by IFOAM and FAO. Its recognition by the Indian government is under process.

With the introduction of PGS, organic farmers will have no reason to complain any more that they have difficulties in the certification of their farm produce.

Dr Daniel Gustaffson, FAO’s Representative in Delhi (above left), makes a point, while group discussions hammer out details of PGS certification for India (right)

Ardhendhu Chatterjee addresses the PGS workshop at Goa
Creating Local Groups under OFAI PGS

Any farmer can take the initiative of forming a ‘local group’ of organic farmers. PGS permits existing groups such as village level organisations, farmer associations, self-help groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), etc., to also take the initiative to either form local groups or volunteer themselves as the local group in their area.

1. The local group can never be less than five members. It must also be ‘local’. Members must know each other and each others’ farms. The group can be expanded to include members of NGOs, consumer organisations, etc, which may be able to assist the local group in terms of writing appraisal reports, maintaining records, organising inspection schedules, corresponding with Regional Councils, storing records, etc.

2. Once a local group is formed, or a recognised group is already willing and available, it must have a correspondence address and telephone number. The names and addresses of all the members must be clearly written down in the local group box file.

3. Next, it is important (as far as OFAI PGS is concerned) that the information given is ‘verified’. This is best done if one or more members of the local group personally know persons of OFAI’s Managing Committee, National Steering Committee, State Steering Committee or state secretariats, OFAI’s advisors or technical resource centres and OFAI-approved consultants.

4. The local group has to ensure that all members engaged in organic farming take the organic farmer’s pledge and read and study the documents provided. These must be made available in the language of the state, a responsibility to be taken up by state secretariats or volunteers. These PGS basic documents are already available in Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu and Hindi.

5. The next stage is individual farm appraisal, and it is mandatory that a minimum of three local group members attend it. ‘This peer appraisal’ will be done using the OFAI ‘peer appraisal form’. They may write in these formats or, if they have access to a laptop, fill in the details directly into the laptop. The form can be downloaded from the OFAI website or will be sent as an email attachment from the central secretariat upon request.

6. An appraisal report must be filed and signed by all three members at the conclusion of the visit. If there is difficulty in writing, OFAI PGS permits a video interview of the farmer to be taken as a record, after it is written on a CD.

7. The local group should then submit a short summary of each of the appraisal reports, together with its decision to certify organic farmer members as ‘organic’ and their names and addresses, to the Regional Council. (Within OFAI, these reports will be placed before the Standing Committee of the National Steering Committee of the Organisation.)

8. PGS allows local groups to evolve and enforce their own norms and procedures in the conduct of their business. These procedures can be discussed by members in advance at their very first meeting and then written in a book for reference and to assist new members, as and when they join the group. Local groups can also follow the procedures adopted by other PGS groups and which are working well. OFAI central and state secretariats will be glad to assist in locating successful PGS groups within the same region or state for this purpose, if requested.

9. It is highly recommended that every meeting be conducted formally, and that a ‘Minutes Notebook’ is also maintained. OFAI central secretariat staff will often ask for physical examination of these documents to assure themselves that they are being maintained as required.

Certification Procedure: Under OFAI PGS

PGS certification is largely for farmers or tribals or local communities that can organise and perform as a group within the village or in a group of villages. Individual farmers unable to join groups will have to choose the option of ‘third-party’ appraisal by OFAI farm appraisers.

I. An individual farm family has to...

1) Join the local group (LG) and become an OFAI ordinary member.

2) Fill in OFAI/FAO form (if possible).

3) Read (or have read to them) OFAI basic standards document. (These documents are available in Hindi, Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, Marathi and Telugu from the OFAI central secretariat.)

4) Read and sign pledge, and hand it over to the LC convener for putting it in the LG file.

II. The local group has to:

1) Fill in or complete OFAI/FAO form of each LG member.

2) Confirm that the farmer family understands the basic standards document.

3) Form ‘peer appraisal groups’ for farm visits (minimum of three members per visit). The peer appraisal group will use a simplified format for the visit and is also permitted to do a video-interview, where possible or necessary. (The inspection of farms of their colleagues or co-farmers of the local group is called ‘peer group appraisal’.)

4) Ensure that appraisal statement is signed by the peer appraisal group and circulated within the LG for study and discussion.

5) Decide to recognize the farmer family as organic; in case of rejection, guide the farmers on how they can improve practice.

6) LG convener should collate application and pledge, and send summary of statement on farm to the state or central secretariat for placing before the Regional Council, which in the case of OFAI is the National Steering Committee Standing Committee.

7) Hold regular meetings to share knowledge and to educate new members, to promote extension of organic farming. A simple record of meetings should be maintained in a small notebook.

III. Regional Council (OFAI NSC) has to...

1) Check the summary statement for completeness and offers comments, if necessary.

2) Recognise a local group.

3) Derecognise a local group, if it is found to be violating standards.

IV. PGS India Council (9 members, including OFAI) has to...

1) Maintain all records of local groups.

2) Provide IDs for each local group.

3) Make available SMS or Internet facility for referencing all recognised organic farms.

4) Maintain a web database of PGS Organic India

Members of OFAI are invited to visit the updated website of the association at www.ofai.org. Organic farmers recognised by OFAI will soon be offered the free facility of offering their produce on the OFAI website for direct sale to customers. Please get in touch with the OFAI secretariat for the necessary information required.

Organic farming meetings (OFAI)

Organic seeds catalogue meet at Bangalore (August 30-31, 2007)
Together with Green Foundation, OFAI organised a two day sharing of skills of those farmers and persons working with indigenous, organic seeds for organic production. The first OFAI organic seeds catalogue will be circulated to its members in January 2008. The workshop approved the details.

PGS briefing meeting at Kottayam
Organic farmers asked for a specific briefing workshop on PGS. This was held in Kottayam district on September 21, 2007. The meeting was organised by the OFAI Kerala Secretariat at INFACT. Though 25 organic farmers were invited, 60 attended.

Inauguration of the International Institute of Sustainable Agriculture (IIASA), Pune
The country’s first international centre for organic farming was formally inaugurated on October 2, 2007 at Ovale, Pune. Initially to be financed by the V.B. Foundation, the 25-acre institute will be the permanent home of the organic farming movement in India. OFAI and MOFF were both involved in the inaugural. Claude Alvares is Founder President of the Institute.

EVENTS AHEAD:

Microbes in Organic Farming, Bhubaneswar
A meeting to develop skills among farmers concerning the maintenance of living soils with beneficial microorganisms is being held from January 10-11 at Bhubaneswar. The meeting is being organised by the Regional Centre of Organic Farming in association with OFAI. Organisation is being done by OFAI Orissa Secretariat.

Organic Farming for North India
A special workshop focused on the needs of organic farmers in north India is being held in December 2007. For more information as firm dates become available, contact the OFAI Secretariat.

National Steering Committee of OFAI meets at Pastapur, Hyderabad
The National Steering Committee of OFAI will meet at Pastapur in January. Members will arrive in Hyderabad on January 13 to participate in the annual seeds mela of DDS scheduled for January 14 and on the following day decide policy issues for OFAI.
Organic Farming News: India

Maharashtra: Exhibition of Organic Produce
Together with the Maharashtra Organic Farming Federation of Pune, organic farmers in Sangli, Kolhapur and Satara districts of Maharashtra and some farmers from Belgium district in north Karnataka organised exhibitions and sale of their organic produce in these different cities.

Feedback from these events indicates that customers want the display and sale of organic produce on a regular basis. Many consumers interested in organic food noted the contact details of organic farmers, to contact them whenever the product is required.

During the exhibitions, there were also lectures by doctors and farmers on chemical-free food and chemical-free organic farming.

On March 17, there was a procession of traditional seeds through Karad city. A bullock cart pulled a tractor trolley laden with seeds in pots. Farmers from Vidharbha, DD Foundation, agricultural officers, the MP and MLA of the area, and Municipality President also participated in the exhibitions. Due to this event, farmers got the opportunity to showcase the different seed varieties in rice, jawar, vegetables, pulses, ground nut, different beans, soyabean, cowpea, black gram, red gram, millets, etc, in 30 different stalls for three days.

This was probably the first seed exhibition of its kind in Maharashtra.

Uttar Pradesh: First Exclusive Outlet for Organic Products
Janhit Foundation had initiated the promotion of organic farming in 2003. It is today working with the farming community in the villages of Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Baghpat districts to promote-certified organic products.

One such Janhit initiative is OrganiC Aaharam, an exclusive outlet for organic products in Meerut. OrganiC Aaharam delivers organic flour (atta), mustard oil, honey, turmeric powder, wheat dalia, masoor, dal urad (chilka), dal urad (dhua) at a slight premium to consumers in this region. Apart from directly benefiting the farmers with their income enhancement, the outlet will provide certified chemical-free, tasty and healthy food items to consumers.

The outlet was inaugurated by Satish Chander, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operation, Government of India. Also present during the function were people from Ford Foundation and One World South Asia.

Amritsar: Natural Farming Workshop Guides Farmers
The adoption of natural farming practices has taken roots in Punjab – many farmers have now adopted natural farming. Kheti Virasat Mission (KVM) had organised a four-day workshop in Bhagat Puran Singh Pingalwara from January 4 to 7, 2007, to train farmers in the techniques of natural farming.

The workshop was inaugurated by a noted thinker, journalist and agriculture policy analyst, Mr Devinder Sharma. Eminent natural farming expert Mr Subhash Palekar was the Chief Resource Person and Master Trainer. The workshop also addressed eminent environmentalist Mr Sunder Lal Bahuguna; Dr R.S. Ghuman, Professor, Department of Economics, Punjabi University, Patiala; Dr Inderjit Kaat, President of the All India Pingalwara Charitable Society, Amritsar; and Dr R.K. Pathak, Chief Advisor of the National Horticulture Mission, ICAR.

Over 126 farmers and environmental activists, representing 14 districts of the state, participated in the workshop. Academicians and teachers also took part in the proceedings.

KVM has also organised ‘Environment Pan-chayats’ in different parts of the state. The aim is natural farming free from poisons, pollution, indebtedness and violence.

Contact: Kheti Virasat Mission, 5th Street, Hardayal Nagar, Jaitu-151202, Faridkot, Punjab.

Maharashtra: MOFF Galvanises Government into Action
Maharashtra Organic Farming Federation (MOFF) presented a 20-page draft policy on organic farming to a committee constituted by Maharashtra state under the chair of Dr Rajaram Deshmukh, Vice Chancellor, MPKV, Rahuri. The draft discusses status and opportunities for, and strategies for the promotion of, organic farming in the state. It talks about mixed farming, commercially produced organic inputs, certification, market development and employment generation in rural areas. The policy also touches upon research and evaluation, credit and capacity enhancement.

MOFF has sent an appeal to the Planning Commission to urgently promote organic farming in the state. It has bolstered its case by referring to how soil deterioration, toxicity levels have adversely affected farming, and how conventional farming methods have reached static levels of production. The appeal declares: “The report on organic farming… supports the views and the remedies expressed here… and the authorities in the Agriculture Department are fully aware of these facts. But the influence of multinationals in promoting GM technology as an answer to low productivity are highly imaginary. Moreover the side effects of GM are yet not known and the said technology has been rejected by European Union. Powerful vested interests are against organic farming as it hurts their business interests and therefore they will do everything in their power including sabotaging the current schemes to promote organic farming.

Uttar Pradesh organic farmers visit Maharashtra organic farms

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Two self-sustainable bio-village projects have also been taken up. Various activities have started for this five-year project, such as socio-economic survey, soil and water conservation, site selection, SHG of male and female farmers, vermicomposting, pre-monsoon training to group leaders, soil testing, recharging of wells, etc.

MOFF has been involved in many other activities: collaborating with OFAI to stem the rising levels of farmer suicides; preparing groups of organic farmers under ‘Participatory Guarantee Scheme’; trying to coordinate marketing linkages between organic producers and consumers in Pune; establishing seed and gene banks; and promoting other NGOs involved in similar efforts.

Eighth Annual Biodiversity Festival Culminates

Yelgoi village of Jharsangam mandal in Medak District wore a festive look on January 14 – the occasion was the inaugural ceremony of the Eighth Annual Biodiversity Festival, organised by the Deccan Development Society (DDS). Amidst traditional kolamats, Sangham women came to the specially erected pandal holding pots filled with seeds; nearby were decorated bullock carts flanked by the ethnic seeds of the region, showcasing the rich seed heritage of the Deccan region. The festival was flagged off by farmer leaders from various states.

Inaugurating the festival, noted environmentalist and Director of the Organic Farming Association of India Dr Claude Alvares commended the dalit women of DDS sanghams for the strides they had taken in conserving traditional organic seeds, preserving biodiversity and practicing organic agriculture. He asked them to become the first groups in the country to certify themselves as ‘organic’ through group certification under the new Participatory Guarantee System that was being explored by the Organic Farming Association of India.

It was also an occasion to appreciate the efforts of Sangham women of two villages for efficiently conducting the festival, despite the boycott from the elected representative of the villages.

Tamil Nadu: Organic Agriculture Awareness Padyatra

An Organic Agriculture Awareness Campaign Padyatra was conducted jointly by Tamil Nadu Organic Agriculture Movement and CREATEE – Tamil Nadu. Starting on April 22 from Vedaranyam, the yatra covered the districts of Nagapattinam, Karaikal, Thiruvur and Thanjavur, ending at the historical Kallanai dam a month later, on May 22. Kallanai Dam, also called the Grand Anicut, built during the reign of Chola King Karikalan, is the oldest surviving dam in the world, dating back to the 2nd century – it is a classic example of the type of irrigation network particular to the Kaveri delta region.

According to Thiru Nammalvar, organic farming expert and leader, the padyatra began from the historical site of Vedaranyam since it was the place where the first freedom struggle took place in defiance of the salt law and tax levied by the British, and it is only fitting that the second freedom struggle should begin from here. The first was against one company, this is against many such companies. “What we have to do now is to take up sathyagraha, and say NO to the companies and corporate bullying!”

The one-month padyatra led to a significant revelation for the yatris: that all the so-called important and huge experiments undertaken by universities and their findings are already known, talked of and practiced by ordinary farmers in organic agriculture. Some of the points that came up time and again during the discussions were the necessity of unity among different groups, political will and lobbying, good leadership on all fronts, and the responsibility of leaving behind a world worth living in for the coming generations.

A highlight of the event was the release of the first issue of the GE Caution Newsletter (in Tamil), brought out by South Against Genetic Engineering (SAGE) Tamil Nadu. The focus of this issue was ‘Bt – the Seeds of Destruction’. Copies of this were distributed to everyone in the gathering.

The organic farmers at the ceremony undertook an exhaustive record of resolutions, including:

• Promoting and establishing the study of organic agriculture in mainstream agricultural universities;
• Barring completely all Bt field trails in Tamil Nadu and declaring the state a GM-free zone;
• Bringing about active means of conserving and promoting traditional and indigenous seeds varieties;
• Creating district-level farmers commissions headed by farmers.

(Source: Priya Nagesh for OFAI Anti-GMO Update)

OFAI President Honoured

D.D. Bhargamoudra, OFAI President, was recently presented with the 7th State level Sri. G. Madegowda “best organic farmer” award. The award is instituted by the Sri. G. Madegowda Pratishthana, Bharatniagara, Maddur Taluk, Mandya District, Karnataka.

The award consists of a momento, an appreciation letter and 10,000 rupees.

The award giving ceremony was held on 10.7.07 in Mandya, Sri. G. Madegowda was himself present at the occasion.

The award has been instituted in the name of Madegowda, a well-known Gandhian, politician, who has been serving for the past four decades in the state. He has held positions like state cabinet minister, Raja sabha member and member of parliament. Madegowda, who hails from a small farming family of the village Gurudevanahalli in Maddur Taluk of Mandya District, has founded many educational institutions, hospitals and industries in the state for the good of rural people. He has been playing a pivotal role in the inter-state Kaveri water dispute negotiations.

DD, as he affectionately called, is a regular at most organic farming meetings where he is eagerly sought for, for advice relating to organic farming.

He represented OFAI last year at the annual meeting of IOFAM in Korea. Recently, he represented OFAI on the Planning Commission’s working group on organic agriculture in the eleventh plan. OFAI conveys its best wishes to its President.
Interview with T.G.K. Menon

“Organic Farming is Picking Up”

★ What is the status of organic farming in Madhya Pradesh?

The government of Madhya Pradesh (MP) decided to take up organic farming on a large scale in 1990-2000. In 1998-99, government-run farms had taken up 50% of their area under organic farming to demonstrate and study the production, productivity and economics of this method of farming. In 2001-02, the government decided to take one village in all 313 blocks as a biovillage, or jaivik gao, to demonstrate and train others. Due to the successful program, in 2003-04 the state decided to spread this concept in five villages of all 313 blocks, that is, in 1565 villages.

The state government conducted national, state- and district-level seminars, workshops and jaivik haats for sharing of experiences of farmers and external workers. It also organised padayatras to disseminate the information, technologies, economics and other merits of organic farming in different districts. It awarded enterprising farmers and extension workers. Subsidies were given to organic farmers for making NADEP compost, vermicompost, phosphate compost, biogas slurry use, green manure, blue green algae and azolla. The farmers were encouraged to use liquid manure from the locally available green biomass and also biodynamic preparations.

In 2003 and 2004, two jaivik haats were organised in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in which there were more than 100 stalls displaying various organic products, technologies, live models and video films, etc. Policy-makers and leaders from Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan visited these haats and different districts. After these visits, these states have also taken up these activities and models. The Organic Farming Task Force, constituted by the Government of India, has recommended that the MP model of organic farming should be taken up in all states. There is general awareness amongst the farmers of MP and they now know that organic farming is profitable and sustainable.

★ How well has the concept of organic farming villages been received?

The concept has been well accepted in many villages where productivity had gone down due to chemical and mechanical farming. Most farmers in tribal and backward regions have found organic farming sustainable and affordable. They found that they get more employment by making agricultural inputs in their own farms or villages and thus reduced migration. In a couple of villages even the existing fertiliser shops had to be closed down as there were no buyers of the inputs. There was a time when farmers looked suspiciously at suggestions that they adopt organic farming in their fields, but now after having seen many successful demonstrations and experiences of farmers in their neighbourhood, it is picking up steadily. However, more training and monitoring of farmers and extension workers is needed to further the expansion of organic farming in the state.

★ Is the commitment of the Madhya Pradesh government to organic farming continuing?

There is a full-fledged commitment of the government of Madhya Pradesh to organic farming. However, whenever there is a change in government, ministers, bureaucrats and departmental heads in the state, there is a slackness amongst the staff of the agricultural department. They become lethargic and slow in action and await new directions. The change of the chief minister (Digvijay Singh) in 2003, consecutive changes of Agriculture Production Commissioner and Secretary, and the retirement of Dr. G. S. Kaushal as Director of Agriculture on July 31, 2004, have affected the programme. There is a slackening on promotion of organic farming in the state. As a matter of fact, the scientific community discourages farmers, extension workers and bureaucrats from taking up large-scale organic farming.

★ Do you think that organic farming can become the official policy of the MP government and displace chemicals completely within a set time period?

We have a democratic government and therefore we cannot expect 100% of organic farming in any state of the country. However, the majority of the farms and farmers can become organic farmers in a fixed period of time. I hope the government of Madhya Pradesh will declare a policy of organic farming in a couple of years’ time. In fact, we have five or six districts where the consumption of chemical inputs is less than 5 kg per hectare and these districts will be declared organic farming districts soon. Most tribal blocks are using very little fertiliser and chemical pesticides and they cannot afford mechanical farming too. The new government has come out with cow-based agriculture and integrated rural development with a scheme of Gokul Gram. In these villages – about 15 to 16 villages in each district – organic farming is being promoted.

In my opinion, who are the best organic farmers in Madhya Pradesh?

I do not have a list of such farmers in the state. However, I can give you a few contact farmers or resources persons on organic farming: Mr. Indraban- hadur Singh, Sagar; Mr. Shyamsundar Chandok, Chhindwara; Mr. Ravi Kelkar, Shajapur (working in the district); Mr. Prakash Malotar, Khargone; Mr. Pratibha Synk has taken up organic farming in 19,600 acres by about 4000 farmers in Khargone, Khandwa and Dhar districts; Dr. G.S. Kaushal, Bhopal; Mr. Suresh Diwan, Hoshangabad; Mr. Kumar Yavatkar Tiwari, Sanawad; Mr. Sanmati Mandloi Mahedwar; Mr. Govindbhai P. Tiwari, Barwaha; Mrs. Utsa Bai, Karni; Mr. Maheshbhai, Behtakhedi, Sehore; Mr. Ravi Thakur, Indore; Mr. K.N. Kharmal, Indore; Mr. Mahendra Kumar Bam, Barnagar; 50 farmers in Bagdipura village in Dhar district; 50 farmers in Rajpur in Dhar district; 45 farmers in Malgaon in Khandwa district; Mr. Rajesh Jain, Badnavar; Mrs. Nalini Madhav, Bai- tar; Bhopal; Mr. Amritlal Patwa, Kukleshwar, Neemach; Mr. Rajeev Barua, 14, Singhvil, Mhow; Kasturbaghram Kishri Khsetra, Indore; Mr. M.N. Patwa, Chhatarpur; Mr. Vinay VINAY, Narsinghpur; Dr. Shankarlal Patidar, Bhopal; Kum. Peeri Porwal, Bhopal; Dr. Sadhurn Sharma, Indore; Mr. Arun Dike, Indore; and Mr. Dayaram Dhakad, Ujjain, among others.

This list is incomplete. I do not think we have any kind of list of organic farming in MP.

★ What are the problems facing organic farming in MP?

Some problems are:

Non-cooperation and discouragement by agriculturalists.

Package of practices with organic farming technologies is missing.

Due to lack of knowledge, experience, education, and sustained directions from the headquarters to the extension workers, there is no confidence in extension workers.

No facilities for continuous training programme of agricultural extension workers and farmers at the block and panchayat level.

No systematic monitoring of the programme in the state.

Audio-visual aids are missing.

The mass media is not taking up organic farming or pollution-free food production.

Big companies and multinational corporations can afford publicity and advertising but organic input producers cannot.
The Organic Farming Association of India
(A society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860)
Registered address:
G-8, St. Britto’s Apartments, Feira Alta, Mapusa 403 507 Goa, India
Tel.: 91-832-2255913, Tel./fax: 91-832-2263305
Email: admin@ofai.org Web: www.ofai.org

Membership form of the Association

I, ____________________________________________ [Name and signature]
___________________________________________ [Date of birth]
___________________________________________ [Sex]
___________________________________________ [Address, city, state, country]
male/female, desire to become a member of the Organic Farming Association of India. My membership fee is enclosed herewith.

My complete and correct address (with phone and email data, if available) is provided below:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

I would qualify to be a member of the Association under one of the following categories (please underline the chosen category):

a) Organic Farmer
b) Company/Society/Trust involved in organic food production
c) Green Shop (applicable only to shops marketing organic produce)
d) Green Trader (also includes suppliers of organic farming inputs)
e) Organic Farming Promoter
f) Organic Consumer

I am willing to assist the Association in the furtherance of its objectives as and when I have the time or when called upon to do so. I can assist in the following ways:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Details for applicants:

Membership fees as per bye-laws of the association:

Individuals: Rs.100 per year. Non-profit organizations: Rs.1,000 per year. Companies and partnerships: Rs.5,000 per year. This amount can be sent by dd or MO or deposited directly into UTTAXIS bank branch anywhere in the country in account No:180010100029917 Mapusa branch.

All members are entitled to free issues of The Living Field or Shyashaya Shamala newsletters.

Membership can also be paid direct at the following OFAI secretariats:

- Andhra Pradesh: Deccan Development Society, 101, Kishan Residency, Road no.5, Begumpet, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh Tel.: 040 27764577, 27764744 Email: hyd1_ddshyd@sancharnet.in • Maharashtra: Maharashrti Organic Farming Federation, 1038/11, Balaji Niwas, Flat No.5, Cosmos Bank Lane, Deep Bungalow Chowk, Model Colony, Pune, Maharashtra 411 006 Tel.: 020 25659090, 3907302. Mob.: 9422035290/9822090606 Email: vbsfoundation@yahoo.com • Gujarat: Jatan, Vinoba Ashram, Gotri, Vadodara Gujarat 390 021 Mob.: 09427054132 Tel.: 0265 2371429, Email: jatan@satyam.net.in • Tamil Nadu: EMBIO, No.9, Shri Nagar, Trichy-Chennai Trunk Road, T.V. Kovil (P.O.) Trichy 620005 Tel.: 094365 27007; 09994303355 (Thiruvanakadavu) Email: reveatham@gmail.com • Karnataka: ICRA, No. 22, Samskruthi, Michael Palya, NTP, Bangalore 560 075, Karnataka Tel.: 080-25328337, 25213104 Email: icra@icri.org • Kerala: INFAT, Kizhathadiyoor PO, Palai, Kotayam District Kerala 686 574 Tel.: 04744276552/53; 0482211997 /211998 Email: kinf@anitaserve.com • Orissa: Living Farms, Plot No.1181/148, Ratnakarbag-5, Tankiapani Road, Bhubaneswar, Orissa - 751018 Tel.: 0674 - 5524011 Email: ofaiorg@rediffmail.com • Goa & rest of India: OFAI, G-8, St. Britto’s Apartments, Feira alta, Mapusa, Goa 403507 Tel.: 0832 2256479 Mob.: 09326115907 Email: ofaigoa@gmail.com, admin@ofai.org

(please note: OFAI secretariats are managed by NGOs, membership may be required to be paid in the name of the NGO concerned and not OFAI. Receipts may also be given by the concerned organization. However, the applicant will get a membership certificate from OFAI, after the fee is transmitted to the central secretariat of the organization by the state secretariat concerned.)
Kerala CM’s no to GM crops welcomed UNI (New Delhi), July 10, 2007
Kerala Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan’s announcement that his government would not allow Genetically Modified (GM) crops and even research trials on GM rice in the state was today welcomed by civil society leaders. They said Kerala has become the second state after Uttarakhand to take up cudgels against the MNC-sponsored moves for controlling seeds and seed technology areas in the country.
The Chief Minister had on Sunday said even if the Central Government granted approval for field trials of GM crops in Palakkad, it could not be allowed without the prior approval of the State Government.
The CM also added that if such experiments are conducted without the State Government’s approval, then those who conduct such trials will be answerable to the State and the people and necessary action will be taken against such improper activities.
Monsanto, the multi-national seed monopoly company that conducted field trials on BT Cotton in Maharashtra, has now proposed to conduct field trials of GM rice. When news came that the approval procedures were in the final stages, there was widespread protest by farmers.
Organisations including the Desiya Karsha Samajam had warned that this would lead to the extinction of all traditional seeds in Palakkad, and that farmers would fall into the clutches of multinational monopoly companies.
Dr Devinder Sharma from the Delhi-based Centre for Food Security and Environment Safety said the goal of such companies is to spread them. The request for approval of trials of GM rice by the companies has the blessings of the Central Government policies of globalisation and liberalisation.
The farmer organisations also demanded that a new face of resistance be built against these seeds and that warnings against the exploitation of water resources and environment pollution by the MNCs in the Palakkad District (referring to the Coca-cola and Pepsi company exploitation) should not be ignored.
Earlier, Kerala State Agriculture Minister Mulkarka Ratnakaran had warned farmers of the State against the use of GM crops and said the State will not permit such trials. He was addressing the District Farmers Meet, an organised by the State Agriculture Department and attended by more than 5,000 farmers.
He had also written to Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar on the issue and raised concerns of the farmers and the State.

Calls for BT Cotton Seed Ban in AP
Uma Sudhir, NDTV (Hyderabad), April 1, 2007
The government of Andhra Pradesh has called for a ban on BT cotton seeds after the death of cattle grazing on leftover BT cotton fields. The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee has said the problem requires scientific investigation... “After grazing on non-Bt fields, there is no problem. Only after grazing on BT leaves, sheep and goat are dying,” the Secretary of Shepherds and Goatherders Union said.
“We have given this message that not just goat and sheep, even cattle are also affected with this poison, so better not to graze,” says Dr Laxmi Rajam, Additional Director of the Animal Husbandry Department.
...The state agriculture department has initiated an independent study.

Indian Farmers Against Patenting of Seeds
Ashok B. Sharma, New Delhi, March 29, 2007
Indian farmers have joined hands with their counterparts in Europe and Latin America to protest against patenting of seeds and life forms....
“The approval of this patent would mean that in future a mere genetic description of a plant or animal would be sufficient to get a patent right covering the plant or animal as well as methods of their breeding. Thus the use of plants and animals would be controlled by the patent holders,” said Krishan Bir Chaudhary, the executive chairman of India’s largest farmers’ organisation.

Moratorium on GM Rice
Reacting to concerns about findings of genetically engineered rice in long grain rice seed in areas outside of California, the board of the California Rice Commission last week voted to support a moratorium on field testing of genetically modified rice cultivars....
The moratorium’s language specifies that it applies to “field testing of all genetically modified rice cultivars in the state of California for the 2007 crop and for future crops, until such time as research protocol and safeguards are acceptable to the California Rice Commission.”

Join OFAI’s anti-GM campaign
Become part of the Organic Farming Movement in India... Join OFAI and its anti-GM campaign
- For details — log onto the website www.ofai.org. The anti-GMO section in the website is www.ofai.org/?c4=gm
- Join the email group — write to ofai@googlegroups.com
- Update your email address to be directly added to receive our updates by email — send your comments, criticisms and suggestions to organic-farmer.india@gmail.com

Government rejects ‘unsafe’ modified maize
The government of South Africa has rejected a seed company’s application to grow genetically modified (GM) maize in South Africa for the biofuel industry. The GM maize, called “maize event 3 272”, is the first GM industrial crops in the world for which approval has been sought for cultivation.
The government turned down the application from seed company Syngenta because it said it had not convincingly shown that the maize was safe for food or animal feed.
Philippines: “Stand up for your rice!”
March 19, 2007
Hundreds of text messages stating “I love my rice GMO-free” kept Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Arthur Yap’s phone busy from 12 noon to 1 pm of March 15. His new textmates: Filipino consumers demanding GMO-free rice and rice production. The text barrage was the World Consumers’ Day activity that is part of Greenpeace’s campaign against GM rice.
The text brigade also marked the launch of Greenpeace’s “I love my rice GMO-free” web campaign. The campaign includes a cyber petition addressed to the DA, kits for spreading the campaign to friends and acquaintances, and a rice blog open to the public for posting. The web campaign may be accessed through www.greenpeace.org.ph

Fields Of Trial: List of GMO Field Trials in India
This has been put online by Amit Srivastava of the India Resource Centre, in March 2002. There does not seem to be a more recent one online.
It seems that the government of India is preparing to approve BT Cotton for commercial use in India. The process, if one can call it that, for approval has been marked with secrecy and irregularities – leading to a huge controversy. We even have US delegations advising Indian judiciary of the benefits of biotechnology! Check out the related story BT Cotton: Seeds of Discontent for details.
Indian and foreign institutions have geared up to take advantage of the anticipated approvals of biotechnology in the agricultural sector, and the following is a partial list of field trials being conducted in India currently


Editorial information about The Living Field
The Living Field also comes out in Hindi for the Northern Hindi-speaking belt. Editor of the Hindi edition is well-known environmental activist and scientific researcher, Dr Bhargendu Prakash. Those who wish to receive a copy of the Hindi edition in place of the English edition are requested to get in touch with either Dr Prakash or OFAI, Goa. The Living Field is published by:

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