Bhubaneshwar to host OFAI’s 4th Biennial Convention, Nov 6-7, 2012

OFAI’s Fourth Biennial Convention (FBC) will be held in November this year at Bhubaneshwar, the ancient temple city of India. All OFAI’s members are welcome to participate in the event and also take time to visit important places like Puri beach, temple of Lord Jagannath and the Sun Temple at Konark.

Once in every two years OFAI members and organic farming associates gather together to celebrate safe, sustainable and planet friendly farming practices. The event has attracted close to 1000 registered participants each time. The last convention was organised at Bhai-kaka Krishi Kendra, near Anand, Gujarat in December 2010. Earlier conventions were held in Wardha and Trichy.

The occasion is an opportunity for exchange of seeds, knowledge, innovative organic practices, discoveries and inventions in organic methods; for sale and exchange of organic products; for building linkages; and most importantly, for showcasing regional organic farming practices.

The Odisha convention will provide an interactive interface for organic farmers from the north eastern regions of India and also a special encounter with tribal agriculture.

The eastern regions of India are undoubtedly rich in bio-diversity and their people have been practitioners of traditional, ecologically aligned farming. The area has a rich tradition of seed conservation - especially paddy. Dr. Debal Deb from Kolkata, a keeper of more than 720 varieties of desi rice, puts it aptly: culture and agriculture stem from the same gene.

Many north eastern states enjoy strong government backing for organic farming through policy and budgetary allocations. Bhutan, our neighbour in this region, has declared that it will soon adopt organic farming as its national agriculture policy. Dr. Debal Deb from Kolkata, a keeper of more than 720 varieties of desi rice, puts it aptly: culture and agriculture stem from the same gene.

If organic farmers are unable to pay Rs. 1000/- they will be provided 50% discount on registration charges provided they produce a letter to the effect from OFAI State Coordinators of their respective areas.

You may make your return bookings for the 7th evening or early 8th morning.

6) Staying arrangements are being made at the Farmer’s Hostel in the Siripur Chowk area which is 10 to 15 minutes by walk from the venue. Tent accommodation is also being planned. The facilities will be of very basic nature with separate staying and sanitary arrangements for men and women farmers.

7) Auto fare from the railway station to the venue may cost Rs. 80/- to Rs.100/-. Public transport is available from bus-stand near the railway station. The bus route number from the bus-stand to the Agricultural University is 801.

You can register with:
Debjeet Sarangi,
Living Farms,
Plot No.1181 / 2146, Ratnakarbag-2, Tankapani Road,Bhubaneshwar - 751018, Odisha, India
Ph: 91-674-2430176
Email: livingfarms@gmail.com

For updates on the convention please follow http://ofai.org/calendar/.

You can also register through OFAI Central Secretariat for the event.

Odisha Organic Farmers’ Convention 2012

Venue: Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology (www.ouat.ac.in)

If you are attending the convention, this is what you should know:

1) Buy your rail ticket to Bhubaneswar Railway Station. Arrive there by 5th evening or 6th morning.

2) OUAT (the venue) located in the Siripur Chowk area is about 5 kms from the Railway Station.

3) Pay your registration fee in advance. OFAI has fixed a registration fee of Rs.1000/- which includes simple basic accommodation at the venue from 5th night to 8th morning; vegetarian meals on the 6th and breakfast and lunch on the 7th.

4) If organic farmers are unable to pay Rs. 1000/- they will be provided 50% discount on registration charges provided they produce a letter to the effect from OFAI State Coordinators of their respective areas.

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OFAI trains farmers across the country: reports
(January – June 2012)

This report gives information on activities of OFAI’s trainers and promoters, compiled from their monthly reports for the period Jan to June 2012.

Participation in events and programmes for promotion of organic farming:

Early this year, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh region OFAI representative, Ashish Gupta opposed the 51% FDI policy for multi brand retail trading in a meeting with the secretary of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

He also represented OFAI at the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) – Asia meeting in June 2012 at Suwon, Korea.

OFAI is working with IFOAM to setup a pan Asian NGO to represent the ideas and ideals of IFOAM from an Asian perspective. There is a working group of about 10 persons from Asia of which 2 are from India – from OFAI and International Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture (ICCOA). The group is presently working on the draft of a document on the body’s mandate, mission statement, goals, and working methodology. This will be finalised & submitted to the IFOAM world board by October 2012.

A food festival was organised on 24th June 2012 in Hosur, Krishnagiri district of Tamil Nadu where about 12,000 farmers participated in the event. Traditional foods and organic farming related books were displayed and made available at the event. Mr. Balasubramanian, OFAI’s farmer trainer for Tamil Nadu delivered a talk on organic farming and safe food.

A one day interactive session was organised in Tirunelveli district of south Tamil Nadu. Mr. Antonisamy, an eminent farmer, Mr. Maranji, a neuropathy doctor, Mr. Gomathinayagam, an organic farming activist and Mr. Balasubramanian participated. Around 32 farmers benefited from the meet.

The modules of the organic farming training programme provided by Maharashtra Organic Farming Federation (MOFF) have been collated and revised according to the present needs of farmers, NGOs and stake holders. The schedule, topics and fees of the training programme have been revised. Details are posted at www.moffindia.org

Maharashtra State organic farmer’s study group meets bimonthly at Pune. In May the meeting was organised at Sri Sri Institute of Agriculture and Technology on 29th and 30th. The discussions were mainly on preparation and planning for the current kharif season.

MOFF organised an essay writing competition for student farmers, NGOs, SHGs, stakeholders, consumers and others on the topic “It is time for farmers to go on strike?” Prizes are to be distributed on 15th August for distinguished entries as also for the three best submissions.

Planning commission, Govt. of India sponsored the Natural Resources India Foundation’s (NRIF), study on “Impact evaluation of organic farming and its contribution in enhancing productivity in agriculture and allied areas.” Many NGOs and institutions were a part of this study, MOFF was one of them. The study report included many valuable inputs of which generation of an Apex Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India, for promotion and funding of organic farming was an issue discussed on priority. Other issues expressing serious dissatisfaction were related to nil amount of subsidy given to adopt organic farming vis-à-vis higher amounts of subsidies given to farmers with chemical inputs; compensation for the loss during the initial years of conversion to organic practices; promotion for marketing organic produce. The most important observation was that under drought conditions, crops in organic agriculture systems produce significantly higher yields as compared to conventional agricultural crops.

Since government and schools are encouraging organic farming in most districts of Kerala, many members of OFAI-Kerala are involved in providing training to children in schools.

Mr. John Mathew, director Keystone Foundation, Tamil Nadu has proposed a novel way to ensure fair price and markets for the farmer’s organic produce and a quality product for the customer by organising a weekly auction at Kottagar district of Tamil Nadu.

Smt. Shobhana Shrivastava, member of Kisan Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Tindwara, Uttar Pradesh along with Dr. Bharatendu Prakash visited the Madhya Pradesh Organic Farming Association’s (MPOFA) Joint Director, Department of Agriculture and the Scientist in charge of organic farming at Madhya Pradesh Centre for Science and Technology for coordinating organic farming promotional activities in the state of Madhya Pradesh. This involved mobilising M. P. Govt. for implementation of its own approved policy of organic farming, allocation of budget for various organic farming promotional activities, organising trainings on organic farming for trainers from 30 districts in MP and organising a traditional seed conservation programme.

KVK organised a training workshop on Avartansheel Krishi (recyclable organic farming) in Badokhar Khurd village, Banda district of Uttar Pradesh. Many delegates of foreign nationalities especially Belgium attended and benefitted from the workshop.

A planning and discussion to organise all organic farmers and trainers for organic farming training and promotion was arranged by KVK in collaboration with Akhil Bharatiya Swadeshi Sangha, Bhopal, in the month of March 2012. KVK addressed school children, teachers, Post graduate students and farmers on climate change and its effects on organic farming through various training programmes and discussions across different parts of MP. KVK discussed...
issues on safe food and organic farming in a get-together organised by Gandhi Bhavan,
Chhatapur for healers and practitioners of alternative therapies.

OFAI–Karnataka along with SAGE
Karnataka launched a campaign on “SALT
THEN, SEED NOW” in Bengaluru on
20th and 21st of May 2012 in which 14
districts from the state participated. Threats to
seed sovereignty, BRAI, Seed Bill and GE
in agriculture were issues taken up during the
campaign. The campaign also focused on
organic seed and its local production;
itself by departments; and extend-
ing required financial support to organic
farmers.

Participatory Guarantee Scheme (PGS)
activities

Many local groups have already successfully
marketed their organic produce using the
PGS label. Weikfield Food Pvt. Ltd., Pune
has agreed to launch PGS certified organic
rice under its brand in the market from 1st
July 2012. Mr. Dinesh Balsaver has made
an agreement with the company to sell the
rice at Rs. 30/kg at Kamshet, Pune. The
company has also agreed to purchase other
PGS labeled commodities in the future.

A letter addressed to the District Deputy
Registrar on 3rd May 2012 by Mr. Vikram
Bokey on behalf of the joint efforts by
MOFF, Krishi Pananvadhi, Shetkari
Sanghatana, Bharatiya Krishi Samaj, Krishi
Charcha and Krishi Mandal representa-
tives was handed over in person to him.

The delegation insisted that the Govt. of
Maharashtra implement the decision taken
earlier by notification to allow farmers to
sell their produce (30 types of fruits, 8
types of vegetables and 5 types of spices) in
the open market without middle men and
legal restrictions. This activity is supported
by 112 NGOs affiliated to MOFF in
Maharashtra.

Rural Technology Action Group (Ru-
TAG) have started to motivate farmers in
UP and Delhi to take up organic farm-
ing, acquire PGS certification and market
their organic products. Different ways for
involving large number of farmers and
popularisation of PGS organic labeling of
their produce was discussed. The approval of
PGS by Govt. of India through National
Centre of Organic Farming (NCOF) in
Ghaziabad was appreciated and it was
decided that all the farmers from the north
be linked to NCOF for organic certifica-
tion. Dr. B. Prakash and Smt. Shobhana
Shrivastava visited Dr. A.K. Yadav, Direc-
tor NCOF to discuss issues regarding
expanding and monitoring plan for PGS
certification in north India.

Around 50 certified organic cotton grow-
ing farmers are willing to produce organic
cotton for garment production in Tamil
Nadu.

In early May, a five day intensive meeting
workshop to design and test a cur-
riculum for sensitising farmers’ children on
genetically engineered crops was organised
in the historic and picturesque village of
Kupali, Shimoga, in Karnataka, the home
town of the legendary Kannada litterateur
K.V. Puttappa.

During the initial 3 days of the meeting
educators, academics, textbook writers, gov-
ernment officials from SCERT (State Cen-
tre for Education, Research & Training)
and activists collectively designed the cur-
riculum. This curriculum was then intro-
duced to children during the two day resi-
dential workshop. High School children in
the age group of 14 to 16 participated. Two
children per district from rural schools at-
tended the meeting from 14 districts across
Karnataka. There was a representation from
all the agro bio regions of Karnataka: from
the coast to ghats to severely drought
hit areas as also regions practicing rain fed
agriculture. All the children belonged to
farmer families and had varied degrees of
exposure to farm work. They were joined
by 3 children from Paachasaale, the green
school in Zaheerabad, Andhra Pradesh
where ecological agriculture is practiced.

The workshop over 2 days saw active and
enthusiastic participation, drawing out an
understanding on farming and GE based on
children’s experience and insights. The top-
ics were initiated through a discussion. This
was followed by listing food, nutrition and
dietary habits of the children. They then
proceeded to backtrack on kinds of crops
grown, soil and weather conditions, rain-
fall and irrigation, seeds and storage, use
of chemical fertilizers, safe and traditional
agricultural practices, product analysis and
crop quantification linked to economy,
cultural linkages to farming, farmlands and
crops.

Through all these interactive exercises
children naturally began to understand the
threats of genetically modified crops to
agriculture. The workshop also included a
visit to a local farm and nature walks each
morning to understand the local forest
and farm bio-diversity. There was a formal
session of interaction with local farmer
couples where children quizzed them on
local agricultural practices and techniques.
The farmer couples were delighted to inter-
act with the children.

One of the tangible outputs of this work-
shop has been the decision to take up
introduction of suitable topics on genetic
engineering within the high school curricu-
lium; do a content analysis of agricultural
topics in school textbooks followed by
advocacy to realign the same to reflect safe
and sustainable agricultural practices.

OFAI participated in this workshop and
the rural curriculum ‘Our land our life’
(reviewed in previous issue (15) of ‘Living
Field’ was referred to. The workshop was
jointly organised by Pariyavaran Adhyay
Kendra of Shimoga, Karnataka and Dec-
can Development Society of Zaheerabad,
Andhra Pradesh.

Farmers’ Children Workshop on Genetic
Engineering (GE)
Albert Howard was a farmer’s son. He would become a famous agricultural scientist, with the resonant title of Imperial Economic Botanist, and be knighted, becoming Sir Albert, even to his wife in her biography of him.

He was proud he came from a farming family, proud of his ability to handle livestock. He had a farmer’s practical ability to look at fields and see how things were growing there. Which was why when he was posted to India in 1905, to the big new agricultural institute the British Raj had built at Pusa, where his job was to develop commercial crops for the Empire, he couldn’t help noticing the fields, not just in his institute, but in the farms beyond.

These fields were tended by the sort of uneducated peasants he was meant to be enlightening about modern agriculture. Their plots were too small and randomly cultivated. Instead of profitably growing a single crop on a large scale, they grew a muddle of grains, vegetables and commercial crops. They raised cattle too, even though the modern thinking was to separate livestock from crop farming.

**Planter’s Punch**
The agricultural authorities at that time simply ignored such farmers - as their successors in modern India still do. But Howard had a farmer’s viewpoint which showed him that plants on these unscientific farms seemed to be doing rather better than his scientifically raised ones. Howard started scientifically studying what those Indian farmers were doing and he became increasingly convinced that their traditional practices had merits that were being overlooked by modern agriculture of the kind he was supposed to be doing.

Howard tackled one of the central problems of Indian farmers - fertiliser. He looked for alternatives to dung and found it in all the wastes naturally generated by farming households. These could be collected and combined with the urine of farm animals, spread on straw, and this would serve as a catalyst for the decomposition of the wastes into a form that could be spread in the fields and absorbed by plants. What was important for him was that they were biological in origin, so they added to the living quality that he saw in soil.

**India: The Perfect Petridish**
This was not fanciful, because Howard had trained as a mycologist, a specialist in fungi, and he was aware of how fungal networks in the soil literally made it a living organism. India gave him not just the inspiration, but also the best means to test his theories. One of the advantages he had here was the wide range of climates and conditions present in the subcontinent. Working across climates, he could speed up his research in ways he never could have in Europe. But there was one problem. The British hadn’t expected Howard to go ‘native’, and become a proponent of industrial-style agriculture. Howard’s writings from that time (most of which were out of print for years, but are now available on websites like journeytoforever.org) give an idea of his holistic and humane views. For example, he examined agricultural labour, a vital issue, but one generally overlooked by scientists. In a paper he detailed ways to attract and keep good labour, by a combination of fair pay, flexible working hours and good living conditions.

**The Big Picture**
Much more than merely organic farming, it was his ability to see agriculture in its totality - from workers to markets. Despite Howard being seen as odd and eccentric by the British establishment, people were soon coming to Indore to see his Institute. One such visitor in 1935 was Mahatma Gandhi. Howard soon found followers. Lady Eve Balfour, another agriculturally inclined aristocrat, based her book The Living Soil on Howard’s theories and in 1946, a year before Howard’s death, she founded the Soil Association, the earliest and still one of the most influential organic farming promotion organisations.

People like Balfour and Rodale would take the organic farming movement forward after Howard’s death, sustaining it through long periods when it was seen as a pursuit for cranks or as something noble, but impractical. Today it is finally receiving its due, not just in the West, but in India as well. Aamir Khan recently endorsed it on ‘Satyameva Jayate’, and in one of his last Budgets, Pranab Mukherjee even allocated a sum for promotion of organic farming.

**A Legacy Bygone**
Yet what is ironic about all these efforts is that they seem to start from the assumption that organic farming is a western practice that needs to be sold in India. The Indian roots of the movement, and Howard’s role have almost entirely been forgotten. A large part of the reason for this is because Indian agricultural research was built on the British system, which had repudiated Howard, and has since shown little interest in his work.

As a final indignity, Howard’s Indore institute seems to have been absorbed into the Indian agricultural research system so thoroughly that no memory of its internationally pioneering role seems to survive. But this is perhaps one place where a formal reassessment of Howard’s contribution to Indian agriculture can start. Like with Howard’s work in India this would not be a change as much as a return, to the roots of a practice with international impact, but whose roots lie firmly in Indian soil.

(This article by Vikram Doctor is reproduced from http://www.timescrest.com/society/desi-by-nature-8267)
The state of Himachal Pradesh is progressing steadily towards increasing the amount of arable land under organic agriculture. On December 2, 2011, the HP state government introduced the Organic Farming Policy to help its farmers switch to sustainable agricultural practices. The International Centre for Competence in Organic Agriculture (ICCOA) has a strong presence in the state. In addition, other groups work with farmers in the Kullu valley, Karsog Valley and Solan. Due to land division over generations, most of the land under organic cultivation is in land holdings of up to 10 bighas (1 acre = 12 bighas).

Bilaspur-Ghumarwin Belt
ICCOA works with various blocks of villages in the Bilaspur-Hamirpur belt of the state. In the Bilaspur belt particularly in the Ghumarwin Tehsil, ICCOA is reported to work with about 478 farmers commanding a total of 365.78 hectares under organic farming. The groups are certified by Ecocert. The entire certification costs are underwritten by ICCOA. In addition, ICCOA field officers provide necessary training, knowhow and inputs. All projects under ICCOA certification are C2 certified i.e., they are in their second year of certification. Farmers of these groups use various methods of organic cultivation. The major crops in this belt are wheat and a few cereals. In addition vegetables such as okra, cabbage, gourds, ginger and turmeric are grown. Mango is the dominant horticulture crop. OFAI met with some progressive farmers. Shri Balbir Singh a village in Bhadroag block has 10 bigha of land holding. He grows vegetables such as okra, cucumber, tomato, gourds and staples such as black lentil (urad), maize and wheat. His land is irrigated through bore well. He reported that this season after sowing 1.5 kg of wheat, the harvest achieved was a modest 6-7 qtl. Since this year due to weather fluctuations wheat of a large part of the state was affected by yellow rust, however he was able to control it with the application of lassi and vermiwash spray. He is confident that with continued organic practices the yields will improve.

Shri Shukhdev Sharma of village Datoh near Talwara described his experience in farming organically with the assistance of ICCOA for the past 2 years. Sukhdev has 10 bighas of land which is irrigated by water from the nearby river. He cultivates vegetables like cucumber, okra, tomato, cauliflower, gourds, capsicum, spinach, etc. All produce is sold to local shop keepers who do not distinguish between chemically grown and his produce. He concedes that apart from taste even the shelf life of organic produce is much longer. He uses panchagavya, vermiwash, EM and makes his own compost.

Both Balbir and Sukhdev lament access to better markets. ICCOA is trying its best to ensure farmers get a good market but there are many challenges to overcome. Apart from meeting individual farmers, OFAI and ICCOA jointly held a half day camp at the village Kaloh. The meeting was held to primarily discuss the current status of cultivation and the problems faced by the farmers. The farmers were told about the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) of certification.

The growers of Kaloh village block primarily own small land holdings and the entire arable land is rain fed. Apart from having sizeable mango orchards, the farmers also grow turmeric, garlic, ginger, potatoes, maize and alocacia rubers (arbi). The farmers are not aware of the rates that are offered at various markets and sell the produce to anyone who comes to buy from them at whatever rates they quote. Hence they would also prefer to have a steady market which sells exclusively organic produce.

The Kullu Valley
The Kullu Valley is known for its panoramic view of the Himalayas and pure mountain environment. Kullu is an apple growing belt and there are no known organic orchards in the region. A few groups and NGOs do their best to promote organic farming practices but currently face a shortage of knowhow and lack an organisational approach to promoting sustainable agriculture. Among such groups is Jagriti (http://www.jagritikullu.org) which predominantly works on promoting sustainable livelihood practices for hill women. The group works in conserving traditional mountain millets, red rice, sustainable agro-forestry and non-timber forest products. A number of these areas are default organic by tradition. In addition, Jagriti runs a marketing initiative called “Mountain Bounties” which markets various processed products such as apricot cosmetics, millets and flours, pickles and traditional mountain teas.

The Shalang village was visited to understand how organic cultivation stands today. Kullus have a tradition of gram devta which guides them in their daily lives and in their farming. The Devta at Shalang had prohibited the use of chemicals and fertilizers by tradition. However, the people have now chosen to overlook this diktat and have continued using chemical inputs. One reason why people choose to do so is lack of government and institutional support. The scientists and government departments only offer industrially intensive solutions for the problems posed and the farmers have no choice but to follow them. Mamta Chander, who runs this initiative, held a meeting with OFAI and informed us that while they do their best to promote sustainable agriculture in the areas under cultivation, they require assistance and knowhow to run this for a prolonged period.

The Solan valley
ICCOA has a command area of about 435 hectares with 381 farmers under second year third party certification (C2 certification). However, there are many challenges before the farmers are converted fully to organic. The farmers market most of the produce through the conventional supply chain and are looking for a better marketing arrangement. Dr. A.S. Kashyap, a retired scientist from the state horticulture university is leading this effort for ICCOA. He is a third generation farmer whose family has been practicing organic farming for over 150 years. He has helped to open a small shop to sell agro-inputs to enable farmers to grow organic produce in Solan.
Hansalim Cooperative:
Bridging the Organic Food gap between farmers and consumers in Korea

Hansalim is the biggest Organic Food and Farming Cooperative of Korea. It is one of the most successful large scale cooperative models of linkage between the organic farmer and the consumer.

The word "Hansalim" is a composite word in the Korean vernacular comprising of “Han” meaning one, universe or together and “Salim” meaning domestic work or to give life. Together Hansalim may mean, “To save all living things.” The organisation enshrines Gandhian values of caring for the poorest of the poor and also the principles of social equity.

From the early 1980s Korea saw the appearance of Consumer Cooperatives to facilitate movement of goods from rural to urban areas. In 1970s there was a great revival of Organic Farming in the country and the movement leaned upon it. Earlier between 1960 and 1980 the rural economy spiraled into a crisis and rapid environment degradation took place. In 1986 Hansalim began as modest grocery stores in a few urban areas of Korea. In the next two decades the movement rapidly grew to one of the biggest consumer and farmer cooperatives in Korea and probably the whole world. The symbiotic idea that ‘producers shoulder the responsibility for consumers’ life and consumers shoulder the responsibility for producers’ living” has been one of the key fundamentals of the organisation.

In 2010 Hansalim had a total of 1702 farm households covering about 2100 hectares under organic cultivation with maximum land under paddy cultivation followed by orchards, greenhouses and outdoor agriculture. A large number of traditional paddy crops are grown and protected by farmers and supplied to producers by the organisation. The cooperative provides over 1900 kinds of products ranging from agriculture and fisheries to processed foods such as jams, tofu and daily care supplies such as cosmetics, eco-friendly detergent etc. Hansalim have their own standards for organic cultivation and processes catering to local conditions for farmers as well as consumers.

While there is a ban on use of synthetic chemicals for pesticides and fertilizers, they also adhere to sustainable values such as food miles, seasonal and fresh produce, avoidance of preservatives and artificial colours apart for ensuring that livestock are not given any antibiotics or growth hormones. While they do not follow any set international standards or PGS, they are confident of their own standard as being more stringent than any other standard that exists. Needless to say, that their customer base considers the Hansalim brand synonymous to trust and as such see no need for any specific certification to prove the efficacy of the produce to their customers.

Overall Hansalim maintains transparency in its entire operation and supply chain. They claim to have an operating cost of 24% and the payment to the farmer is 76% of the cost of the product. This is actually one of the highest in the world.

As of 2011, Hansalim had about 3,00,000 members and a total sales of about $184 million. The total volume of sales is an indicator of the local reach of the cooperative. Apart from catering directly to the consumer, they also provide for schools and provide dietary education to children. Their consumer-producer exchange programmes are also popular. They arrange festivals and celebrations for both the farmers and consumers with great gusto.

Currently, Hansalim along with millions of other farmers in Korea are facing a very challenging problem. The government in Korea is planning to open a Free Trade Agreement with China. This FTA would lead to an unfair economic system for the local farmers in Korea since Chinese imports may be cheaper than that produced locally. Hansalim, along with other farmer groups are vehemently opposing this government policy. The organisation does not trade Korean produce with other countries since it has strong principles of self-sufficiency. In addition it strongly endorses an anti-nuclear power campaign to ensure human safety. With its sheer size, customer base and strong value system, Hansalim is one of the most significant movements to look up in the organic world.

(As reported by Ashish Gupta)

Amir Khan TV Episode on Toxic Food

The episode on Aamir Khan’s reality show ‘Satyamev Jayate’ on 24th June 2012 that highlighted on importance of organic farming and consumption of poison free food is recorded on CD or www.ofai.org. The copy of the CD is now available for use in training and awareness programmes.
This piece is an extract from the article, 'The Telangana Table' by Lesley A Esteves that appeared in Outlook India.

The small town of Zaheerabad in Medak district is a couple of hours westward from Hyderabad. Once you reach, watch out for the Deccan Development Society’s organic millets shop on your right. A café with a sign saying ‘Authentic Telangana Cuisine’ is in the same lane, a few yards ahead of the shop. Within the Deccan Development Society’s DDS’ Café Ethnic (08451-275632; 6am-10pm), I had an unforgettable meal prepared with the traditional millets grown in Telangana—jonna (jowar, or sorghum), taida (ragi, or finger millet), korra (kangani, or foxtail millet), saama (kutki, or little millet) and sajja (barley, or pearl millet).

Lunch comprised bowls of sour tamarind gravy, korra pysham and kandipappu (tuvar dal), gongura with peanuts and chana dal, a mudapappu sambar, a korra pelala and crispy sajja murukkulus, and all of this eaten with a sajja roti and korra khichdi. V. Srinivas Reddy, manager of Café Ethnic, tells me that it’s a meal made from the millets that the DDS is trying hard to reintroduce in Telangana. For breakfast here they prepare both the idli, vada and dosa eaten in Andhra alongside taida ambuli, the traditional Telangana breakfast porridge. But the difference is that here idlis are made of korra, dosas of taida and vadas of saama.

All of these millets have been eaten in Telangana until the last generation, when rice took their place. All have more protein, fibre, iron and calcium than rice, and require far less water for irrigation.

So why is DDS having to reintroduce millets to Telangana? This is a question that K. Srinivas, editor of Telugu daily Andhra Jyothi, would later answer in Hyderabad. "The difference in Andhra and Telangana cuisine, " he says, "is chiefly the difference between the cuisine of an irrigated and non-irrigated land. Rice and wheat, crops of the irrigated land, enjoy a hegemony over other grains due to a colonial mindset. N T Rama Rao introduced rice in the Public Distribution System (PDS) at two rupees per kilo in Andhra Pradesh. Millets are not in the PDS, making them more expensive. So Telangana cuisine is in danger of dying out. This is why DDS is trying to get millets included in the PDS.”

The PDS battle is one I pray the DDS wins. The trip to Zaheerabad is more than worth anyone’s time. You can not only buy millets at their store, you’ll also get a free copy of their cookbook of Telangana millet recipes. It has the most sharply written foreword of any cookbook I’ve ever read and I quote “... it may seem odd that someone is coming out with a book on traditional recipes. That too recipes on jonna, sajja, korra, saama, which apparently have the lowest status among food crops in comparison to preferred grains such as rice and wheat”... During my quest, I heard a number of suggestions from Telangana people for why their food was so inadequately represented in Hyderabad. Chief among these was that a particular coastal community controlled most of Hyderabad’s restaurants and looked down on Telangana cuisine as poor man’s food. There’s no way of knowing whether this is the case. But I do believe it is possible to take the revival of one’s own culture into one’s own hands. I can’t put it better than that inimitable DDS cookbook: "...food is fundamental to all our cultures. If we can retain our food culture, we can retain the rest of our identity.” Until then, I hope that Telangana food is as resilient as it is special.

(The full article can be read at http://travel.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?281198)
Attention All OFAI Members

All individual members of OFAI who have not yet renewed their membership up to 2013 are requested to deposit their contribution in favour of “Organic Farming Association of India” payable in SB A/c No.18001010029917 at Mapusa-Goa branch of AXIS Bank at Rs.100 per year up to a maximum of 10 years.

Do not forget to intimate OFAI-Central Secretariat by letter or email to myofai@gmail.com or call 0832-2255913 during normal office hours. Please send information as per pro-forma below.

Name: ____________________________
OFAI ID No. : _______________________
Postal Address: ______________________
____________________________________
____________________________________
State : ___________ PIN : _____________
Phone : _____________________________
Email Address: _______________________
Total Farm Area ( Ha/Ac) : __________
Crops Grown : ________________________
____________________________________
Contribution for ________ Years
Signature: _________________________

The expenses in printing and posting The Living Field are quite high and we would appreciate some support in the form of contributions. Thank you!

Members are also invited to donate small sums to support the work of the association.

OFAI Secretariat Update
Jenessey Dias took very ill in May and is on leave for an indefinite period. Her recovery has been slow but steady.

Benjamin Rodrigues and Savio D’Souza joined OFAI in June to assist Nyla Coelho in running the office. Shamika Mone joined as principal researcher in July.

Abhinav Gupta, a young computer engineer with management training has been internning with Claude Alvares since June. Part of his time was dedicated to help put in place better systems of information storage, retrieval and dissemination mainly with regards the numerous queries that the office receives from persons interested in organic farming.

OFAI has taken over once again the Secretary’s post in the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) Organic Council. The OFAI central secretariat now also functions as the principal working secretariat for PGSOC.

In the recent months, the traffic on the OFAI website has been impressive. Persons seeking information on organic farming in India seem to be making OFAI’s website their first choice. A statistical tracking system reveals that the website had an average of 100 first time visitors every day in the month of July. Consequently, in the past few months, we have had a steady stream of requests for membership to OFAI.

Discussions for resetting up of the IFOAM-Asia body, primarily initiated by the Korea Organic Farming Association, are underway. Ashish Gupta has been actively interacting with groups across Asia on behalf of OFAI.

New Organic Farming Sourcebook (5th edition)

The Organic Farming Sourcebook is written and edited by Claude Alvares with the assistance of Nyla Coelho. The book contains almost everything connected with organic farming in India, including a vast directory of organic farmers. Packed with pictures, the book now includes new chapters on GM seeds, farm animals, especially indigenous cows, and a comprehensive list of green or organic stores from all the different states.

Members of OFAI have the good fortune of ordering the book for Rs.350 (one copy per member) (including post and packaging free). Please contact the Central Secretariat for your copy. You will have to quote your OFAI ID number. Payment by DD only, drawn in favour of “Other India Bookstore,” payable at Mapusa 403507 Goa.

Updates on Organic Farming Events

The OFAI website (www.ofai.org) is updated regularly with news and events related to organic farming and we would like to encourage our members and readers to regularly look up the website.

OFAI Facebook is also being used to announce events as well as establish links with like-minded people everywhere.