

1. The Context:

Agriculture in Himachal Pradesh is a way of life for the agrarian population and nearly 70% population is directly or indirectly dependent on this sector. Presently, farming and farmers of Himachal Pradesh are passing through a transitional phase, comprising of several factors and processes, which include both constraints and opportunities. The ongoing diversification drive has conclusively proved that economic prosperity of hill farmers lies in growing off season vegetables and production of fruits. This opportunity, however is constrained by increasing input costs and impoverished soils. Farmers are looking for alternatives in view of ever increasing cost of synthetic inputs and poor input output ratio. The vegetable and fruit business of Himachal farmers can transform drastically by adopting organic farming. It is in these areas and for these commodities that certified organic tag or Himachal organic brand will be an important alternative option. This is a sustainable option for maintaining productivity of farm lands also.

Integrated farming system is the strength of Hill farming. Agriculture- Animal husbandry are complimentary and supplementary enterprises which provide livelihood to the agrarian population in one hand and reduce dependence on synthetic external inputs on the other. Thus better management of animals, grass lands, farm yard manure hold promise for promotion of organic farming in the State.

Large part of the area of Himachal is under pastures, forests and other kinds of wild land, wasteland and support land which is largely used by local farming communities as grazing land, source of fodder, and wild harvest. The forest land and pastures are also habitats of biodiversity and gene pool of wild relatives of many crops. The state of forest and pastures, also determines the level of contribution state makes in capturing carbon which has a direct bearing on the contribution to mitigate ill impacts of climate change. These naturally organic areas holds great potential for conversion to organic.

The expansion of tourism to rural areas by involving villagers in rural home stays is being promoted in the state. There is an opportunity to add value to home stays by broadening its scope as **ORGANIC AGRICULTURE TOURISM**.

Organic farmers of Himachal Pradesh and the supporting institutions, such as Department of Agriculture, have to their credit the achievement that organic farming has taken roots in the state. Himachal Pradesh is one of the states in India, where over the past few years farmers, Government and non Government agencies have **made significant contributions to the state wide process of organic farming promotion** and sustainable development. Low consumption of fertilizers and pesticides, can further facilitate large scale adoption of organic farming with relative ease by the farmers in niche areas.

Practical Experience of Himachal Farmers; so far, has demonstrated the usefulness of organic farming to reduce/ replace use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and reduce the cost of cultivation and improved productive capacity of soils. Based on these experiences, the expectation is that organic farming will be advantageous to the farmers living in all the agro-ecological zones of Himachal Pradesh.

The National Missions on sustainable agriculture and horticulture development emphasize promotion of good agriculture practices as necessary components of the agriculture development approaches for which organic farming is the best known tool. Therefore, to put in place an enabling policy framework for promoting organic farming in the state, is the need of the times. Government of Himachal Pradesh has taken several steps towards environmental conservation and sustainable development, such as **maintaining green cover, producing clean renewable energy, reducing carbon foot prints** etc.; and these efforts will get further strengthened by adopting organic farming policy.

2. Preamble:

- 2.1. State would strive for adoption of organic farming practices and will bring about policy changes in agriculture development scenario in order to provide sustainable livelihoods to the farming community through organic farming approaches since it;
- i. **relies** primarily on local, renewable resources,
 - ii. makes efficient use of solar energy and the production potential of biological systems,
 - iii. **maintains** and improves the fertility of soil;
 - iv. maximises circulation of plant nutrients and organic matter,
 - v. **does not use** organisms or substances foreign to nature (e.g. chemical fertilizers, pesticides, GMOs)
 - vi. **maintains** diversity in the production system as well as the agriculture landscape,
 - vii. **integrates** farm animals into the system and gives them life conditions that correspond to their ecological role and natural behaviour.
- 2.2. *Incorporating principles of organic agriculture in Policy:* Organic agriculture is a unique production management system which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity, and this is accomplished by using on-farm agronomic, biological and mechanical methods in exclusion of all synthetic off-farm inputs. Organic farming as a system avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetic inputs (such as fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, feed additives etc) and to the maximum extent feasible rely upon crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, off-farm organic waste, mineral grade rock additives and biological system of nutrient mobilization and plant protection”. Organic is not only about replacing inputs, which is the starting point of the process, it goes beyond, as enshrined in the four principles of organic farming advocated by IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement).

- i. **Principle of health:** *Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible.*
- ii. **Principle of ecology:** *Organic agriculture is based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.*
- iii. **Principle of fairness:** *Organic agriculture should build on relationships, that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.*
- iv. **Principle of care:** *Organic Agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner, to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations, as well as the environment.*

2.3. ***Opportunity for addressing poverty alleviation and rural development in Himachal through organic farming:*** International Alliance for Organic Agriculture, set up under the patronage of FAO, by IFOAM and several other agencies, have recognised the potential of organic agriculture sector to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, one and seven (MDGs; www.un.org/millenniumgoals). The first MDG i.e. the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. As a production method, organic agriculture is well suited for resource poor and subsistence farmers, as well as for those who are commercially successful. Since organic agriculture advocates lesser dependence on fossil fuel and more on locally available production assets, farmers work with natural processes and increase cost-effectiveness and resilience of their agriculture systems. It helps them break the vicious cycle of indebtedness for agriculture inputs and helps improve soil fertility in sustainable ways. The seventh MDG is to ensure environmental sustainability. Organic agriculture is a promising approach to address the issue of environmental degradation; land, water and air, due to agriculture activities. Organic agriculture has potential to contain environmental degradation through improving soil health, enhancing biodiversity and reducing external energy consumption, in addition to improving farmers' incomes.

2.4. **Organic farming also acknowledges farmers innovations** and experiences and integrate indigenous or traditional knowledge with larger agriculture development processes, thereby, showing respect to the farmers as shapers of the future. Since organic farming depends mostly on renewable on-farm resources, it will increase consumption of renewable energy resources in the state and improve agro-

biodiversity (both varieties and crops). Farmers will again become seed savers thus protecting the heritage of hill agriculture for the future generations. **When adopted widely in the state, organic farming may significantly contribute to reducing the food-mileage and carbon foot prints.**

2.5. **Recognising this**, organic farming is being promoted in the state by organic farmers associations, NGOs and Government agencies, as an appropriate farming approach for farmers, producing for themselves or for the local/ national markets. Under this backdrop, Government in partnership with other stakeholders, is formulating the organic policy of the state, which is comprehensive, futuristic, and valued by all stakeholders.

2.6. **The policy is;**

- **inheriting** the spirit of national vision and approaches about supporting growth of organic farming in India both by Govt and non Govt sector,
- **building on** the growth achieved so far by the organic farmers of the state and the prevailing circumstances for future growth of organic farming in the state,
- **anticipating** policy and services support needs of the organic stakeholders of Himachal Pradesh
- **Incorporating** lessons of successful experiences of innovative global approaches and best practices about organic farming development
- **distilling spirit** of organic agriculture principles enshrined by IFOAM, and
- **drafted** by the organic experts by and debated among organic stakeholders of Himachal Pradesh

3. Organic Farming Policy: Vision

“Organic Himachal Pradesh”

where;

3.1 Organic farming is widely practiced by the farmers of the state and they benefit from organic farming, economically and ecologically.

3.2 Farmers and people enjoy pesticide free safe food, vegetables, fibre, fruits, milk and water; thereby, reducing human health risks.

- 3.3 Youth of the state become engaged in self employment in the organic agribusiness and organic villages based agro tourism.
- 3.4 Himachal as a state contributes to the global goals of reducing carbon foot prints, environmental health and agro biodiversity conservation.

4. Organic Farming Policy: Objectives

4.1 ...in order to see that the dream of organic vision come true, it is imperative to undertake all necessary initiatives, including;

- 4.1.1. Giving recognition and encouragement to the organic sector in the state; which includes the recognition of the relevance of organic sector to over all development of agriculture in the state and thereby linking organic sector with the agriculture development objectives of Himachal Pradesh.
- 4.1.2. Creating enabling environment for organic farming in the state, through developing appropriate policies, plans, and support services for activities, such as, **organic production of lead cash crops- fruits and vegetables of the state**, increasing yields in low-input areas, conserving biodiversity and natural resources on the farm, increasing income and reducing cost of cultivation and increase supply of safe food to local / national/ international markets.
- 4.1.3. Develop favourable policies and plans to strengthen crop-livestock linkages of the farming sector and make Himachal an organic compost rich state.
- 4.1.4. Undertake steps to make **Himachal Forests, grazing lands, pastures recognised as organic, certified/ uncertified, so as to facilitate organic grazing areas**, organic fodder supply for livestock and **organic non timber forest products**.
- 4.1.5. Create investment environment for organic agribusiness and organic villages / valleys based **organic agro tourism**, so as to develop these a key sectors for self employment and value added on farm & off farm activities in rural development sector.

Note: **This list is not exhaustive, more items can be added to it as felt necessary from time to time, as the organic movement develops.**

5. Organic Farming Policy: Scope

- 5.1. Farm lands and crops; comprising, annual and perennial food crops, fiber crops, horticulture crops- fruits and vegetables, plantation crops, and spices crops etc.
- 5.2. Livestock and livestock products, cattle, sheep, goats, poultry, fisheries, honey bees, and sericulture, etc.
- 5.3. Forests, rangelands, pastures, waste lands, support lands/ common lands, revenue lands, and the non timer forest products collected as wild harvest from these lands.
- 5.4. Water resources of the state, rivers, streams, springs, ponds, all drinking water sources and irrigation sources.
- 5.5. Processed foods and beverages, such as, beer and wines etc.
- 5.6. All farm produce from plant and animal origin,
- 5.7. Inputs, like manures, compost, municipal solid waste of biodegradable nature, liquid microbial solutions, bio-insecticides, repellents, anti-feedants, fungicides, hormones and enzymes of plant and microbial origin etc.

6. Organic Farming Policy: Strategies

Under the broad vision of organic farming in Himachal Pradesh, its defined scopes and mission, series of strategic initiatives are planned and these include the following;

6.1. *Strategy for incorporating organic into agriculture development:*

- 6.1.1 Reforming Agriculture and Allied Sector Policies to bring these in line with Organic vision. *“When the state will promote natural resource based organic agriculture, keeping soil health, sustainability and productivity as prime focus” many policies of other sectors will need to be realigned.* These objectives will be achieved through series of reforms and new initiatives.
- 6.1.2. *Organic Policies and Strategies:* State will formulate organic policies and strategies, giving due consideration to their farming concerns/needs, potential niches. The strategies will aim at strengthening the institutional and human resources

capacities of the state, so as to enable it implement the organic promotion initiatives, across all agro-ecological zones and production domains.

6.1.3. *Govt support to organic sector:.* It will be linked to general agriculture policies, as much as possible, especially where the organic agriculture is promoted as a mainstream solution. The state government will recognise and give due consideration to the diverse interests represented in the organic sector and ensure that all of them are considered properly.

6.1.4. *Support to Organic Farmers:* At present organic farmers of the state do not enjoy a level playing field compared to conventional agriculture farmers, in terms of incentives and subsidies for various farming operations. For example; farmers under conventional agriculture are getting subsidies on inputs like seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. Support services will be strengthened w.r.t. organic seeds, organic inputs and knowledge to enhance skills on organic practices.

6.1.5. *The incentive schemes for farmers will include;*

Strengthening organic resource base of organic farmers, provide subsidy on organic inputs like seeds, organic manures, bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides etc. Farmers will also be incentivised by way of capacity building through trainings, exposure visits etc. Organic agricultural practices shall be demonstrated by conducting on farm trails on farmer fields. Farmers will also be encouraged to adopt technologies like vermi-composting, preparation of organic inputs at farms and for that they will be supported suitably.

6.1.6. **Himachal Organic Farmers Forum** already setup is a welcome step. The private sector and NGOs in the state will be encouraged to join forces to form a state level non Government body for organic sector **-THE HIMACHAL ORGANIC FORUM.** It will be a non-Govt advisory body charged with steering and monitoring the growth and promotion of organic farming in the state towards fulfilling the vision, where people from across the sectors are represented. Government would consider their suggestions and advice for promotion of organic farming in the State.

6.2. *Strategy for Awareness Raising:*

There is absolute need for mass awareness about the potentials of organic farming to farmers, consumers, civil society as a whole. It calls for supporting different

approaches to bring awareness among different sections of the farmers and society. Organic strategy will support launch of various awareness programmes. Some of the important interventions would be;

- 6.2.1. Organising meetings, conferences, seminars, **workshops**, national and international **trade fairs, exhibitions and organic haats** etc.
- 6.2.2. Awareness through **print and electronic media**.
- 6.2.3. Publications, books, manuals in different Indian languages on several aspects of organic agriculture need to be encouraged/ supported; namely, **popularisation of innovative practices, production and quality control of inputs**, region specific management practices etc.

6.3. Strategy for Organic Research and Technology Support: Identified issues for research;

- 6.3.1. Standardization of technologies of organic farming for different categories of crops, farmers, farming systems, resource bases and agro-ecological zones.
- 6.3.2. Selection and breeding of suitable varieties for organic farming;
- 6.3.3. Development of **nutrient management protocols** with rotations, nutrient management strategies and on-farm input management with locally available resources.
- 6.3.4. Development of organic compliant plant protection measures
- 6.3.5. Identification of **suitable crop combinations and crop rotations** for particular crop specific farming system
- 6.3.6. Identification of **suitable varieties** from existing pool of crops and varieties for **optimum productivity, quality and pest resistance**
- 6.3.7. Improvement and **enrichment of input production strategies/ methodologies**
- 6.3.8. Integration of animals with cropping systems
- 6.3.9. Development of appropriate machines, tools and machine driven/ **bullock driven devices** for organic farming operations such as liquid manure spreader, **mechanical weeding machines for different crops, seed drills for multi-crop sowings and planting.**

- 6.3.10. Development of machines/ devices for conversion of animal energy into mechanical and electrical energy.
- 6.3.11. Collection and documentation of successful practices developed by practising organic farmers
- 6.3.12. Validation of soil enrichment and plant protection formulations developed by practising organic farmers/ NGOs and institutions.
- 6.3.13. Validation of various systems of organic farming (such as natural farming, homa farming, biodynamic farming etc) for their proper integration into integrated organic farming approaches with best productivity prospects.
- 6.3.14. Identification, development and documentation of suitable post harvest management and post harvest storage practices.

6.4. Action Points for Research and Technology Support;

- 6.4.1. Long term, medium term and short term projects targeted on scientific validation of organic farming practices, protocols, innovations will be taken up.
- 6.4.2. A critical cadre of scientific manpower in organic agriculture which is capable of undertaking research in organic agriculture on critical issues of technology validation, refinement and innovations will be built up and consolidated.
- 6.4.3. The two farm universities of the state will be encouraged to focus on research in organic agriculture. This will also enable the university scientists to formulate package of practices on different crops and farming systems.
- 6.4.4. Similarly, projects on documentation, validation and refinement of technologies and practices shall be supported/ encouraged for preparing package of practices, organic crop guides, organic agricultural systems guides etc
- 6.4.5. The two farm universities, as well as others will be encouraged to launch diploma and certificate courses in organic agriculture, specially covering areas like input management, certification and inspection, supply chain management, retail marketing etc.
- 6.4.6. Projects which include on farm i.e. farmer's fields based research, on variety of issues confronting organic farmers of the state, will be encouraged and support under RKVY and other similar schemes.

6.5. Strategy for Strengthening Organic Extension Support Services;

- 6.5.1. ***Model organic farms of the farmers as training centres:*** Initial growth of organic agriculture has taken place on the strength of technology developed by practicing farmers. These pioneers in organic agriculture are also innovators of organic technologies. Many such farms of the farmers in states of Maharashtra and Karnataka are serving as informal centres of exposure and learning in a farmer to farmer knowledge sharing process. Farmers of the State will be similarly encouraged.
- 6.5.2. ***Extension Training Programmes:*** The training programs for the extension workers will include courses on organic cropping management systems, input production and management, quality assurance systems, post harvest management and value addition etc.
- 6.5.3. ***Creating Cadre of Farmer Trainers:*** **Farmers tend to learn easily from farmers.** Therefore, across state, a **pool of farmer-trainers will be developed.** These farmer trainers shall be given further training on organic agriculture production systems, supply chains, policies etc. In the long run, organic promotion programme will be best served by these agents of technology dissemination. **The farmer trainer approach will include involvement of local practising farmers and local NGO's.** **The farmers trainers shall also be encouraged to launch short courses for capacity building of farmers.**
- 6.5.4. **Government will facilitate creation of local service providers** to ensure Internal Control Systems, input supplies, skill development of farmers.

6.6. Strategy for Organic Quality Assurance of Himachal Produce; **(Certification/ Branding/ Credibility building)**

- 6.6.1. To promote organic agriculture as low cost resource conserving sustainable form of agriculture, state will **avoid compulsory requirements for mandatory third party certification,** so as not to block other suitable alternatives to emerge. Mandatory regulations will only be considered when the need is clearly

established. State will put in place/ support regulations for local markets based on local conditions, and **not on the conditions defined for export.**

6.6.2. *State will follow the following approach to organic certification and quality assurance;*

One, facilitate certification by third party only for commodities aimed at export outside the state (national or export). Two, develop participatory guarantee system (PGS, now promoted by NCOF, MOA-GOI) of organic certification for commodities being marketed, such as food grains, vegetables, fruits for within state urban centres. Three, develop a concept of niche branding in case of some farm produce for marketing within state. For example, identify and market rice of X organic village, pulses of y organic village, the vegetable crops of Z organic village and like wise. This will help create variety in organic food, which people within state would admire and become their regular consumers.

6.6.3. *Third Party Certification:* **State shall facilitate setting up of an accredited organic certifying agency for easy access to organic farmers of the state.** The certification body of professionals, such as agricultural technocrats forum of the state, shall be encouraged, not only for certification but also for providing ICS (**Internal Control System) management services.** To create a network of ICS services to help organic farmers, different agencies shall be considered. In order to provide back up support for ICS and quality assurance, setting up of few residual testing laboratories by public or private bodies, or under PPP would be considered.

6.6.4. Organic farming promotion shall go a step forward and consider **setting up a state level web hosted data base system,** to develop a repository of organic farmers and organic products of the state.

6.7. Strategy for Meeting Organic Input Requirements;

6.7.1. The key inputs comprise of soil enriching micro organisms, nutrition supplements, pest control agents, seeds and varieties of crops. **The quality control, quality assurance, packaging, pricing and delivery mechanism are some of the key issues that require state interventions through legal** and statutory provisions. Hence set of guidelines and control orders would be put in place.

6.7.2. Under input management, major emphasis will be given to on-farm inputs production, management and quality control. For this, **farmers will be supported**

for production of organic seeds, planting material, keeping cattle, making compost, liquid manures, bio-fertilizers, bio agents, bio-pesticides, application tools, and farm implements etc. **Setting up of different organic/ biological input production units, would be encouraged.**

6.8. Strategy for Building Organic Supply Chains and Marketing;

- 6.8.1. Promotion of organic farming is directly linked with the market development. Therefore, efforts will be made to develop dedicated facilities for **grading, cleaning, primary processing, packing, transportation and storage etc. under public and private sectors.**
- 6.8.2. Farmers will be **educated and organised** to form organic farmer groups and will further be encouraged to **undertake direct marketing.**
- 6.8.3. To facilitate marketing of organic commodities Government would take steps to set up **retail organic stores in the market centres across the state.**, using already existing infrastructure or encouraging private parties to set up private markets.
- 6.8.4. Setting up of the COMMON FACILITY CENTRES at focal points would be considered to facilitate availability of organic inputs. Likewise, **in APMC Mandi areas, the concept of few organic shops for whole sale supplies to organic retailers** will also be considered.

6.9. Strategy for Identifying Organic Farming Niches;

Villages, Panchayats, valleys, which are so far traditionally organic and **use little inorganic inputs** i.e. synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, will be designated as “**Primary Organic Niches**” for a comprehensive thrust programme **for promoting organic farming.**

6.10. Strategy of Converting Institutional Farms into Organic Farms;

Farms owned and operated by departments like Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Sericulture shall be encouraged **to convert to Organic farms.** These farms will then provide excellent opportunities to be **hubs for systematic and scientific demonstrations** of well managed organic farming sites on the one

hand and on the other hand they shall be the institutions for training, learning, research and development on various aspects of organic farming.

7. Implementation:

- 7.1 For speedy and effective implementation of “Organic Farming Policy” the State Government will ensure an **appropriate institutional mechanism and inter departmental linkages.** The short term and long term actions required under the policy would be prioritised and suggested by a **full time team of professionals** having requisite expertise and experience.
- 7.2 Reforming agriculture and allied sector policies to bring these in line with organic vision.
- 7.3 Support services to organic farmers shall be strengthened.
- 7.4 Organisation of farmers into groups and their capacity building.
- 7.5 To launch awareness programmes to educate farmers, consumers, civil society as a whole about the usefulness of organic farming.
- 7.6 Long term, medium term and short term projects targeted on scientific validation of organic farming practices, protocols, innovations will be taken up.
- 7.7 A critical cadre of scientific manpower in organic agriculture which is capable of undertaking research in organic agriculture on critical issues of technology validation, refinement and innovations will be built up and consolidated.
- 7.8 The two farm universities of the state will be encouraged to focus on research in organic agriculture. This will also enable the university scientists to formulate package of practices on different crops and farming systems.
- 7.9 Projects on documentation, validation and refinement of technologies and practices shall be supported/ encouraged for preparing package of practices, organic crop guides, organic agricultural systems guides etc
- 7.10 The two farm universities, as well as others will be encouraged to launch diploma and certificate courses in organic agriculture, specially covering areas like input management, certification and inspection, supply chain management, retail marketing etc.

- 7.11 Projects which include on farm i.e. farmer's fields based research, on variety of issues confronting organic farmers of the state, will be encouraged and support under RKVY and other similar schemes.
- 7.12 Government will facilitate creation of local service providers to ensure Internal Control Systems, input supplies, skill development of farmers.
- 7.13 State will consider creation of own organic certification body for certification of organic produce.
- 7.14 Government will facilitate creation of local service providers to ensure internal control system, input supplies and skill development of farmers.
- 7.15 To develop a repository of organic farmers and organic products, state level web hosted data base system shall be considered.

8. Review:

The policy will be subject to review from time to time as per the need with prior approval of the Government.