Naveen Patnaik, Orissa’s CM, inaugurates OFAI’s Fourth Organic Farming Convention in Bhubaneshwar

Declares Government of Odisha’s support for Organic Farming
The temple city of Bhubaneshwar, Odisha, and its Agricultural University (OUAT), played welcome host to the Fourth Biennial Organic Farming Convention organised by the Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI).

The principal highlights of the conference—besides the Chief Minister’s inaugural speech in favour of organic farming—included:

a) Participation from more than 600 organic farmers from the States of Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu. The largest contingents, however, came from Odisha. They included almost exclusively small and marginal farmers and tribal communities—the segment most closely associated with “default” organic farming and also most readily its beneficiaries. (85% of organic farmers in Odisha fall in the category of small and marginal farmers.)

b) Specialised talks by Dr Debal Deb, Chairperson, Centre for Disciplinary Studies, West Bengal on traditional rice breeding; Mr Umendra Dutt of the Kheti Virasat Mission, Punjab on cancer epidemics from indiscriminate use of chemicals and poisons for green revolution; N.G. Gopalkrishnan, India’s leading expert on vermiculture from Trichy; Mr Sarvdaman Patel, India’s most well known biodynamic farmer, and Kapil Shah, from Gujarat; Prof. Radhamohan from Sambhav; Dr Jayant Barwe, organic grape grower from Vita, Satara, Maharashtra and several other organic farming pioneers.

c) The costs of the convention were mostly met by registration fees. More than 500 farmers paid Rs.500 each for simple accommodation and food and sat through all the sessions till the final valedictory. The convention was multilingual, but principal sessions were in Hindi, Oriya and English. Hindi and English speeches were translated into Oriya, as bulk of persons in the convention came from Odisha.

d) A special “Grand Panel” of organic farming experts comprising 15 experienced organic farmers answered all technical questions on organic farming problems raised by participants.

e) Large number of stalls were put up by individual farmers and NGOs featuring indigenous seed collections, literature on organic farming and GMOs. Sale of organic farming books and organic cotton cloth were also brisk.

f) There were little or no complaints from delegates about the organisation of the convention. All delegates appreciated the hot food, freshly prepared, even though they had to walk a distance of ten minutes to the dining hall. All outstation delegates were happy with accommodation provided. Delegates were happy with the cooperation of the Department of Agriculture, Odisha government.

The following recommendations were considered by the convention and thereafter released to the media, at a special press conference:

a) State of Odisha should come out with a comprehensive organic farming policy that will help Odisha maintain its all-India lead in organic production. This should be done within 3 months. OFAI can assist in this task as it has necessary expertise.

b) State of Odisha should move urgently from “default” organic to fully organic within 3 years, which is possible. Blueprint can be drawn up by specialised agencies like XIMB, Bhubaneshwar and OFAI, with the support of organisations like Oxfam.

c) State should provide as much or equivalent support for organic farmers as it is presently giving to chemical farmers.

d) The Agriculture Minister of the State has already written to the Environment Minister actively resisting the Monsanto proposals for Bt brinjal. We hope the same stand will be continued and that no GM crops will be allowed to contaminate the rich diversity of Odisha agriculture. Odisha has set an example for other states on this issue.

e) Agriculture and University should allocate 50% of budget and research for establishing organic farming in the State. 50% of extension should be for organic farming. This can be done through directions issued by the government to these institutions.

f) NGO-Government partnership (as a new form of PPP) is urgently needed to be set up for working intensively with technological needs of small organic farmers, specially adivasis. This is because the NGO sector is the principal player in Odisha as far as small and marginal farmers and tribals are concerned. Neither agricultural institutions nor corporations are interested in the welfare of this huge segment of the population for obvious reasons.

The convention and its sessions were widely reported in the media. The publicity given to the media is expected to provide a strong thrust to the organic movement in the State. It is important that the Government of Odisha, especially its Agriculture Department, not lose the opportunity provided by this new momentum generated by the convention. This opportunity may not come again.
I am delighted to be here today to attend the Biennial Convention of Organic Farmers organized by the Organic Farming Association of India. I welcome all the organic farmers from different states to Odisha.

Organic farming denotes a holistic system of farming which optimizes productivity. The present farming techniques, with priority on application of fertilizers and pesticides for food production, have led to a significant loss of biodiversity, environmental pollution and also other associated problems. Synthetic fertilizers and pesticides have a very negative impact on food quality and safety because of their residue in food stuff.

Therefore to regain the lost glory of traditional agriculture, the Government at both the national and regional levels has taken initiatives to encourage organic agriculture movement.

There is a growing demand for organic foods because of the quality and safety of these foods. In developed countries, consumers are willing to pay more for organic foods. A spectacular growth in the demand for organic products has opened up export possibilities for India. India has tremendous potential for practicing organic agriculture due to unique diverse agro climatic regions across the country. Organic farming can be a preferable model for the development of Indian agriculture as it offers multiple benefits like economy, natural resource conservation and other social benefits.

The consumption of chemical fertilizers and pesticides are significantly low in Odisha compared to the national average. The farmers in Odisha have traditionally been the custodian of rice genetic diversity. Traditional farming is still in practice in the inland non-irrigated pockets of the state. This has placed Odisha in an advantageous position to resort to Organic Farming Practices as the lands are virgin and less-contaminated.

The state too has a large area under forests from where the wild harvests can be collected as organic products. A range of organic products like cotton, turmeric, ginger, pulses, niger and scented varieties of rice are being regularly exported. The Kandhamal Turmeric is already a brand name all over the world. A recent study by ASSOCHAM suggests that Odisha has an export potential of Rs.600 crore from organic farming produce in next five years. The study reports further reveals that organic farming can create 80 lakh additional jobs both in-farm and non-farm sectors.

The state has formulated a progressive agriculture policy in 2008 under which special focus have been given to organic farming. The policy supports sustainable incentives for farmers harvesting organic certified crops. Organic seed banks will be opened. Organic Farming Association will be promoted. A separate agency will be set up for certification of organic products. The Odisha State Seeds and Organic Product Certification Agency has recently been accredited as the Certifying Body for the organic product and it is one of the state owned agencies to have such an accreditation. Our policy also has a resolution to include organic farming in the syllabus at school level. It will also be introduced as a compulsory subject at both degree and post-graduate level in the state Agriculture University.

In conformation with our policy the State Government has taken some initiatives like Farmers Training Camp, establishment of Vermi Hatcheries, provision of green manure seeds and many other steps. Similarly farmers are being encouraged to use more bio-fertilizers. Subsidy to the tune of 50-75 percent is being provided for use of bio-fertilizers. The concerted efforts of the state Government and keenness by organic farmer will certainly lead to a very healthy growth of organic farming in our state.

I wish the Convention all success.
NGOs working with tribal communities including Sahabhagi Vikash Abhiyan set up stalls where they showcased their collections of organic seeds.

B.K. Naganna, organic farmer and NSC member from Karnataka, addressed the gathering with translation help from former OFAI President D.D. Baramagoudra.

Rajni Patel, organic farmer from Gujarat, demonstrated the use of plants for pest management through non-toxic means.
Welcome Speech at the Biennial Convention

by S A R V D A M A N P A T E L
President, Organic Farming Association of India

It gives me great pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to all of you as President of the Organic Farming Association of India.

This is OFAI’s 4th biennial convention. Earlier all-India conventions of organic farmers were held by OFAI at Wardha, Trichy and in 2010 at Bhaikaka Farm, near Anand in Gujarat.

For this 4th all-India convention, we have selected Odisha as Odisha is by official statistics the largest exporter of organic produce from the country.

It is also quite well known that almost all this production comes from the hands of small and marginal farmers who constitute the bulk of the agricultural producers of Odisha today.

We are very happy that Mr Naveen Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Odisha, accepted our invitation to inaugurate this convention. That he made time to attend, despite his busy schedule, indicates the importance he is willing to give to this important sector of Odisha’s agriculture. We hope that this convention will convince him that nothing should be done that will jeopardize or harm Odisha’s leading place in organic agriculture in India. In fact, the state will have to do much more to hold on to its lead. This can best be done by ensuring that what has been done at the level of exports will now be replicated at the domestic front as well.
The Odisha model is a good example for the country since by and large everywhere agriculture is still with the small holders who have invariably little access to official support or the resources required for improved production. Therefore if all the small farmers and tribal people in the country simply follow what farmers in Odisha have done, then India will be one of the few countries in the world to have organic production done predominantly by small holders, compared to several other parts of the world where organic is done on very large farms.

I wish to use this occasion to remind ourselves how far we have departed from our priorities in agriculture. Our first priority as a farming community is to provide good quality, safe food to everyone in the society so that no one goes hungry and no one is harmed by the food we produce. This is our primary objective. Another equally important primary objective is that we maintain the soil in a state of good health so that we can produce food without crisis. Finally, we require to maintain good quality seeds of which we have plenty so that we are assured of good production and diverse production and our food security is never compromised or put in the hands of foreigners.

The farming community cannot be expected to produce unlimited food for greedy people. Today the ambition is to produce food on an industrial scale and we do not care about the means. We use extremely dangerous chemicals to shore up or increase the production and now we are also attempting to tamper with the natural processes of plant growth by venturing into GMOs.

We have to emphasize that the earth is our mother and not a machine and therefore we cannot produce endlessly without limits and without damage to our soils, our ecology, our health. In the past few decades a lot has been said about the contributions of science to agriculture. These cannot be denied. However they should be placed in context.

Science cannot operate either contrary to nature or without the energies that nature provides. If we cross two varieties of rice to exploit hybrid vigour, that vigour is supplied by nature and has nothing to do with the scientist or with the nutrition that the plant is provided with.

If mutations lead to a new variety that again is nature’s choice which instructs the plant to either accept or reject mutations. Mostly plants reject mutations since most mutations are harmful. Compared to human beings the intelligence and wisdom of nature is several million years old. So to force nature to accept something from human intelligence – which does not have much evolutionary background – is neither right nor good science and will eventually be good neither for business nor for agriculture.

We cannot be expected to produce food if people are also going to waste it. Farmers do not waste food themselves because they know how much effort is required to produce it. But in the urban centres large quantities of food are wasted because the persons involved do not have to raise the food themselves and hence have no emotional relationship or have not suffered the pain of struggling to produce it. We can feed everyone if no one wastes food.

Over the past two decades, organic farmers have come out with hundreds of innovations to improve production and to diversify production without damaging the soil or public health. Organic farming methods improve the soil, produce good quality food, and leave a thriving habitat in which all other creatures of this planet can also survive, including earthworms and microbes.

If all that we did was to look at the innovations of organic farmers and encourage their widespread dissemination, many of our anxieties on the food front would disappear.

Take the example of SRI cultivation, which is taking over more and more rice areas in this country by storm Why? Because it is based on common sense, a very good understanding of the rice plant, how it multiplies its tillers and what it needs in terms of space for its extensive root system.

Modern agriculture, on the other hand, encourages practices which actually obstruct nature or natural processes. It refuses to acknowledge the principles of how nature works and how one should work in line with those natural principles.
I was a chemical farmer myself for 25 years but now for the last 13 years I have converted my entire farm fairly successfully into a biodynamic organic farm. Today the farm functions not only as a place to produce food but as a laboratory. Because it conducts courses for training in organic methods, it functions as a university as well. The farmers from all over Gujarat, India and from other countries who visit the farm – whatever the age of the visitor – are always keen to learn, discuss and take notes during their visit, which is something one does not see any longer in agricultural universities or departments.

As at a time when world oil supplies have peaked, it is no longer wise to put all our agriculture in one basket. After all, we are not feeding a few 100 people but a population of 1.2 billion! The feedstock for the fertilizers that produce our food in the form of the green revolution come from the oil market which is already under decline and as we all know is getting more and more expensive and scarce by the day.

Whereas earlier our agriculture was dependent on the monsoons, today it is dependent on the monsoons and oil with the additional observation that without the monsoons and without water, the oil in the form of synthetic fertilizer cannot be absorbed by the plants.

Thus our agriculture of permanence has now been converted into a “subsistence agriculture” where we must, every year afresh, ensure the resources to keep the system going. A major disruption in the gulf, in our oil supplies, would have a completely destabilising effect on our agriculture. This scenario in any way is bound to arrive in the near future. Our agriculture, in other words, is living on borrowed time and borrowed resources.

So we need agricultural policies that support farmer’s science and respect his or her efforts to understand his field and her soil. Scientists are important, but in agriculture, for sometime now, scientists have been sidelined by corporations. Monsanto is the best example. Monsanto now determines the seed agenda in cotton and it has already expressed a fervent determination to have full control over all seeds used in food production.

Thus our agricultural science model needs to change in its own interest or it will fall by the roadside.

One major reason why we have chosen this campus is that we still have good minds here who will appreciate what the farming community has done, what the ordinary farmer has done. They need to orient their university research to validate those findings. We do hope that in the days to come, there will in fact be good interaction between the university and the organic farming movement not just in Odisha but in the country as well.

The bulk of the participants of today’s conference are adivasis and farmers by definition and by habit. That is why we have selected this topic for this conference. In a great war, it is always the small people who get hurt first. Because of our developmental model which pampers industry, most of our policies are proving to be detrimental to farmers. All agricultural decisions are subordinated to other policies like industrial growth, large scale developmental projects, SEZs, etc. We all want our food three times a day and will tolerate no compromise on that. But when the same planners, bureaucrats have industrial plans, they feel they can subordinate agriculture to every other economic activity which is always given priority. This is a wrong approach and it must change. In this, Odisha organic agriculture can be of great use.

Let me reiterate my welcome to all of you to the conference. OFAI conferences are unique because they allow the organic farmers to make presentations while the rest of the people participating either sit by to listen or try to experiment. I hope you will have a stimulating atmosphere in the coming two days. Thank you!
A Seed Bank is NOT a Seed Museum
by DEBAL DEB

Demonstration of the agronomic performance of the 610 traditional rice varieties on Basudha farm over the past 14 years has convinced farmers that many traditional varieties can out-yield any modern cultivar. Moreover, the savings in terms of water and agrochemical inputs and the records of yield stability against the vagaries of the monsoon have convinced them of the economic advantages of ecological agriculture over chemical agriculture. Gradually, an increasing number of farmers have been receiving traditional seeds from the Vrihi seed bank and exchanging them with other farmers.

Every year, farmer-researchers meticulously document the morphological and agronomic characteristics of each of the rice varieties being conserved on our research farm, Basudha. With the help of simple equipment—graph paper, rulers, measuring tape, and a bamboo microscope (Basu 2007)—the researchers document 30 descriptors of rice, including leaf length and width; plant height at maturity; leaf and internode color; flag leaf angle; color and size of awns; color, shape and size of rice seeds and decorticated grains; panicle density; seed weight; dates of flowering and maturity; presence or absence of aroma; and diverse cultural uses.

Dr Debal Deb, one of India’s most extraordinary rice seed conservationists, delivers the keynote address at the convention
Vrihi’s seed bank collection includes numerous unique landraces, such as those with novel pigmentation patterns and wing-like appendages on the rice hull. Perhaps the most remarkable are Jugal, the double-grain rice, and Sateen, the triple-grain rice. These characteristics have been published and copyrighted (Deb 2005) under Vrihi’s name to protect the intellectual property rights of indigenous farmers.

A few rice varieties have unique therapeutic properties. Kabiraj-sal is believed to provide sufficient nutrition to people who cannot digest a typical protein diet. Our studies suggest that this rice contains a high amount of labile starch, a fraction of which yields important amino acids (the building blocks of proteins). The pink starch of Kelas and Bhut moori is an essential nutrient for tribal women during and after pregnancy, because the tribal people believe it heals their anemia. Preliminary studies indicate a high content of iron and folic acid in the grains of these rice varieties. Local food cultures hold Dudh-sar and Parmaisal in high esteem because they are “good for children’s brains.” While rigorous experimental studies are required to verify such folk beliefs, the prevalent institutional mindset is to discard folk knowledge as superstitious, even before testing it—until, that is, the same properties are patented by a multinational corporation.

Farmer-selected crop varieties are not only adapted to local soil and climatic conditions but are also fine-tuned to diverse local ecological conditions and cultural preferences. Numerous local rice landraces show marked resistance to insect pests and pathogens. Kalo nunia, Kartik-sal, and Tulsi manjari are blast-resistant. Bishnubhog and Rani kajal are known to be resistant to bacterial blight (Singh 1989). Gour-Nitai, Jashua, and Shatia seem to resist caseworm (Nymphula depunctalis) attack; stem borer (Tryporyza spp.) attack on Khudi khasa, Loha gorah, Malabati, Sada Dhepa, and Sindur mukhi varieties is seldom observed.

Farmers’ agronomic practices, adapting to the complexity of the farm food web interactions, have also resulted in selection of certain rice varieties with distinctive characteristics, such as long awn and erect flag leaf. Peasant farmers in dry lateritic areas of West Bengal and Jharkhand show a preference for long and strong awns, which deter grazing from cattle and goats (Deb 2005). Landraces with long and erect flag leaves are preferred in many areas, because they ensure protection of grains from birds.

Different rice varieties are grown for their distinctive aroma, color, and tastes. Some of these varieties are preferred for making crisped rice, some for puffed rice, and others for fragrant rice sweets to be prepared for special ceremonies. Blind to this diversity of local food cultures and farm ecological complexity, the agronomic modernization agenda has entailed drastic truncation of crop genetic diversity as well as homogenization of food cultures on all continents.

All these differences are amply demonstrated on Basudha farm in a remote corner of West Bengal, India. This farm is the only farm in South Asia where over 600 rice landraces are grown every year for producing seeds. These rice varieties are grown with no agrochemicals and scant irrigation. On the same farm, over 20 other crops, including oil seeds,
vegetables, and pulses, are also grown each year. To a modern, “scientifically trained” farmer as well as a professional agronomist, it’s unbelievable that over the past eight years, none of the 610 varieties at Basudha needed any pesticides—including bio-pesticides—to control rice pests and pathogens. The benefit of using varietal mixtures to control diseases and pests has been amply documented in the scientific literature (Winterer et al. 1994; Wolfe 2000; Leung et al. 2003). The secret lies in folk ecological wisdom: biological diversity enhances ecosystem persistence and resilience. Modern ecological research (Folke et al. 2004; Tilman et al. 2006; Allesina and Pascual 2008) supports this wisdom.

Agricultural sustainability consists of long-term productivity, not short-term increase of yield. Ecological agriculture, which seeks to understand and apply ecological principles to farm ecosystems, is the future of modern agriculture. To correct the mistakes committed in the course of industrial agriculture over the past 50 years, it is imperative that the empirical agricultural knowledge of past centuries and the gigantic achievements of ancient farmer-scientists are examined and employed to reestablish connections to the components of the agroecosystem. The problems of agricultural production that arise from the disintegration of agroecosystem complexity can only be solved by restoring this complexity, not by simplifying it with technological fixes.

About Debal Deb: Debal Deb is Founder-Chair, Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies, Barrackpore and Founder-Coordinator, Vrihi Seed Exchange Centre (the largest non-governmental folk rice germplasm bank in India) at Bankura, West Bengal.

He is also a Member, Expert Committee on Agrobiodiversity, National Biodiversity Authority, Chennai and a Member-Advisor, Eastern Zonal Review Committee, National Innovation Foundation, Ahmedabad.

In 2007, he was Consulting Co-Investigator, University of East Anglia – ATREE collaborative research in PEFESPA

In 2010, he developing methodologies for, and estimation of, ecosystem services valuation of forests under community forest management vs state management regimes in Nayagarh district, Odisha

He is a consultant, Regional Centre for Development Cooperation, Bhubaneswar.

In April 2012, he assessed stock of non-timber forest produce and bamboo for sustainable harvest under Community Forest Management in Balangir district, Odisha.
Green Revolution: Lessons from Toxic Punjab

by UMENDRA DUTT

Umendra Dutt’s presentation on the health impact of the use of chemicals and poisons in Punjab agriculture was a heart touching experience for all farmers gathered in the convention hall. Few worth mentioning lessons are jotted down here for a quick reference.

To employ the Green Revolution methods, Punjab was chosen as the initiation site in India. Although it is relatively dry, there had been extensive development of irrigation canals during the colonial period. Additionally, Punjab was home to many large wealthy farmers who would become the first to receive the Green Revolution packages (Newman 1997).

Punjab occupies 4.2% of total cropped area of country and uses highest percentage of pesticides (18%) and fertilizers (10%). The state possesses highest cropping intensity (196%) and highest tractor population (2.4%) of India. Do these numbers show “development” in Punjab?

15 different types of pesticides were found in 20 blood samples tested. Each blood sample contains a cocktail of 6-13 different pesticides. Level of certain organo-chlorine pesticides (OCs) were found to be 15-605 times higher than those found in blood samples of US population. Also found residues of the newer and so-called ‘non-persistent’ pesticides – organophosphates.

Reproductive health impacts like menstrual disorders, fetal loss in Punjab (spontaneous abortions, miscarriages, still births), neural tube defects (anencephaly), congenital anomalies especially genito-urinary, deteriorating semen quality, male infertility, erectile dysfunctions and impotency.
Courtes of this devastating Green Revolution technology, there are now villages for sale in the state of Punjab. This fact held me rethink on what I had heard. In January 2002, village Harkishanpura district Bathinda, in June 2005, village Malsinghwala, District Mansa and in 2010, village Mullanpur Sandharsi, Patiala district declared itself for sale.

Main reason for such dramatic sale of villages in Punjab is because of the water crisis in Punjab. There were 3712 villages which had water problem in 1980s and this number has increased to 11849 in 2004. Punjab has now become the land of dark zones. In 1984 there were 53 blocks as dark zones, in 1995 they were 84 and in 2005 the figure went up to 108 out of total 138 development blocks in Punjab.

And still the Punjab government, the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) and other promoters of chemicals continue to hold sway over the people of the State.

About Umendra Dutt: Dutt is an emotional poetic spirit, in service of Mother Nature. He continues to work in a movement which originates from deep compassion, concern and empathy for Nature, society and his ecological heritage. He is founder of Kheti Virasat Mission - The Movement for Natural Farming and Ecological Restoration of Punjab based at Jaitu, Faridkot. Ecological spiritualism is his religion as he always say God is omnipresent in entire nature and hurting nature is violence against the God.

BIHARSHARIF: Progressive farmers from Nalanda who created world records for the highest yield of potatoes using organic fertilizers, were awarded for their excellent achievements by the Union minister of state for agriculture Tariq Anwar at the third India International Expo-2012 held in New Delhi in December. On this occasion, N Vijyalaxmi, secretary, agriculture department, Bihar, also received an award for the achievements of the farmers.

Nitish Kumar, a farmer from village Darveshpura in the district, who produced 729 quintals of potato per hectare and created a world record of highest yield by using organic fertilizers, was awarded by the minister for his achievement. Nitish also equalled the previous world record of paddy production held by a Chinese while another farmer from his village Sumant Kumar got the award for the highest yield of paddy last season to beat the Chinese record after he produced 127 quintal per hectare using the scientific method of system of rice intensification (SRI) and organic fertilizers.

Since then hundreds of farmers of the district have turned to SRI and the average yield of paddy and wheat has almost doubled in the district. Rakesh Kumar of Nalanda Organic Vegetable Growers’ Association (NOVGA), of which Rakesh Kumar is the secretary from Sohdih in the district and Vijendra Prasad from village Jhamadih in Nalanda, also received awards for their outstanding performances for procuring significant yield of potato by the minister on this occasion.

Over 500 farmers of the district are attached with NOVGA, who grow vegetables using only traditional organic fertilizers, supply their produce to different states and currently they are negotiating for supplying potatoes to Russia and Saudi Arabia.

The recipients of the award said the constant support of the district agriculture department and encouragements from DM Nalanda Sanjay Kumar Agrawal helped them achieve the feat.
News from the OFAI Secretariat

OFAI remains today the largest association of organic farmers. So what does its Central Secretariat do? Good question. Here are some of the jobs assigned to the Secretariat located in Goa by the Association:

a) Keeping tabs on the membership. This is quite a time-consuming task, but it has become easier ever since we began to ask people to register for ten years at a time. This way, they also become life members, in a way, of the association and get The Living Field regularly. Those who subscribe for only one year and then forget, do not get more than four issues.

b) Drafting organic farming policy statements. OFAI researcher Shamika Mone is busy studying organic farming policies of various states. From this study has emerged a model organic farming policy which OFAI will circulate to its members and then send to individual State Governments who do not have a policy in place, but would like a ready-made one! At the moment, Vivek Car- iappa has assisted OFAI to prepare a draft organic agriculture policy for Goa. Shamika is also busy with an organic farming policy for Odisha. This will be discussed with other interested groups at a meeting in Bhunabeshwar on January 23, 2012, for onward submission to the Odisha government.

c) Administering PGS organic certification: OFAI Secretary has also been elected the Secretary of the PGS Organic Council which deals with PGS organic certification. The OFAI Secretariat maintains the PGS office, issues PGS codes for those Local Groups that have succeeded in getting themselves certified.

OFAI staff are also expected to train organic farmers who wish to join PGS organic certification. This means a lot of time demanded for travel to different parts of the country. Since the PGS Organic Council has now taken a decision to issue certificates valid for three years to Local Groups, OFAI is now reorganising the data available for the purpose.

d) Publishing The Living Field: The country’s only newsletter on organic farming comes out whenever there is some news of significance to report.

e) Maintaining the www.ofai.org website. This website is extremely popular across the world since it contains huge amounts of information on organic farming in addition to details of OFAI members, descriptions of organic farmers (taken from the Organic Farming Sourcebook), green stores, etc. Anyone who wants to know anything about organic farming invariably has to visit the site. Efforts are on to make it the best site on organic farming in the world.

f) Besides PGS certification, OFAI also has a few farmers recognised as organic under its third party certification scheme. This is only available for individual farmers who live in isolated places and cannot come together to form Local Groups as required under the PGS label.