

# SIKKIM ORGANIC MISSION

## Policy Vision and Mission

Organic farming is a practice being adopted by the farming community of the state for ages. But in due course of time when chemical fertilisers and pesticides came into supply of plant nutrients and control of diseases the noble practice slowly started fading and chemicals took over in certain crops over a period of time. Still the consumption of fertilisers and pesticides was very low as compared to other states of India and far below the National average. Many of the crops never encountered chemicals and have been growing at the strength of organic inputs. This would certainly make the organic movement easier. Green revolution launched in India in the early seventies enhanced chemical use leading to enhanced production and productivity of crops under irrigated agriculture. **But mountainous state like Sikkim and other North Eastern states where basically agriculture is rainfed, the chemical use did not have significant impact on production and productivity.**

Now, when the entire World is concerned about maintenance of environment and ecology for better living it is time for all of us to think about it seriously and support the cause. It is always better to think of sustainable and long lasting options than quick result oriented options that has the deteriorating effect on ecology and environment. Rather it is important for us to do away with the options which has more harms than benefit.

Considering all these aspects the Government of Sikkim took a decision to adopt organic system of farming in the entire state and probably the first state in India to bring resolution in the State Assembly. Concern for the people of the state for a healthy and wealthy living in a sustainable way keeping due care of ecology and environment has been taken as the prime duty. Thanks to Hon'ble Chief Minister for his visionary thinking and for his concern for the people of the state. **Now Sikkim is taking a lead in the North East part of the country on Organic farming and has targetted to convert the entire state into Organic by 2015.**

The main objectives of the mission shall be-

1. **Frame policy of organic farming in the state.**
2. Prepare a clear cut implementable road map of organic farming.
3. To implement the programmes of organic farming with a systematic approach to achieve the target set by the Govt.
4. To develop and explore markets of Organic commodities.
5. To develop linkage between the organic farmers and the market with intervention of certification agencies **so as to continue the policy permanently.**
6. **To develop Sikkim organic brand with proper logo.**
7. To make farming profitable, sustainable and environmentally acceptable.

Changing circumstances of farming for the small farmers, because of increasing cost of inputs, lesser margin of profit, climate changes, declining soil health of crop lands and new market opportunities guided by consumer preferences for safe farm products, globally as well as nationally, over the past decade, has led to the emergence of organic farming, which some prefer to call – the developing organic movement.

Domestic market for certified organic products too started with focus on elite class of consumers, with very high premiums. It served one purpose, though, a new opportunity in agribusiness, with organic as value addition, even for a small band of agri-entrepreneurs, was identified and efforts started for institutionalising it.

Small farmers in rain fed areas where farming was traditionally organic, farmers are now facing problems of food insecurity because of unsuitability of green revolution technologies to their farmlands. Success stories of testing suitability and efficacy of organic farming, as low cost and low external input option to maintain their family food security are now increasingly being highlighted. **However, their problem is that institutional support services do not exist as yet for wider adoption of organic agriculture as economically and ecologically viable way of farming.**

Therefore, in order to benefit from an emerging sector in agriculture in India, hilly states like Sikkim, have some advantages of continuing traditional farming and farmers have certain level of knowledge and skills for organic farming,. These states also possess variety of agro-climatic conditions, unique commodities indigenous to their farming and an emerging new class of educated farmers, wanting to make agriculture a professionally viable vocation. For mountain states like Sikkim, this offers hopes of improving soil health of largely marginal hill farmlands, reducing cost of inputs and developing cash crops and agri-enterprises with an aim to offer opportunities of employment to a section of its people.

### **Capturing the Organic Opportunities by Sikkim**

In 2003, the state Govt of advocated the idea of making Sikkim an organic state. It was part of a larger concept of making whole of North Eastern region as wholly organic zone of India. **Following Sikkim, Mizoram also declared its intention of becoming an organic state.** The decision of Govt of Sikkim to go organic was based on the premise that farming in this hilly state was traditionally organic and it will be to the benefit of not only to the sixty two thousand farming families of the state who own an average of 1.9 hectares of farmland but also to maintain quality of environment of the state. Govt saw comparative advantages in promoting organic because use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides was still minimal ay farmers level and therefore it will be relatively easy for them to shift to organic or improve their already known organic ways of farming.

Average fertilizer use on the one lakh hectares of farmland, that Sikkim has on record, was never more than 12 kg/ha, as compared to national average of 90kg/ha.

Agriculture is supporting farming based subsistent livelihoods on the mountain landscapes and valleys. It is increasingly becoming non viable and the new generation of educated youth (both boys and girls) do not consider agriculture as a respectable and viable opportunity for themselves. State considers it a challenge to make farming a respectable vocation for educated youth of the state. Hard though it may appear, state aims at reducing dependence of rural population on outside food grain supplies, and help them grow enough safe food on their farmlands, so as to feed their families.

There is a growing thinking that hilly state is increasing its dependence for food commodities, specially vegetables and fruits, on outside state supplies. It is seen as money not going to its farmers as well as questions about safety of food to consumers. *(Govt wants to reduce dependence of the consumers of the state for vegetables / fruits on outside state supplies to help its farmers benefit from the consumer boom and discourage Sikkim becoming a consuming society, particularly when rural population starts moving away from farming increasing dependence on PDS).* In the face of increasing consumer demands, it would have benefitted farmers and the state of Sikkim farmers could substantially diversify farming to meet much of the consumer demands of vegetables, within the state. It will help improve rural economy as well as provide on farm employment to so many in rural areas. In this regard, **increasing access to Sikkim farmers' organic produce such as vegetable/ fruits/ grains, in the local markets**, will serve meaningful purpose.

The state also has opportunities to develop niches based organic agribusiness enterprises, providing self employment to educated youth and improving state's economy. Because of unique agroclimatic conditions and farming cultures there are recognised niche commodities in Sikkim, such as cardamom, ginger, oranges, tea, kiwi fruit, passion fruit and many types of mountain vegetables and food grains. Adding value by way of growing these organically, hold the promise to become niche commodities for national and international markets. There exists strong possibilities of developing the **SIKKIM BRAND OF ORGANIC COMMODITIES**. The success of this effort will largely depend on the careful choice of commodities, quality assurance and the efforts to build strong producer to consumer supply chain mechanisms.

## 1. Organic Sikkim : Policy Vision

### *Pillars of Organic Foundation*

The line of thinking and efforts of Sikkim people and govt agencies to develop its organic sector, as outlined in the preceding section, provides enough leads to define organic vision of the state of Sikkim. The pillars of the vision are erected on the ground realities of farming led livelihoods, existing circumstances and foundation laid so far. **Aim is to make Sikkim an organic state, building on the following pillars of opportunities;**

- i. Sikkim becomes a leading organic state in India with accredited **SIKKIM ORGANIC BRAND**. Organic production and marketing of commodities is seen here as a strategic move to achieve the goals of value addition for better returns to farmers, safe and healthy food to consumers and as a strategic effort to maintain clean environment. **That most of its forests and some agriculture land is certified organic**. Certified organic high value wild harvest, orchids, leading commodities of export outside the state and forest produce consumed by local people is widely available.
- ii. Farmers of Sikkim are able to meet the demand of Sikkim consumers for organic vegetables, fruits, milk, meat, eggs and other commodities, finding place in the food habits of Sikkim people.
- iii. Farming families living in the rural areas of remote mountain landscapes and valleys **are able to reduce their dependence on PDS** system and that organic sector develops into a pathway for these subsistent hill farmers as viable low cost opportunity of food security and economic viability. That means that wider use of organic practices helps these rural folk to grow enough food grains, pulses, oil seeds, vegetable and fruits, as well as produce enough milk, meat and eggs to meet the needs of their families.
- iv. Organic sector grows as a promising agribusiness opportunity attracting educated unemployed youth of the state to develop self employment opportunities and as well create a variety of job opportunities for others in the organic agribusiness sector, such as on farm and post harvest handling and marketing of the products. Further, Sikkim develops great potential of organic villages, as part of the **agrotourism strategies**, so as to convert organic products into high value services, and provide self employment at home in rural areas. **(DEVELOPING ORGANIC KHETI AS SAMMANJANAK OPPORTUNITY - IT MEANS THAT IT IS ECONOMICALLY PROFITABLE TO MAKE A GOOD LIVING).**

## 2. Sikkim Organic : Mission - 2015

Govt of Sikkim has already set up a broad target of making Sikkim largely organic by 2015. Under this initiative, state will need to make all out progress in all sectors. Selected indicators of the mission are listed below;

- 2.1. The naturally organic wild lands of Sikkim, which are home to cardamom, medicinal plants, fruits, vegetables, orchids and other flora and fauna will have certified organic status. That means every product coming from the forests will be certified organic.
- 2.2. Sikkim will have converted 50,000 hectares of farmland (out of the total 100,000 hectares of farmland of the state) into organic where over 60,000 farming families will be engaged in organic farming.
- 2.3. SIKKIM ORGANIC BRAND takes roots by developing strong production and supply chain mechanisms for selected commodities. Organic enterprises are established by some Sikkim entrepreneurs, promoting Brand Sikkim Organic products, which enable the state export niche commodities, such as, orange, ginger, cardamom, tea, bamboo shoots, etc.
- 2.4. Organic farm produce of Sikkim is able to substantially reduce/ substitute (60-80 %), outside state supplies of fresh vegetables, milk, fruits etc.
- 2.5. Making hill farmers food secure on their farmlands, thus reducing dependence on PDS. (Produce adequate food grains, pulses, oil seeds, vegetables, milk, eggs, meat and fruits for consumption of family). Tangible impact is made to reduce dependence of the rural families of Sikkim on the PDS system.
- 2.6. Efficiently functioning Institutional infrastructure mechanism (policies and govt support services infrastructure including marketing channels) is in place in the state. Defined Policies, strategic road map and delineated line agencies, functioning to guide growth of organic sector.

The target set is to convert 50,000 hectares of farmland into Organic by 2015 in the following manner,

<b>2010-2011</b>	<b>18,000 hectares.</b>
<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>18,000 hectares.</b>
<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>14,000 hectares.</b>

To achieve the target massive capacity building of stake holders is needed looking into the need for huge trained manpower to take over different aspects of Organic farming.

### 3. General Guidelines for formulating a Strategy and Action plan.

- The objectives of the government involvement for the development of organic sector should be clearly defined.
- Before planning to go organic, it is imperative that the state performs an in-depth assessment of its agriculture policies, programs and plans, to understand how it affects the competitiveness and the conditions of the organic sector.
- An Action Plan for the organic sector should be developed based on analysis of the state of the sector, a need assessments and proper sequencing. Setting clear targets for the organic sector can help agencies and stakeholders to focus their efforts.
- Govt support to organic sector should be linked to general agriculture policies as much as possible, specially when organic agriculture is being promoted as a mainstream solution. The state government must recognise and give due consideration to the diverse interests represented in the organic sector and ensure that all of them are considered properly.
- It helps if Government facilitates development of local service providers for ICS, input supplies, skill development of farmers in production technologies and other back up support farmers may need. Similarly a marketing mechanism requires to be created .
- Setting up, ICS based PGS system and also a third party organic certification body within the state, some private bodies/ NGOs can be encouraged to take the lead. In this context, APEDA and NCOF both help provide training and in accreditation.
- It is important for the state to avoid compulsory requirements for mandatory third party certification, because it will block other more suitable alternatives to emerge. Mandatory regulations should only be considered when the need is clearly established.
- The SIKKIM ORGANIC Brand label should be established and heavily promoted. It can be in two forms. SIKKIM ORGANIC NATURAL AND SIKKIM ORGANIC CERTIFIED. Public procurement of organic products should be encouraged, including featuring organic food in important public events.
- Domestic market development should consider both the supply and demand side, so as to make a success story. The organisation of farmers, joint distribution and storage should find place as part of the strategy. Further, some times it becomes desirable for the government to establish a system to have some control on biological inputs. Regulations for local markets shall be based on local conditions, and not in the conditions in export markets.
- Export market access can be supported through capacity building and other support to certification agencies. Export promotion activities should be supported, recognising the special nature of organic markets. Certification agencies can be supported to become good service providers for the export sector.
- Direct support measures to producers can also be kept as an option for small farmers as well as to commercial operations.

- It is important to give attention to **consumer awareness** and it be actively promoted. Govt programmes be designed to actively contribute to awareness raising for organic at all levels.
- For better performance it is advisable to involve all stakeholders in the policy development and development of plans and programmes.
- The **private sector, commercial and NGOs in Sikkim** should be encouraged to join forces and **form a united organic sector body**. Setting up a permanent body, where people from these sectors are represented, may be considered for the consultations between the government and the private sector.
- **Research facilities** will need to be established to solve problems emerging in the **fields** of the stakeholders problems and interests given due consideration in priority setting. Research in organic be based on the needs of the producers.
- Organic extension needs to be developed with fully trained staff and implemented in a participatory manner and have the farm and the farmer in the centre of attention. **Traditional knowledge about pest control** treatments should be surveyed and brought into the extension service and disseminated in other ways.
- Regional cooperation in marketing, standards, conformity assessment and R&D need to be promoted. As the organic sector of the state grows, Government and private sector should participate in relevant international and national events, such as **India Organic, Biofach India and IFOAM events**.

### 3.1. Specific Guidelines

- **Certifying the forest lands, which cover about 87 % of the area, will provide an edge.**
- Govt agencies in Sikkim should facilitate partnership between few selected agribusiness entrepreneurs of Sikkim with good credentials and an outside agency with credentials for organic marketing and backward supply chain support services. There are two options, **agency may identify a commodity and taking benefit of climate and human resources tie up with a local entrepreneur for certified organic production of X commodity.** It will need to supply seed/ planting material, organic inputs and help develop facilities for post harvest handling of organic produce. APEDA, Ministry of Commerce, and several private companies in India may prove useful partners in this matter.
- Organic farming in the state cannot be wholly dependent on outside input supplies for ever. It is neither economic nor fair under organic principles. Since the stakeholder organic farmers of Sikkim fall under four categories, there will need to be different approaches to meet their needs. Farmers growing organic for family consumption, where improving the subsistent farming is the aim, interventions need to be designed and supported for such farmers to enable them produce inputs on farm. **They need to certify their farm lands.** **The small quantities of surplus grains or fresh produce going to the local market, may be sold without much premium on prices. The volumes will be such that certification will not help such farmers.**

- **Sikkim may adopt and promote the following certification approach, One**, facilitate certification by **third party** only for commodities aimed at **export outside state** the state (national or export). **Two**, Develop participatory guarantee system (PGS) of organic certification for commodities being **marketed and consumed within the state**, such as food grains, vegetables, fruits for within state urban centres. **Three**, develop a concept of niche branding for food items for marketing within state and support supply chain formation. For example, **identify and market rice of X village, pulses of y organic village**, the oranges or n organic village and like wise. This will help create variety in organic food, that local admire and prefer for local farm produce.
- The small farmers, who grow food for themselves, should be made to convert to organic farming in phases, as per their capacities to develop skills and resources to go organic. It will largely depend on the pace with which line agencies develop their capacities to provide access to technical support services to these farmers. **Making people food insecure by knee jerk policy of stopping access to fertilizers without alternatives may prove counter productive.**
- Equally undesirable will be the idea of promoting application of a single input supplied from outside by a company, be it the case of bio-fertilizers or pesticides. **Farmers should have access to basket of choices in this regard.** Govt may not be seen as promoting a particular brand to make Sikkim go organic.
- **Departments of agriculture, horticulture and livestock and to some extent forestry need to create a critical mass of trained technical staff** for extension services.
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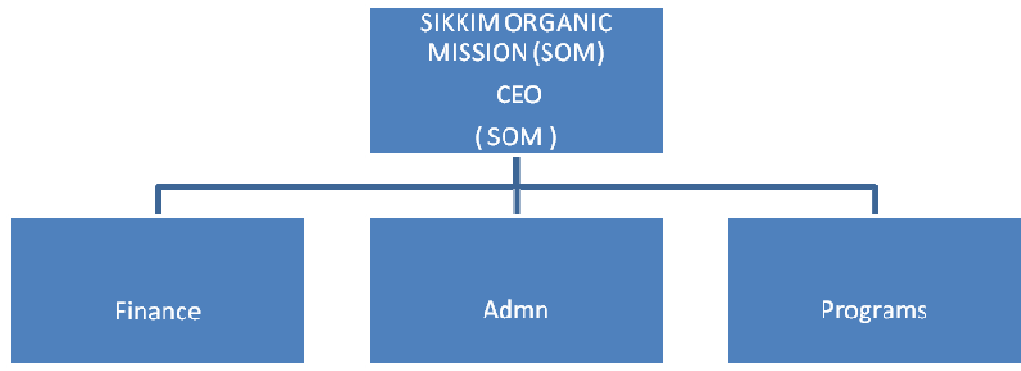
#### 4. Institutional Framework

Formulating policy vision, mission and designing a strategy for implementation is only the first step in the direction of fulfilling Organic Mission 2015. Much depends on the follow up next steps. It is necessary that a team of personnel, at the HQ and in the field, works together to implement the identified activities. Generally, missions like this one, have a dedicated staff drawn from stakeholder departments but working as a team in a defined institutional structure.

Keeping in view the departmental structures of the state, and the needs of this mission, following ORGANOGRAM is suggested for implementing organic mission 2015.

1. Organic Mission Chief
2. Advisory Committees to Mission Chief
3. Mission Divisions – Admn, Finance and Programmes
4. Mission Programme Sections







Promoting organic farming is an instrument of environmental policy of the state. Success of the Organic Mission is the success of the people of Sikkim. Let us all join hands and make Sikkim known to the entire World as an Organic State by all means.