“A STUDY OF MARKET POTENTIAL AND CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND FOOD” WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WESTERN VIDARBHA

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ABSTRACT
India is mainly an agricultural country, where agriculture contributes to about 14.6 percent in gross domestic product (GDP) and support over 58 percent of nation’s population for livelihood (GOI, 2010). The recent economic and trade liberalization are exerting heavy pressure on India’s land resource partitioning in sectors such as forestry, agriculture, pasture lands, human settlements and industries. The coupled effect of meeting food demand under limited arable area and toxin-free agricultural produce have become an important forcing factor for countries like ours to explore possibilities for opting ‘conventional agriculture’. the dominant farming approach promoted by most government and agribusiness groups throughout the world or ‘organic agriculture’ a holistic production management system which is supportive to environment, health and sustainability.

Keywords: Agriculture, GDP, MOFF, Organic Food.

Introduction:
Historians said that farming developed in the Middle East about 10,000 years ago. Before the discovery of the art of cultivation, people had on the move continuously, searching for food or were herding animals. The story of human civilization is the story of agriculture or visa-versa. Development of agriculture in India since prehistoric time can be studied at National Agriculture Science Museum (NASM) through posters, various models, and interactive touch screen kiosks. Agriculture mainly depends upon six major factors viz. soil, water, climate, seeds, tools, and peasants. These are called six pillars of agriculture.

As we seen about Agriculture in Pre-Historic Era it has said that man had learnt farming about 10,000 years back. Farming started in Middle East Asia. The people, who hunted and gathered food by wandering, now become farmers and started living in villages. In this process, when man started changing over to agriculture and animal husbandry from hunting and food gathering, a new revolution came which had far reaching impact. During this period, man collected food from plants and extracted food from the animals killed by carnivores’ animals and killed small and big animals to quest hunger. Change of food habits had direct impact on the shape of the cranium of man, resulting in change in the shape of their teeth and face muscles.(Kaul, 2012)

Organic Food Opportunities and Challenges:
India is mainly an agricultural country, where agriculture contributes to about 14.6 percent in gross domestic product (GDP) and support over 58 percent of nation’s population for livelihood (GOI, 2010). The recent economic and trade liberalization are exerting heavy pressure on India’s land resource partitioning in sectors such as forestry, agriculture, pasture lands, human settlements and industries. The coupled effect of meeting food demand under limited arable area and toxin-free agricultural produce have become an important forcing factor for countries like ours to explore possibilities for opting ‘conventional agriculture’. The dominant farming approach promoted by most government and agribusiness groups throughout the world or ‘organic agriculture’ a holistic production management system, which is supportive to environment, health and sustainability. Organic farming system emphasis on the use of organic matter for enhancing soil properties, minimizing food chain associated health hazards and attaining closed nutrient cycles, the key factors for sustainable agriculture.

Organic farms although yield on an average 10-15% less than conventional farms, the lower yields are balanced by lower input costs and higher margins. Its annual growth rate has been about 20% for the last decade (Lotter, 2003), accounting for over 31 million hectares of area and generating over 26 billion US dollars in annual trade worldwide.(Singh, 2012)

Indian farmers face many challenges in adoption of certified organic production. Among these fragmented land holdings, high cost of certification and uncertain markets are the main problems. However, these
problems could be overcome by forming self-help groups or cooperatives. This will help the farmers in making collective decisions during production and cost of certification can be reduce by group certification. Some of the important organic production requirements as per national standards for organic production developed by APEDA are reproduced below:

- Genetically engineered cultivars or plant materials are not permitted in organic production.
- Either the seed for raising a crop should be organically produced or if organic seed is not available, conventional seed without any chemical treatment may be used.
- Whole farm including the livestock should be converted to organic in a step by step manner.
- Products used for pest, disease and weed management, prepared at the farm from local plants, animals and microorganisms, are allowed.
- The use of synthetic herbicides, fungicides, insecticides and other pesticides is prohibited.
- In case of reasonable suspicion of contamination the certification programme shall make sure that an analysis of the relevant products and possible sources of pollution (soil and water) shall take place to determine the level of contamination.

Market Potential of Organic Food in Western Vidarbha

Western Vidarbha is the eastern region of the Maharashtra state, India made up of Nagpur division and Amravati division. Its former name is Berar it occupies 31.60% of total area and holds 21.30% of total population of Maharashtra. It borders the state of Madhya Pradesh to the north, Chattisgarh to the east, Andhara Pradesh to the South and Marathwada and Khandesh regions of Maharashtra to the west. Situated in central India, Western Vidarbha has its own rich cultural and historical background district from rest of Maharashtra. Western Vidarbha includes total five districts such as Amravati, Akola, Buldhana, Yavatmal and Washim. The largest city from western Vidarbha is Amravati; the second largest is Yavatmal while Akola stands third followed by Buldhana and Washim. Western Vidarbha region is famous for growing oranges and cotton. Vidarbha holds two-thirds of Maharashtra's mineral resources. The living conditions of farmers in this region are poor compared to India as a whole.

MOFF is grateful to its leading members (listed below) for having documented these diverse practices systematically and for having compiled them into crop-wise packages, for the convenience of ordinary farmers. (Bokey, 2009)

The potentiality of the market in western Vidarbha has based on the producers i.e. farmers, farmers is the backbone of the whole market the market emerged or market developed is totally bridge between the organic farmers products and their consumable consumers. Therefore, the potentiality of the markets shows on the basis of farmers productions of organic food and their sale in the market. Following are the some varieties of organic food which western Vidarbha farmer's produces in large quantity.

Table 1: Organic Products Produced By Organic Farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spices</td>
<td>Ginger, Turmeric, Chilies, Cumin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals</td>
<td>Wheat, Jowar, Rice, Bajra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulses</td>
<td>Green, Red &amp; Black Gram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil-Seeds</td>
<td>Groundnut, Mustard, Sesame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>Banana, Papaya, Orange,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>Tomato, Brinjal, Garlic, Capsicum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Products</td>
<td>Honey, Cotton, Sugarcane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Secondary Data

Western Vidarbha farmers produce different of varities of organic foods and fulfills the demand of the consumable markets. Especially the producers of the organic food getting high rate of income return from the production, which will fulfil the desire of the farmer to cultivation of organic farming.

Consumer Perception of Organic Food in Western Vidarbha:

The demand of the food is infinite because the consumption of the food increases day by day. In addition, people are more conscious about their health and health is wealth as these dictum consumers are look towards the healthy food. Therefore, in western Vidarbha condition is as well demand of the organic food is
increases day by day and the consumers turn towards the organic food. As we see in above that the production of the organic food is increases by demand increase in market moreover the demand of the organic food are increases day by day in western Vidarbha. Consumers are more aware about the consumption of organic food and they prefer to pay more money for that. Consumer perception has drives from many ways such as test, preference, liking, usages etc. However, want of the consumers has specified the product choice of the food.

Perception of the consumers manly depends on their behavior as we discussed in above as such consumer behavior varies consumer to consumer so verities of consumers have different likely usages of organic food. While conducting the survey in western Vidarbha finds that consumers have verities of preference towards organic food so the demand of the organic food is more in western Vidarbha.

While judging the perception of the western Vidarbha consumers its shows that many internal factors which affects, the consumer’s behavior for organic food such as demographic and personal choices that means in western Vidarbha. Organic apples is not the home production which is imported in western Vidarbha but organic oranges is the home production that varies the demographic choices of the consumers as its impacts on personal choices of the consumers. As the second factors is that personality its differs the choices also the person is from single family and or a society single persons have limited wants and the person living in the society has more wants so personality also main internal factors of consumers perceptions.

Literature Review:

1) Rahudkar and Phate (1992) narrate the experiences of organic farming in Maharashtra. Individual farmers growing sugarcane and grapes, after using vermin compost, saw the soil fertility increased, 6 irrigation decreased by 45 per cent and sugarcane quality improved. The authors say that net profits from both the sugarcane and grape crops are high in organic farms.

2) Makatouni (2002) indicates that for the British consumers, certain types of consequences of organic food products have self-relevance. Makatouni has conducted a research to obtain an in-depth understanding of consumer purchasing behavior with regard to organic food products in UK. More specifically, the aim is to explore the beliefs and attitudes of both organic and non-organic food products buyers and to detect their impact on purchase behavior.

3) According to Magistris and Gracia (2008), the study of food choice is a complex phenomenon that represents one of the most important parts of human behavior, where several cognitive and behavioral factors can vary sharply between individuals. The authors cited that whether consumer intent or decide to purchase organic food products is difficult task because it depends on many factors that cannot be directly control.

Research Methodology: Researcher in this study has paid due attention to designing and adhering to the appropriate methodology throughout the study for improving the study for improving quality of research.

Statement of the Problem
The main theme of the study that “a study of market potential and consumer perception towards organic agriculture and food” with special reference to western vidarbha the present study to investigate the increasing organic agriculture farming and food for healthy life.

Objectives of the Study:

1) To study the concept organic agriculture.
2) To study consumer attitude towards organic food.
3) To study influence factor organic food.

Data Collection:
Primary data collected from farmer and secondary data of various organizations. Such as annual reports of organic agriculture organizations, various agriculture universities, state agriculture ministry reports, agriculture journal, reports and publications, world agriculture forum, internet and various organic

Sample selection:
The present study deals with the various aspects of market potential and consumer perception towards organic agriculture and food. Data collected from Amravati, Akola, Washim, Yawatmal, Buldhana districts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Amravati</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Akola</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Consumer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limitation of the study:
1) The study focuses on organic agriculture and food in western vidarbha of Maharashtra state
2) The study is restricted to western vidarbha of Maharashtra state.
3) The result arises from research may or may not be applicable to other parts if states or countries.

Data Analysis and Discussions:
Table No. 2
Organic Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Information About Organic Food</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newspaper/Magazines</strong></td>
<td>136</td>
<td>50.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>23.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>02.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>00.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retailer</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>06.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Friend</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Promotional Event</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>271</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Compiled by researcher on the basis of Primary Data.

Figure 1
Organic Food

The total number of respondents of 271 farmers maximum number of 136 farmers replied that they get information about organic food from newspaper/magazines with 50.18%, 65 farmers replied that they get information about organic food from books with 23.99%, 43 farmers replied that they get information about organic food from family/friend with 15.87%, 18 farmers replied that they get information about organic food from retailer with 06.64%, 07 farmers replied that they get information about organic food from television with 02.58% but no one farmers replied that they get information about organic food from radio, telephone and at promotional events.

Table No. 3
Forthcoming Crop is an Organic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forthcoming Crop Is an Organic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>91.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>08.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>271</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Compiled by researcher on the basis of Primary Data.
From the above table no. 4.2 and figure no. 4.2 it's clear that the forthcoming crop of the farmers in their farm 249 farmers among the 271 respondents replied yes and remaining 22 farmers replied no. it's clearly shows that the quantity of number of organic farmers is large in near future in western Vidarbha of Maharashtra region.

Table No. 4
Influence Factors of Organic Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Factors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Profit</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>23.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Eco Friendly</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>09.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Better Public Acceptance</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.31%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>07.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Benefits for family</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>19.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Challenge</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>271</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Compiled by researcher on the basis of Primary Data.

The farmers regarding influence factors related to cultivation of organic food so among the 271 respondents 74 farmers replied that they are influence towards organic cultivation with better public acceptance with 27.31%, 64 farmers replied that higher profit with 23.62%, 54 farmers replied that health benefits for family with 19.93%, 32 farmers replied that professional challenge with 11.81%, 26 farmers replied that more eco friendly with 09.59% and the only lowest number of 21 farmers replied that they get job satisfaction with 07.75%. So it's clear from above table and figure highly influence able factors to turn towards organic cultivation is better public acceptance, it's results shows the popularity of organic food in people.

**CONCLUSION:**
In western Vidarbha of Maharashtra region there should be long chain of distribution of retailers. However, due to less awareness about organic food they cannot adjust with organic products so therefore there is need to create the awareness among the retailers and distributors. Therefore, that it will help for farmers
and consumers to rejoin with organic food products. Mouth publicity of the organic product by experts and farmers can influence the perception of the consumers. Therefore, experts and farmers should arrange the promotion camps for consumers in their areas to awareness of the organic products that help to both farmers and consumers. Government should make the policy for health benefit, eco friendly for peoples that create large amount of class of liking organic food.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

1. Many of people doesn’t understand the organic theme but they want to know more about organic food but they doesn’t have any sources so there is need to crate domestic market for organic food.
2. Consumer purchasing of organic food mainly depends on certification label of the product but as concern to organic food, there might be a barrier of authentication. Therefore, certification authorities have the more responsibility to make their certification more transparent.
3. Farmers do not get the full return of the organic production that the consumer get advantages but farmers get loss on that so in this globalised world there is to focus on the return get it by farmers and make a policy to get advantages to farmers.
4. The common observations is that the majority of the respondents feel that organic food is expensive and they are not getting the products at the reasonable price, so our recommendations is that to increase the demand that help to reducing the price of the product.
5. Create the policy for farmers for their production storages of organic food and give them subsidies on that.
6. Develop the organic food cultivation technique to generate farm employment for small and marginal farmers.

**References:**

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