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The Influence of Socio-Demographic Factors in adopting Organic Farming Practices

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Abstract

Sustainable livelihood and economic empowerment of small and marginal farmers has been much concern in India which is being properly understood by in-depth study of their Socio-demographic profile. The growing demand of organic food globally and numerous advantages in organic farming system could be a viable means of sustainable livelihood for the farmers. The purpose of this study is to understand the demographic profile and socio-economic condition of organic and conventional farmers. Further, this study also examines the influence of socio-demographic factors in adopting organic farming. Total 160 small and marginal farmers through convenience sampling method were considered for this study. The result demonstrates that most of the farmers adopted organic farming in 2009 and after conversion socio-economic condition has strengthened. Further, ANOVA and Post Hoc Multiple comparison resulted significant difference in subgroup of educational qualification, Mode of Transportation and Crops Selling by farmers. The study contributes to the farmers, researchers and organization working in the arena of organic movement. Government agencies can play critical role in promoting organic farming by appointing experts to deal with the marketing aspects, crops disease, certification issue and promoting concept of “community farming” which reduces overall cost of cultivation.

Keywords: Socio-demographic, Organic Farming, Sustainable livelihood, Small Scale Farmers

Introduction

Sustainable livelihood and economic empowerment of small and marginal farmers has been a challenge from last few decades. India's 57 per cent populace still depends on agriculture and allied activities where more than 80 per cent farmers hold less than 2 acre (FAO) under marginal and small categories. Organic agriculture is frequently associated with or subsumed under the rubric of “sustainable agriculture,” with many using the terms interchangeably. In theory, sustainable agriculture refers to a system that integrates environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity (Feenstra, 1997). The National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture (2004) describes a sustainable food and agricultural system as one that is simultaneously “economically viable, environmentally sound, socially just, and humane.” Traditional agriculture in India was a kind of non-certified organic, and almost all practices and processes in these agro-ecosystems were compatible with organic agriculture, but it has not been certified as organic. Gradually, after Green Revolution use of chemical in farming became quite common practice in India. Despite bulk move from traditional to conventional farming; still many farmers especially in remote area belonging to rural part were using organic manure but without certification. In the last few decades, increase in consciousness among the consumers has provided a different recognition to the Organic Food. Gradually numerous organic movement were formed to provide and assure authenticity to the consumers. However, today certification procedure by the reputed organization made convenient for the consumers to differentiate between organic and conventional foods, thereby commercialization of organic food started.

Sustainable Livelihood and Economic Empowerment

Sustainable livelihood is one of the major concerns for the small and marginal farmer in India. Gradually, land acquisition for non-agricultural purpose and distribution within the farmers, growing number of marginal farmer where economic viability of farming is another challenge. Despite numerous benefits of organic farming like environment, ecological and social, economic empowerment is one of the key challenges for the farmers to convert their farming system. Around 40 per cent farmers are willingness to quit farming in India (OWSA) especially marginal and small farmers and they are looking for other means to earn for their sustainable livelihood. Further, in the past decade unfortunately India recorded highest suicide in the world history by the farmer community in India and still continuing which is an outcome of financial distress among the farmers. Sustainable livelihood could be improved through economic empowerment therefore, this study focus and compare the demographic differences in organic and conventional farmers and influence on adoption to organic farming.

Concept of Organic Farming

As per the definition of the USDA, study team on organic farming “**organic farming is a system which 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**”.

The concept of organic farming is based on following principles:

The soil in this system is a living entity

The total environment of the soil, from soil structure to soil cover is more important.

Nature is the best role model for farming, since it does not use any inputs nor demand unreasonable quantities of water.

The entire system is based on intimate understanding of nature's ways. It does not believe in mining of the soil of its nutrients and do not degrade it in any way for today's needs.

The soil's living population of microbes and other organisms are significant contributors to its fertility on a sustained basis and must be protected and nurtured at all cost.

Benefits of Organically Grown Food items and Agricultural Produce

Better Nutrition: As compared to a longer time conventionally grown food, organic food is much richer in nutrients. Nutritional value of a food item is determined by its mineral and vitamin content. Organic farming enhances the nutrients of the soil which is passed on to the plants and animals.

Free of poison: Organic farming does not make use of poisonous chemicals, pesticides and weedicides. Studies reveal that a large section of the population fed on toxic substances used in conventional agriculture have fallen prey to diseases like cancer. As organic farming avoids these toxins, it reduces the sickness and diseases due to them.

Enhanced Taste: The quality of food is also determined by its taste. Organic food often tastes better than other food. The sugar content in organically grown fruits and vegetables provides them with extra taste. The quality of fruits and vegetables can be measured using Brix analysis.

Longer shelf-life: Organic plants have greater metabolic and structural integrity in their cellular structure than conventional crops. This enables storage of organic food for a longer time.

Organic Farming in Bihar

Agriculture is the backbone of Bihar's economy that provides 81 per cent of workforce which is much higher than national average and generating nearly 42 per cent of the State Domestic Product (Agi-Dept, GOB). The gross and net sown area in the State is estimated at 80.26 and 56.38 lakh hectares respectively and major crops are paddy, wheat, pulses, maize, potato, sugarcane, oil seeds, tobacco and jute. In 2011, the Bihar government has launched "organic farming promotion programme" for the cultivation of organic crops in all the districts of the state. The government has decided to develop 38 "organic grams (organic villages)" for which a sum of Rs 255 crore was sanctioned for five years. However, government could not utilize proper mechanism to promote organic farming consistently and still majority of the small and marginal farmer even consumers are unaware about the organic farming and food.

Literature Review

The conversion from conventional to organic farming system literature lack relevant social barriers to adoption other than profitability (National Research Council, 1989). One of the major obstacles to widespread adoption of sustainable farming is the lack of readily available scientific information for farmers. Singh and Osawaru, (1990) Most of the studies have been done from the perspective of the researcher or professional conservationist rather than to looking at the decision making process from the farmer's perspective. (Nowak, 1983) To promote further spread of organic agriculture for sustainable development, there is a need to better understand the farmers' view point. Aimee Shreck et al., (2006) organic agriculture necessarily fosters social or even economic sustainability for most farmers and farmworkers involved and suggest that these farmers are philosophically as well as economically motivated. Susil and Jabir (2011) suggest that consumers' concerns on food safety, quality and nutrition are increasing across the world therefore demand for organic food is increasing. Consumer's interest in organic food is influenced by their belief that organically produced food is safe and better for health, environment and welfare of farmers and the society. John and James (2009) suggest that health and safety concerns and environmental issues are the predominant motives for conversion, whereas economic motives are of lesser important. Problems experienced during conversion relate to lack of governmental and institutional support, less use of chemicals and improved food quality were highly ranked as benefits. Sammy Comer et al., (2008) highlight that sustainable farmers achieved higher score on sustainable agriculture paradigms compared to conventional farmers. The results also show that farmers' affiliation with different organization/groups does affect their perception about organic agriculture.

From the discussion it can be conclude that organic agriculture can improve livelihood condition of the farmers, and to understand farmers' socio-economic condition there is a need for comparative between organic and conventional farmers.

Need for the Study

Socio-economic condition of the farmers has been a matter of concern from last few decades. It has also been reported that many farmers willing to quite farming. The contribution of Agricultural sectors in India's GDP is continuing to decline. The emerging market for organic food worldwide and numerous advantages of organic farming and food led many farmers to adopt organic farming. Further, organic farming has been considered costly than conventional farming which need more

technical knowledge too. It has also been promoted that organic farming is sustainable practice to empower farmers and upgrade their socio-economic condition which is more or less depend on their productivity and profitability too. Therefore, this study was carried to understand the differences in socio-economic condition of organic and conventional farmers. Moreover, this study also examines correlation between demographic variables and organic/conventional farming and highlight the demographical influence in adopting organic farming practices. Further, a good understanding of farmers' characteristics, attitudes and beliefs would help to determine factors influencing their decisions to adopt organic farming and identify characteristics associated with adopters and non-adopters. This will assist policy-makers in developing strategies to increase adoption of organic agriculture.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to compare the socio-economic condition and understand the socio-demographical factors in adopting organic farming. However, following objectives are:

- To understand the demographic profile of organic and conventional farmers.
- To compare the Socio-economic condition of organic and conventional farmers.
- To examine the influence of socio-demographic factors in adopting organic farming.

Methodology and Sample Design

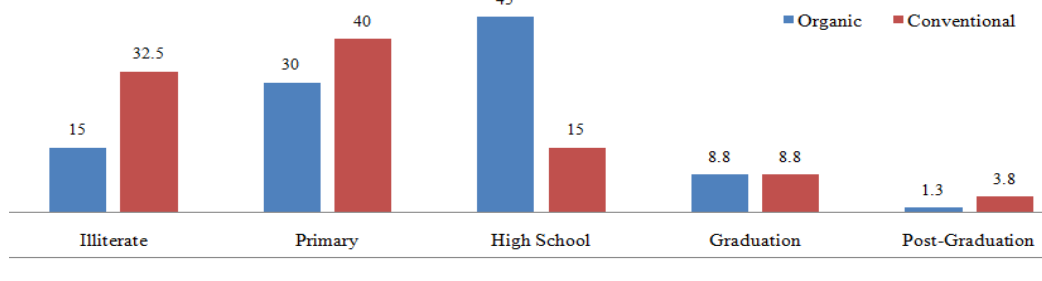
This study is based on primary data collected from the farmer of District of Nalanda, Bihar. The data was collected from organic and conventional farmers through structured questionnaire and interview method. The questionnaires were designed to look into the aspect of farming method with Education level, Farm experiences, Land ownership, Mode of transportation and number of family members involved in farming. The data were collected from 160 farmers (N=160) through convenience sampling method where 80 organic and 80 conventional small farmers (2 or less than 2 acre land) were responded. The Organic farmers were considered those who are certified under National programme for organic farming (NPOP), Government of India. Descriptive statistical indices were calculated to understand the demographic differences and socioeconomic condition of the organic and conventional farmers. Further, to examine the influence of socio-demographic factors on adoption of organic farming correlation, ANOVA and Post Hoc Multiple Comparison was used. The major crops were cultivated by the farmers were vegetables i.e., Potato, Onion, Brinjal, Ladyfinger, Cauliflower etc.

Findings and discussion of the study

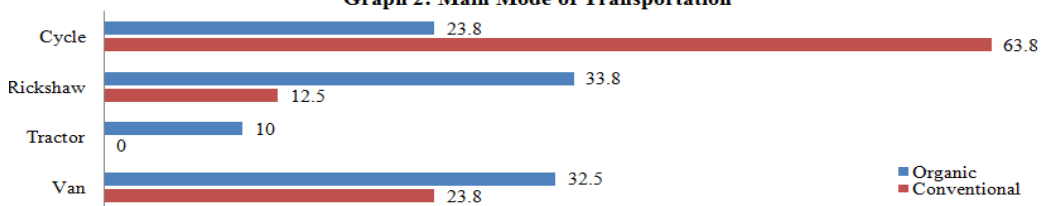
Educational Qualification - From the graph it can be inferred that conventional farmers are more illiterate (32%) than Organic farmers (15%). More than 70 per cent conventional farmers are either illiterate or having only primary education whereas, more than 50 per cent organic farmers are either high school or more than that.

Demographic Profile : Organic vs Conventional Farmers

Graph 1: Educational Qualification of the farmers



Graph 2: Main Mode of Transportation

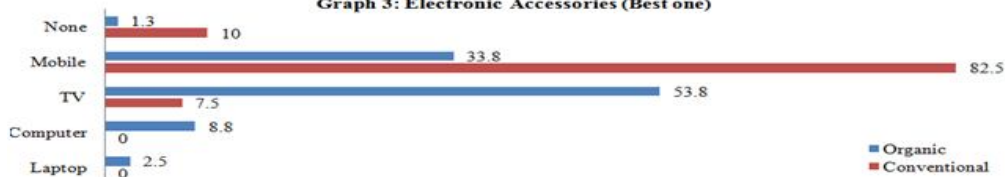


Mode of transport - More than 60 per cent conventional farmers were used Cycle as a means of transportation whereas, majority of the organic farmers were using Rickshaw, Van and Tractors. Around 20 percent conventional farmers sold their crops directly to the consumers whereas organic farmers sold only Villages and Town Traders.

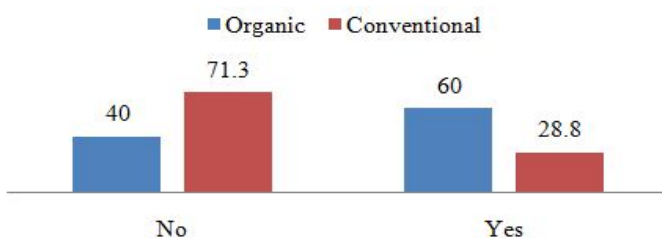
Electronic Accessories - More than 60 per cent organic famers having either TV or Computer where as conventional farmers figure around 10 per cent only.It has found that no conventional farmers using computer/laptop whereas, around 10 per cent organic farmers access.

Training and Agricultural loan – Around 60 per cent organic farmers are trained whereas more than 70 per cent conventional farmers are not trained. More than 40 per cent organic farmers access loan facility whereas conventional farmers figured 28 per cent.The organic farmers were slightly high in own as well as leased land than conventional farmers. There were not many differences in terms of Farm experience in both groups.

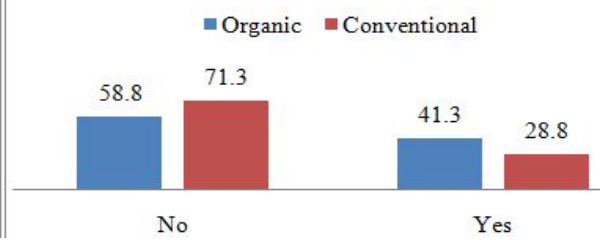
Graph 3: Electronic Accessories (Best one)



Graph 4: Agriculture Training



Graph 5: Agricultural Loan/Credit



Most of the farmers involve in agriculture activities are male and married in both organic and conventional farming. The Average age of the farmers lies between 45 to 50 and Size of the family figured 6-10 members where in most cases 1 member were involved in farming. More than 90 per cent organic farmers adopted organic method of cultivation in 2009 and after conversion it has found that they are more concern for environmental responsibility, conscioustowards society and democratic rights which could bring them into the mainstream. Further, socio-economic condition of the organic farmers has strengthened and their access to the banking facilities, Agricultural training, electronic accessories and mode of transport has gradually increased (Table A).

Therefore, from the above demographic profile it can be inferred that most of the conventional farmers are underprivileged and unable to access their basic requirement whereas organic farmers are substantial better in many cases like Education, use of vehicles, Mode of transportation, Training, Agriculture loan etc

Table 1: Pearson Correlation - Organic Farming

Variables (Organic Farmers)	Education Qualification	Farm Experience	Land Ownership	Mode of Transport	Selling Crops	Member Involve
Education Qualification	1					
Farm Experience	-.247*	1				
Land Ownership	.233*	.007	1			
Mode of Transport	.277*	-.059	-.045	1		
Selling Crops	.215	-.128	-.081	.478**	1	
Member Involve	.050	.144	.242*	-.004	-.069	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Above table (1) describe that in organic farming there is a positive correlation (.478) between Mode of transportation and selling crops at 0.01 significant levels. Further Farmer's education with Land ownership and Mode of transport depict positive correlation whereas, with Farm experience negatively correlated (-.247). Land ownership with number of family members involve was also positively correlated at 0.05 significant level.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation – Conventional Farming

Variables (Conventional Farmers)	Education Qualification	Farm Experience	Land Ownership	Mode of Transport	Selling Crops	Member Involve
Education Qualification	1					
Farm Experience	-.506**	1				
Land Ownership	.014	-.202	1			
Mode of Transport	.465**	-.122	-.205	1		
Selling Crops	.354**	-.478**	-.165	.511**	1	
Member Involve	.080	.077	.023	.367**	.353**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In conventional farming qualification of farmers shows highly negative (-.506) correlation with farming experience whereas, mode of transport and selling crops were positively correlated at 0.01 significant levels. Selling crops were found highly positive (.511) with mode of transport whereas negatively (-.478) correlated with farm Experience. Further, there was positive correlation (.367) between Mode of transport and number of family members involve in farming (Table 2).

Hypothesis Testing

Following hypothesis has been framed to understand the influence of variables by measuring differences between adoption of organic farming with Educational Qualification, Farm Experiences, Land Ownership, Mode of Transport, Crops Selling and Members Involved in farming activities through ANOVA and Post Hoc Multiple Comparison.

H₀₁: There is a no significant difference in Education level of the farmers and adoption of organic farming

H₀₂: There is a no significant difference between Farming Experiences and adoption of organic farming.

H₀₃: There is a no significant difference between Land ownership of the farmers and adoption of organic farming.

H₀₄: There is a no significant difference between mode of transportation and adoption of organic farming

H₀₅: There is a no significant difference between farmers selling crops (whom) and adoption of organic farming.

H₀₆: There is a no significant difference between no. of family members involve and adoption of organic farming

Table 3: ANOVA – Adoption of Organic Farming

Variables	df	Mean Square	F	P - Value	Significance Level
Educational Qualification	4	1.206	5.316	0.000	Significant
Farm Experiences	2	0.072	0.285	0.752	Not Significant
Land Ownership	2	0.319	1.271	0.283	Not Significant
Mode of Transport	3	2.627	12.761	0.000	Significant
Crops Selling	2	2.085	9.134	0.000	Significant
Members Involve	2	.224	.890	0.413	Not Significant

To understand the significant difference in various group in adopting organic farming, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) has been used which resulted significant difference in group of educational qualification (Illiterate, Primary, High School, Graduate and Post-Graduate), Mode of Transport (Cycle, Rickshaw, Tractor and Van) and Crops Selling by farmers (Direct to Customers, Village Traders and city/town Traders). However, Farm Experience, Land ownership (cultivating) and Family Members involved in farming shows no significant differences in adopting organic method of cultivation (Table 3).

Table 4: Educational Qualification Post Hoc Tests - Multiple Comparisons (Tukey HSD)

Qualification (I)	Qualification (J)	Mean Diff (I-J)	P - Value	Significance Level
Illiterate	Primary	-.113	.792	Not Significant
	High School	-.434*	.000	Significant
	Graduation	-.184	.730	Not Significant
	Post-Graduation	.066	.999	Not Significant
Primary	High School	-.321*	.007	Significant
	Graduation	-.071	.987	Not Significant
	Post-Graduation	.179	.951	Not Significant
	Graduation	.250	.420	Not Significant

High School	Post-Graduation	.500	.263	Not Significant
Graduation	Post-Graduation	.250	.887	Not Significant

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level. Dependent Variable: Organic Farming

Post Hoc Test shows the significant difference within the group or subgroup which has been resulted significant though ANOVA Test (Table 3). Result indicates that there is a significant difference in adopting organic method of farming within the education level of farmers. There is a significant difference with educated (High School) Farmers with Illiterate and Primary. However, other sub group in education level has not been found significant differences (Table 4).

Table 5: Mode of Transport - Post Hoc Tests - Multiple Comparisons (Tukey HSD)

Mode of Transport (I)	Mode of Transport (J)	Mean Diff (I-J)	P - Value	Significance Level
Cycle	Rickshaw	-.458*	.000	Significant
	Tractor	-.729*	.000	Significant
	Van	-.306*	.003	Significant
Rickshaw	Tractor	-.270	.423	Not Significant
	Van	.152	.435	Not Significant
Tractor	Van	.422	.077	Not Significant

Table 6: Crops Selling - Post Hoc Tests - Multiple Comparisons (Tukey HSD)

Crops Selling (I)	Crops Selling (J)	Mean Diff (I-J)	P - Value	Significance Level
Direct to Customers	Village Traders	-.470*	.001	Significant
	City/Town Traders	-.538*	.000	Significant
Village Traders	City/Town Traders	-.068	.675	Not Significant

Mode of Transportation (Table 5) used by the Farmers during the farming has been resulted significant differences in adopting organic method of farming, especially farmers using Cycle (mode of transportation) with Rickshaw, Tractor and Van. However there are no significant differences in Tractor, Van and Rickshaw.

The difference within groups of farmers selling their crops directly to the customers found significant with the farmers selling crops to the Village or Town Traders by the organic farmers. Further, there is no difference between the group of farmers selling crops to the Village traders and City/Town Traders (Table 6).

Above significant differences within the subgroup describes the influence of variables and sub-variable in adoption of organic farming which brought holistic understanding in regards to the socio-demographic factors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Organic agriculture, which has a holistic approach that includes taking care of human beings needs and rights, is supposed to be beneficial for all people involved at all levels. This is, indeed, an ambitious goal. (Cierpka, 2002). Organic farming can be defined as an agriculture that is ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially responsible. Sustainable livelihood and economic empowerment has been major issue for the farmers in India. This study discussed the demographic characteristic of organic and conventional farmers. The result shows that how socio-economic condition has changed between two group and socio-demographic factors influenced farmers to adopt organic farming. Organic farmers were more aware and close to the mainstream whereas conventional farmers are still lacking in many aspects. Level of

Education, Training, Mode of transportation and consumers to who farmers are selling their products seems to be more influential factors in adopting organic farming. However, Farm experience, land holding patterns was not significant in decision making. Marketing aspect and proper price of their crops has been another challenge for the farmers where middle-man exploit farmers by lesser price of their crops but due to unavailability of transportation means farmers unable to reach at the proper market. Further study can be carried out to understand the factors influencing or major road blocks for farmers in adopting organic farming from various perspectives such as from economic, social, cultivation and government policies. The study contributes to a growing understanding among farmers, researchers and organization working in the arena of organic moment. Government can play critical role in motivating the farmers towards organic farming by providing training and conversion compensation or subsidy which is expected to occur during conversion period. Further, government should provide at district level advisory/expert services to deal with the marketing aspects, crops disease, proper use of organic manure, certification issues and establish group of farmers to uplift the concept of “community farming” which reduces overall cost of cultivation too. Further, at district level government should plan for awareness programme thereby local demand of organic food will generate which will motivate farmers to adopt organic farming.

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Table A: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Particulars	Organic Farmers (N = 80)		Conventional Farmers (N = 80)		
	Number	%	Number	%	
Gender	Male	76	95.0	67	83.8
	Female	4	5.0	13	16.3
Marital Status	Single	8	10.0	5	6.3
	Married	72	90.0	75	93.8
Family Type	Nuclear	50	62.5	40	50.0
	Joint	30	37.5	40	50.0
Age of Farmers	Less than 20	6	7.5	2	2.5
	21-40	17	21.3	24	30.0
	41-60	39	48.8	35	43.8
	More than 61	18	22.5	19	23.8
Size of the Family	1-5 members	24	30.0	21	26.3
	6-10 members	48	60.0	41	51.3
	11-15 members	8	10.0	18	22.5
Family Member Involve	1 member	70	87.5	67	83.8
	2 members	9	11.3	13	16.3
	3 members	1	1.3	0	0
Land ownership (cultivation)	Own Land	45	56.3	40	50.0
	Leased Land	14	17.5	10	12.5
	Both Own & Lease	21	26.3	30	37.5
Farming Experience	Less Experience	19	23.8	16	20.0
	Average Experience	24	30.0	28	35.0
	High Experience	37	46.3	36	45.0
Access Newspaper/Radio	None	21	26.3	52	65.0
	Radio	9	11.3	7	8.8
	Newspaper	50	62.5	21	26.3
Selling products/crops	Direct to Customers	1	1.3	17	21.3
	Village Traders	41	51.3	37	46.3
	City/Town Traders	38	47.5	26	32.5