

# Organic Consumption and Production Work in Rajasthan

*A Dossier on Decade of CUTS' Initiatives on Educating Farmers and Consumers*

## About CUTS International

Established in 1983, the Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) has become a prominent advocate for consumer rights in India and internationally. Evolving with the expanding landscape of consumer protection, CUTS diversified and established the CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) in 1996. Focused on research, advocacy, and networking, CUTS CART pioneered campaigns and empowers consumers by engaging with government authorities to address issues affecting the common man.

## Background

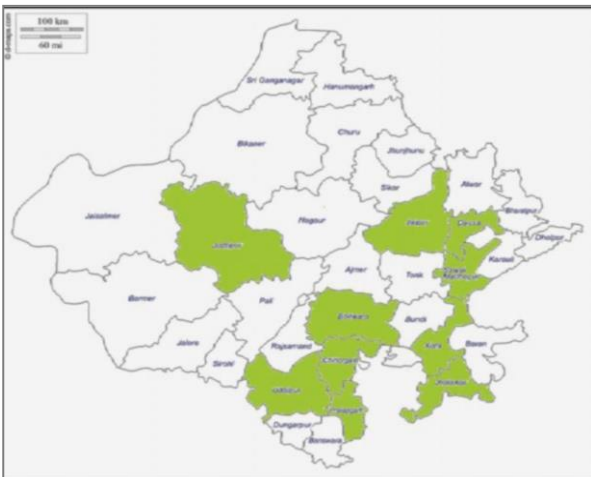
India is mainly an agricultural country, where over 58 percent of nation's population is involved in agriculture-related activities for livelihood. There is a huge untapped potential for organic farming in India. Organic farming emerged as a potential alternative for meeting food demand, maintaining soil fertility and increasing soil carbon pool. The modern agriculture methods are one of the major causes of environmental degradation. Both crops and animals are prone to the vagaries of nature. At present, agriculture has become a relatively unrewarding profession mainly due to low productivity, unfavourable prices and practically very little value addition. In most

of the cases, even primary value addition is missing. The promotion of organic consumption is directly related to the environment in many ways. It will drastically reduce the use of pesticides and chemicals in production, which is one of the major causes of environmental degradation along with unfit for human health. The chemical in food products adversely affects reproduction capabilities in women and girls. Moreover, Indian societies being largely patriarchal, women's needs are not first priority, so they are more prone to chemical contaminations in food. So the adoption of organic consumption will benefit women and girls the most.

## Organic Consumption and Production Work

The ProOrganic project in Rajasthan (<https://rb.gy/a4qoep>) was a groundbreaking initiative designed to champion organic consumption and instigate a transformative shift towards sustainable farming practices. The pilot phase supported by Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), started in October, 2013 got concluded in March, 2017 and it marked three years of significant achievements. This phase witnessed a substantial increase in organic farming acreage and a heightened consumer demand for organic products. (<https://rb.gy/r10ucc>), which was the key highlight of this pilot phase. The other highlight features of this pilot phase can be viewed at: <https://rb.gy/6clum1> and <https://rb.gy/agvrn3>.

Encouraged by this initial success, SSNC extended its support for ProOrganic II for another period of four years (<https://rb.gy/ng97u2>). This phase aimed to cultivate a culture of sustainable consumption and lifestyle through organic production and consumption. Aligned with environmental and social factors, the project emphasized consumer education, empowerment, and sustainable food and farming practices. ProOrganic II envisions formulating a comprehensive agenda for sustainable



development, targeting the entire population of the selected districts for a collective shift towards organic practices, ensuring a resilient and sustainable future. The glimpses of key activities of this phase and a bridge year of 2021 can be seen at the following Communiques: <https://rb.gy/yti1ba>; <https://rb.gy/dyzt1m>; <https://rb.gy/nxjued>; <https://rb.gy/aiuxmx> and <https://rb.gy/8hzce9>.

After the conclusion of ProOrganic II, taking our past experience and the network created as our strength, we planned to escalate work on organic consumption and production with an addition of two more districts, thus making it 12. The purpose of carrying forward this work in the 12 target districts was not only to consolidate the already set base, which was created more than eight years back and which started yielding results at ground but also to strengthen it by further working on it continuously and more passionately with an innovative approach keeping all the stakeholders in loop as that was a better time, when the state governments and the Government of India have also started showing its inclination towards organic culture work throughout the country in its way' (<https://cuts-cart.org/proscop/>). The glimpses of key activities of this 15-month phase can be seen at: <https://rb.gy/5qzybh>.

## Major Activities Accomplished During Ten Year's Intervention

### Awareness Generation – Voices Reaching to Ground

The ProOrganic program has significantly expanded its reach in Rajasthan by conducting awareness sessions for over 100,000 individuals comprising consumers and farmers. These sessions were conducted at the Gram Panchayat level, totalling 1,168 sessions, and at the block level, where 386 sessions were successfully executed. The

purpose was to take forward the movement down the line and make consumers/farmers aware of organic products and influence their buying/farming habits, which included farmers, village-level traders, elected representatives, people directly/indirectly involved in agriculture, consumers, local officials, experts, youth groups, self-help groups (SHGs), and local civil society organisations (CSOs) among others.

### **Capacity Building- Inspiring Farmers**

The objective was to motivate and train farmers with some novel and technical sessions on organic farming to reduce chemical uses in farming through several sessions/lectures on organic farming and related issues by subject experts and showcase some of the successful live demonstrations of organic farming for practical orientation in all 10 districts. Efforts were made to ensure the participation of farmers, especially women farmers, representing all blocks of the district. The objective of this advanced level orientation was to build the capacities of farmers and inspire them to take up organic farming through experience gained from various subject experts and live demos of organic culture. The trained farmers further envisaged that they would work as catalysts at the local level to impart their knowledge gained from orientation and exposure and were taught about the efficacy of vermicomposting and other eco-friendly methods, such as poly house farming, mulching and recycling of farm waste besides drip and other water conservation technologies during the session. Subject experts of agriculture departments took these sessions -- Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Agriculture Science Centres), Agriculture Universities and Colleges and Agriculture Research Institutes. These capacity-building workshops and exposure visits were witnessed by around 3,000 participants.

### **Media Sensitisation Workshops- Voices from the Ground**

The 'Media Sensitisation Workshops' aimed to raise consumer awareness about the benefits and availability of organic products, enhance farmers' capacity in organic farming, and sensitize stakeholders and agencies in Rajasthan, utilizing media for effective advocacy.

### **Organic Club Garden- Healthy Approach**

This unique activity started in the 2018-19 period to bring the campaign of organic farming to the level of children and to sensitize them schools are suited to be the best platform. To inculcate the culture of organic farming and consumption, among children, school administrations were convinced to establish clubs of select school students preferably higher classes and through them create organic gardens on the school campus itself. After the first successful phase in the last year, this activity created an enthusiasm among young consumers, who have proved themselves as young stakeholders in our intervention, with whom we could inculcate a culture of sustainable consumption, who can also contribute towards safe and sustainable food systems.

### **Community Seed Cell Management– A Unique Approach**

The program aimed to safeguard and promote indigenous seeds within the realm of organic farming. This unique activity started in 2019-20 to protect, preserve and promote different indigenous seeds, which are existing in our country in organic farming. This activity was introduced in all the 12 targeted districts with progressive organic farmers of these districts being the main target groups. Regular knowledge-sharing meetings and feedback meetings were held regularly focussing on preaching the importance of community seed

banks and how indigenous seeds of different crops, which could be promoted in organic farming; cooperative efforts for proper management of a community base seed management system and traditional methods for seed saving, which can be adopted for the proper functioning of these seed cells.

### **Compost is a New Buzz Word**

Fifty compost cells (five in each district) were set-up during 2018-19 as a novel activity to address the problem of scarcity of organic manure and motivate farmers to shift from chemical to organic farming. This activity helped in motivating the farmers starting from smaller level. They were supplied with readymade kits, worms and cow dung., required for compost cells. Through this, these farmers are being benefited in terms of not only using the vermi compost from these units but these units also helped them in pulverising wastes around their farms. Besides, these farmers benefitted others as well by sharing vermi compost. Hence, the concept of sharing was also addressed to a large extent through the activity.

### **Organic Fair-A Productive Platform for Organic Producers**

This was an old and highly acclaimed activity of the pilot phase, which was repeated throughout every year. The purpose of the fair was to provide a platform and guidance to the farmers for selling their organic products and make them further aware about the importance of the issue and also make the consumers aware about the available organic products and its benefits by bringing both farmers and consumers on the same platform. Though the farmers are producing organic products they are not getting any outlets to reach the consumers and sell their products. Thus, this was an attempt to help them in this direction.

### **Model Organic Village- Healthy Food Roots Gets Deepened**

To set an example for other nearby villages/farmers to adopt organic farming, one village was selected to make a Model Organic Village. Kitchen garden trainings were organised in the sets of selected villages to be converted as “Model Organic Village” in all the districts. A total of 22 kitchen garden trainings were organised with a two days’ agenda of orientation, demonstration, and seed kit distribution to the selected women participants in the trainings.

### **Key Achievements Throughout All Phases**

- **Changing Pattern Leading to Shift in Focus-Key Highlights of Endline Survey**

CUTS work under ProOrganic II project for increasing awareness among farmers and consumers on organic consumption and production has shown impact with tremendous results through an endline survey done among the same stakeholders and in the same area. The purpose of the endline research was to gauge the level of impact, which has been created in the last four years of intervention as part of a project outcome with a focus on changes seen in organic consumption and production patterns in the targeted 10 districts. The key findings with regard to comparison of this endline survey with baseline survey of 2017 shows that awareness level among consumers on ill effects of chemical input-based food products has rose from 86 per cent to 97.4 per cent. Similarly, awareness about organic

products has enhanced to 94.7 per cent as compared to baseline's 84 per cent. The more important is that percentage of consumers buying organic products has gone up to nearly 66.8 per cent, which was earlier only 39 per cent during the baseline. The percentage of consumers who reported difficulty in buying organic products in the market has reduced to 40 per cent from earlier 68 per cent.

From the farmer's angle, awareness about ill effects of farming based on chemical inputs, there is a slight increase, which is 97 per cent as compared to earlier 94 per cent. Around 26.1 per cent of farmers, who earlier had reported during the baseline for doing chemical-based farming have reduced to 13.3 per cent during four years of period. Around 51 per cent of farmers have reported getting higher price from the market as compared to earlier baselines' 32 per cent. Based on the learnings and CUTS's efforts and initiative to expand organic production and consumption, now 98 per cent of farmers have agreed to motivate and help other farmers to convert to organic mode, which was only 91 per cent. *Detailed reports in a Monograph at: <https://cuts-cart.org/pdf/endline-survey-report-developing-a-culture-of-sustainable-consumption-and-lifestyle-in-rajasthan.pdf>*

- **A National Recognition:** Farmers Jagdish Prasad Parikh of Sikar and Hukum Chand Patidaar of Jhalawar district motivated and associated with CUTS project throughout received the Padma Shri award in 2019 for their contributions to organic cultivation.

- **Getting Reward:** For the first time ever since 2013, six farmers Rameshwar Prasad Jat of Dhoblai village in Govindgarh panchayat samiti; Mool Chand Jat of Maheshwas village; Jagdish Yadav of Bardevthala of Chomu and Ganga Ram Sepat of Jobner all in Jaipur district and Shyam Sunder Sharma and woman farmer Ruby Pareek both of Khatwa village in Lalsot panchayat samiti of Dausa district, who were actively involved in the ProOrganic project activities have been awarded by the Agriculture Department of Rajasthan for their outstanding work in the area of organic farming.
- **Growing Trend of Organic Food Consumption Amid Pandemic: A Changing Food Habit Pattern:** A random perception survey by CUTS International in Rajasthan on growing trend in organic consumption and sale in Rajasthan during initial pandemic period of 10 months targeting consumers and sellers with 200 samples of consumers from each of the 10 targeted districts of ProOrganic and 20 samples of organic sellers from each district. The results of the survey have been overwhelming and encouraging. 91 per cent organic sellers and 89 per cent of consumers have confirmed that there has been a substantial growth in both sales and the consumption of organic products during the pandemic. (<https://t.ly/zDVcs>)
- **Changing Mode:** Around 180 farmers were motivated to change their mode from chemical to organic in a span of 10 years. (<https://rb.gy/q466gu>). The success stories of transition of some of these farmers are documented as: <https://cuts-cart.org/pdf/the-transition->

[from-chemical-to-organic-farming-real-case-studies.pdf](#).

## A Favourable Top of Form

### Government Intervention: A Boon

- **School Nutrition (Kitchen) Guidelines:** The Government of India has also started recognising the efforts of involving school children by way of issuing an official circular of ‘School Nutrition (Kitchen) Guidelines (SNG)’ stating instructions and guidelines to all state-level governments for escalating this initiative of Organic Kitchen Gardens and Organic Clubs setups within schools within their respective states. (<https://cuts-cart.org/pdf/guidelines-for-school-kitchen-gardens.pdf>)
- **Pesticide Management Bill, 2020:** Another achievement during the project period is an announcement by the Government of India regarding its plan for tabling a Pesticide Management Bill, 2020 to promote safer pesticides. The new draft bill is aimed at protecting the interest of the farmers so that they get safe and effective pesticides. Farmers would be empowered to get all information regarding the available pesticides,

their strengths, weaknesses, and risks from the dealers they choose to purchase the pesticide.

(<https://rb.gy/fdxn0y>)

- **Introduction of Rajasthan Organic Policy 2017:** The state government introduced a policy to boost organic culture. ([https://cuts-cart.org/pdf/Rajasthan\\_Organic\\_farming\\_Policy-2017.pdf](https://cuts-cart.org/pdf/Rajasthan_Organic_farming_Policy-2017.pdf))
- **National Organic Schemes:** The Government of India initiated Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) and Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER) to support organic farming and develop end-to-end value chains.
- **An Exclusive Organic Corner and Subsidy to Organic Farmers:** CUTS' efforts through advocacy contributed to the Government of Rajasthan's plan of establishing exclusive organic corners in vegetable mandis. ([https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/rajasthan-to-boost-organic-farming-provide-subsidies-to-farmers-123090400751\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/rajasthan-to-boost-organic-farming-provide-subsidies-to-farmers-123090400751_1.html))