

## **Speech by Chief Minister of Odisha during the 4<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention**

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 to 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.

The Chief Minister felicitated successful Organic Farmers at the Convention. President of the Association Shri Sarvadaman Patel delivered the welcome address and Dr. Claude Alvares made a presentation of slide show on organic farming in India.