

## Organic Farming in Sri Lanka: Farmers' Point of View

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Organic farming is an environmentally compatible, ecologically sound and human and animal friendly production system. It is gaining world-wide attention with its ability to reduce environmental pollution while enhancing sustainable development in many aspects. It is obvious that organic farming is capable of reducing the negative impacts of conventional agriculture on human beings and the environment while enhancing rural economic development. However, most of the Sri Lankan farmers (about 85%), are still engaged in conventional or inorganic farming. Moreover, it is hard to find literature on the farmers' perception of organic farming at present. With this kind of context, the study was purposively focused on exploring the Sri Lankan farmers' perception of organic farming. Thus, the main objectives of this research were to investigate the Sri Lankan farmers' attitude towards organic agriculture, existing potential and challenges to continue with the organic farming in Sri Lanka. Badulla and Ratnapura districts were purposely selected as study areas because of their adaptability to organic farming. A sample of 300 farmers, 150 from each district was randomly selected to conduct the field survey during July 2017 to April 2018 while using a pre-tested structured questionnaire. Few descriptive statistical methods were used for the data analysis. Results revealed that the majority of the farmers (74%) had a significant level of indigenous knowledge about organic farming which was passed from their parents. As per the mean analysis, farmers had a positive attitude towards two factors; health enhancing aspects and environmental protection aspects of organic agriculture. However, they had a negative attitude towards two factors; the complexity of organic farming and unavailability of a proper market for organic products. Moreover, the presence of indigenous knowledge about organic farming including seeds, planting materials and favorable climatic condition was the main potential while labor intensiveness and loop holes in quality certifications of organic products were the major challenges. The study can be concluded as, if necessary conditions are provided to farmers in these two districts, they can be motivated towards organic farming. Therefore, promotion of organic farming and sustainable development of these two districts can be done by developing better marketing facilities for organic products, providing required facilities for the production of organic food as well as processing and value addition of organic foods.

**Keywords:** farmers' attitude, organic farming, organic products, Sri Lanka