

— Standards and certification systems for organic agrifood products —


Driven by increasing demand from health- and fitness-conscious consumers who are also concerned with the impact of production processes on the environment and food safety and quality, organic production and trade are soaring worldwide, not only in the markets of the USA and EU but also in Japan. To take advantage of this growing export market, there is a need to have credible systems of organic standards and organic certification because only products produced, inspected, and certified in accordance with the prescribed regulations and standards can be traded and labeled as organic at premium prices. There is also a need to develop a critical mass of inspectors of organic products to facilitate the certification of production processes.

The status of organic standards and certification systems in many developing Asian countries could be improved. In the absence of harmonized organic standards, organic product labeling and certification are not totally reliable. The APO considers the development and promotion of sustainable production systems such as organic farming very important and has organized a number of projects on the subject. Based on some of those projects, in 2010 the APO published an e-book titled *Organic Agriculture and Agribusiness: Innovation and Fundamentals*.

To share good practices of organic standard setting, inspection, and certification processes, the APO and National Productivity Council of India jointly organized a workshop on Development of Standard and Certification Systems for Organic Agricultural Products, 16–20 May 2011, in New Delhi, India. Twenty participants and four resource persons attended the workshop, which consisted of lead presentations by the experts, country presentations by participants, field visits, and group discussions.

German expert Gerald Herrmann highlighted global trends in organic farming including organic production and international trade and reviewed the standards and accreditation program of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements. Prof. Shih-Shiung Chan from the Republic of China spoke

on the status of organic standards and certification systems in East/Southeast Asia, and inspection and certification processes of organic agrifood products. Indian experts Rajshekhar Reddy Seelam presented the organic sector in India, and Dr. A.K. Yadav spoke on organic inspection and certification systems, the participatory guarantee system, and processing, handling, packaging, and labeling of organic food products.

To glimpse good practices in organic farming in India, the participants visited an organic farm in Beheta village, Uttar Pradesh. In group discussions, participants identified the issues in enhancing support for the development of organic farming, processing and manufacturing; promoting/marketing organic products; and facilitating regional trade in organic products; and formulated action plans to address them. Contributed by M. Saeed/APO Agriculture Department. 



Participants discussing issues in regional trade in organic products and action plans to address them. Photo courtesy of NPC.