

BUILDING THE POLICY ECOSYSTEM FOR ORGANIC PRODUCTION IN BALOCHISTAN, PAKISTAN

Locations	Pakistan
Dates	02/08/2021 - 31/07/2024

Summary

Sectoral approaches to land management (increasing production, for instance) are no longer viable to meet global challenges such as poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation and food production due to mounting pressures from population increases and climate change. Organic production, however, is a more profitable, sustainable and environmentally-friendly approach to agriculture that alleviates problems. This project will focus on integrated landscape approaches and will use CABI's strong in-country partnerships to integrate agricultural policy change, strengthen market linkages and ultimately enable business model change for organic produce production in the Balochistan province of Pakistan.

The problem

Conventional farming practices rely heavily on the application of chemical inputs and high-yielding varieties which has affected soil fertility and led to a loss in topsoil, organic matter and crop production. Due to increases in input costs and

stagnant market prices of agricultural outputs, conventional farming also brings small profits. It is these factors and practices that pose a serious threat to future food security and has highlighted the role of sustainable agricultural systems.

Organic agriculture has the potential to address these threats to agricultural sustainability by minimizing the use of costly synthetic inputs, such as fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, as well as making agriculture more environmentally sustainable and economically viable. Moreover, it avoids nutrient exploitation, increases soil organic matter content and higher prices can be obtained through organic certification.

Organic agriculture production also improves farm incomes due to lower input costs and higher sale prices which when combined contributes to the organic ecosystem – a key factor for environmental protection and poverty alleviation.

However, in order for organic agriculture to start, and remain sustainable, policy is needed.

What we are doing

The main goal of the project is to develop a sustainable organic agriculture landscape, creating a robust and widely accepted organic agriculture policy, standards and regulation, that will help to build new business models at local levels and support organic agriculture.

The project will support efforts to address issues regarding organic agriculture promotion including clear policy gaps and the unavailability of good quality organic seed and bio-inputs, making them available to those who need them – the producers.

A landscape initiative in the Barkhan and Lasbela districts of Balochistan – based on a land management approach integrating policy and relevant practices to solve those issues regarding organic agriculture promotion – will help to address systematic issues by bringing all the relevant stakeholders (policymakers, supply chain members, farmers) together towards the shared goals of targeting climate change and inequality.

To achieve this initiative, the project has the following objectives:

1. Develop an organic agriculture policy for Balochistan
2. Enhance the availability of good quality organic seed
3. Advance the accessibility of bio-inputs for organic agriculture production systems

Results so far

During 2022, three working group meetings were held at federal and provincial levels. As a result, the first draft of an Organic Agriculture Policy was developed.

In addition, five training workshops were delivered to the Department of Agriculture Extension (AED) on bio-inputs and three capacity building training workshops were conducted for farm-input suppliers. To create a ‘learning by seeing’ approach, four field demonstration plots were established and one exchange visit was carried out between a farmer and input supplier. Three organic training manuals were also developed.

The project initiated the landscape initiative in the Barkhan and Lasbela districts of Balochistan. Based on a land management approach which integrates policy and relevant practices, the initiative aims to solve issues regarding organic agriculture promotion and address systematic issues by bringing all the relevant stakeholders together.

Future activities will include:

- Launch an organic agriculture policy for Balochistan

- Develop national organic standards for approval at local and national levels
- Shift the focus from a conventional institutional approach to organic agriculture techniques
- Develop business opportunities at local levels to facilitate organic seed and bio-inputs with the aim to support organic agriculture production systems.

Donors	Laudes Foundation
Partners	Ministry of National Food Security & Research (MNFSR), Directorate General Agriculture Extension, Balochistan, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), Agriculture Policy Institute, Islamabad (API), Directorate General Agriculture Research, Balochistan, Nuclear Institute for Agriculture and Biology (NIAB), National Institute for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering (NIBGE), World Food Programme, Lead farmers and farmer organizations
CABI Project Manager	Muhammad Waseem Ishaq







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