

## ORGANIC FARMING: GEOGRAPHY

**NEWS:** IOB, Amul, Richplus to promote organic farming

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Indian Overseas Bank, Amul, and Rich Plus have partnered to promote organic farming in India by launching an Organic Farming Card and a dedicated credit scheme while supporting certification and training.

India ranks first globally in the number of organic farmers, with strong government schemes and export potential driving the sector's growth.

### Context

- Indian Overseas Bank (IOB), Amul, and Rich Plus have signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote organic farming practices across India.

### Key Highlights of the Agreement

- **Launch of Organic Farming Card:**
  - A co-branded Organic Farming Card has been introduced by IOB for account holders involved in organic farming.
  - The card enables farmers to avail **discounted organic agricultural inputs** from Amul's certified retail outlets.
- **Introduction of 'Harit Kranti' Credit Scheme:**
  - IOB has launched a **dedicated financial scheme** to support the credit needs of organic farmers.
  - This scheme aims to improve farmers' access to funding for sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Technical Expertise by Richplus:**
  - Richplus will provide **technical training, capacity building, and guidance** on organic farming practices to empower farmers with knowledge and skills.

### What is Organic Farming?

- **Definition:**
  - Organic farming is a **sustainable agricultural system** that avoids synthetic inputs like chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
  - It depends on natural elements like **crop residues, compost, and farmyard manure** to maintain soil fertility and manage pests and diseases.

### Status of Organic Farming in India

- **Global Ranking:**
  - India ranks **4th globally** in terms of area under organic certification (as per IFOAM 2022 statistics).
- **Leading States:**
  - **Madhya Pradesh** leads in certified area, followed by **Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Karnataka**.
- **Sikkim – First Fully Organic State:**
  - Sikkim achieved **100% organic status**, applying organic practices on 75,000 hectares of farmland.
- **Farmer Participation:**
  - India holds the **1st position globally** in terms of the number of organic farmers.
- **Export Potential:**
  - India's organic product exports stood at **\$708 million in 2022–23**, compared to the global market size of **\$138 billion**, offering immense potential.

### Advantages of Organic Farming

- **Healthier Food:**
  - Organic food is **free of harmful chemical residues** and contains **higher nutrient levels**.
- **Improved Soil Health:**
  - Builds **organic matter**, enhances **microbial activity**, and supports **nutrient recycling**.
- **Economic Benefits:**
  - Farmers can earn **premium prices**, access **niche export markets**, and benefit from **lower input costs** in the long run.
- **Climate Change Mitigation:**
  - Promotes **carbon sequestration** through composting and organic soil management, lowering **greenhouse gas emissions**.
- **Biodiversity Support:**
  - Fosters biodiversity by preserving **habitats for beneficial insects, birds, and wildlife**.

### Certification Systems in India

- **National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP):**
  - Under Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
  - Third-party certification covering **production, processing, trading, and export** of organic products.
- **Participatory Guarantee System (PGS-India):**
  - Under Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
  - Involves **peer verification** by farmers and producers themselves.
- **Mandatory Domestic Certification:**
  - Certification under NPOP or PGS is **mandatory for domestic sale** under the **Jaivik Bharat logo**.

### **Role of APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority)**

- **Establishment and Mandate:**
  - Formed in 1986 under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
  - Promotes export of **agri-products** like fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, etc.
- **Certification Oversight:**
  - Functions as the **Secretariat to the National Accreditation Board (NAB)** under NPOP for certifying organic exports.

### **Government Schemes Supporting Organic Farming**

- **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY):**
  - End-to-end support covering **production, processing, certification, marketing, and post-harvest**.
  - Includes **training and capacity building**.
- **Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER):**
  - Focused support for organic farmers in **NE states**.
- **Jaivik Kheti Portal:**
  - A digital platform that enables **sale of organic produce**, supports **farmer–buyer linkage**, and **promotes organic farming awareness**.

### **Way Ahead**

- **Enhance Market Access:**

- Strengthen procurement, branding, and retail outlets for organic produce through **Amul, Jaivik Kheti**, etc.
- **Promote Awareness & Training:**
  - Continuous **technical training and advisory** to help farmers meet market and certification standards.
- **Expand Certification Infrastructure:**
  - **Decentralize and simplify** certification with more **local certification bodies** to improve reach.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/iob-amul-richplus-to-promote-organic-farming/article69633839.ece>