

1. India-Australia Agreement – International Relations

India, Australia agrees to accept each other's organic certification. India and Australia have signed a landmark Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) for organic products, a move that will significantly boost bilateral trade by simplifying compliance and reducing regulatory barriers. Under this arrangement, both countries will recognize and accept each other's organic certification systems.

Key Features of the MRA

Coverage – The agreement applies to organic products grown and processed in both countries, including –

1. Unprocessed plant products (with some exclusions like seaweed and greenhouse crops).
2. Processed foods containing certified organic ingredients.
3. Wine.

Implementing Agencies

India – Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

Australia – Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF).

Significance of the Agreement for India

This MRA is a major strategic win for India's organic sector and its farming community.

Boost to Bilateral Trade – India's organic exports to Australia in FY 2024–25 were USD 8.96 million. The MRA is expected to significantly expand this by opening up market access for products like cereals, tea, spices, and wines. Australia has the world's largest area of organic farmland (53 million hectares), presenting a vast market opportunity for Indian exporters.

Simplified Compliance – The agreement builds mutual trust in each other's certification standards, eliminating the need for duplicate testing and certification. This will reduce costs, time, and regulatory hurdles for Indian exporters.

Benefits for Farmers – Organic products typically fetch 30–40% higher prices, which will directly boost farmer incomes. The agreement supports the government's vision of making India the "Organic Food Basket of the World" by facilitating easier access to a premium international market.

Overview of India's Organic Sector

India is a global leader in organic farming, both in terms of land area and the number of producers.

Production and Global Ranking – India ranks second in the world in organic agricultural land and first in the number of organic producers. In FY24, India produced 3.6 million tonnes of certified organic products. The total area under organic cultivation is 7.3 million hectares.

Major Producing States – Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Gujarat are among the leading states.

Exports – India exported 2.61 lakh tonnes of organic food in FY24, valued at USD 494.8 million. The major export markets are the US, EU, Canada, UK, and Australia.

The Organic Certification Process in India

The certification process in India is governed by the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP), which is implemented by APEDA. This ensures that products marketed as "organic" meet stringent national and international standards.

Accreditation – Certification is issued by agencies accredited by APEDA.

Inspection and Audit – These agencies conduct detailed on-site inspections of farms and processing facilities to verify compliance with NPOP standards.

Conversion Period – A farm must typically undergo a three-year conversion period, during which no prohibited substances (like chemical pesticides or fertilizers) can be used.

"India Organic" Logo – Once certified, products can use the official "India Organic" logo, which is a mark of authenticity. The certification is valid for one year and requires annual renewal audits.

Key Government Initiatives for Organic Farming

The government has launched several schemes to promote and support the organic farming sector.

Scheme Name	Nodal Body/Ministry	Key Features and Objectives
National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)	APEDA (Commerce & Industry)	Sets standards for organic production, accredits certification bodies, and ensures export compliance. Its standards are recognized by the EU and Switzerland.
Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)	Dept. of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare	Promotes organic farming in clusters, providing financial aid (₹31,500/ha over three years) for inputs, certification, and marketing.
Mission Organic Value Chain Development for NER (MOVCDNER)	Dept. of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare	A special scheme for North-Eastern states that builds end-to-end organic value chains, from production to marketing, with subsidy support for infrastructure.
National Centre for Organic Farming (NCOF)	Dept. of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare	Provides technical support and guidelines on bio-inputs like biofertilizers and biopesticides, and assists states in framing organic policies.

Source - <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-australia-ink-organic-products-recognition-pact-to-boost-trade-11758733534174.html>

