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*RESEARCH EXPLORER-International Journal on Economic and Business Management*

*ISSN: 2250-1940 (P) 2349-1647 (O)*

*Impact Factor: 3.655(CIF), 2.78(IRJIF), 2.77(NAAS)*

*Volume XIV, Issue 48 (2)*

*July - September 2025*

*Formally UGC Approved Journal (63185), © Author*

## **ECONOMIC INSIGHTS INTO THE CHALLENGES FACING ORGANIC FARMING IN KERALA AND TAMIL NADU**

**Mr. JACOB JOSE**

Research Scholar

Department of Commerce

Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies

Pallavaram, Chennai

**Dr. MOHANA PRIYA. M**

Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor

Department of Commerce

Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies

Pallavaram, Chennai

### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to explore the key factors that hinder farmers from adopting organic farming practices in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. While organic farming is steadily gaining popularity across India, with many farmers transitioning from conventional (inorganic) methods to organic approaches, various challenges continue to restrict wider adoption. Notably, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have witnessed a significant shift toward organic agriculture. However, despite this growing interest, several obstacles discourage farmers from fully embracing organic practices. Against this backdrop, the study undertakes a comparative economic analysis of the primary inhibiting factors affecting both organic and conventional farmers in these two states.*

**Key Words:** Organic farming, Conventional farming, per acre value of output.

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The Green Revolution, introduced in Indian agriculture during the mid-1960s, marked a significant shift in farming practices by bringing about technological advancements that substantially increased crop yields and land productivity in many parts of the country (Bhattacharya & Chakraborty, 2005). However, this progress came at a cost. It led to the excessive use of synthetic inputs such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides (Banerjee, 2010). Over time, the post-Green Revolution era has raised serious concerns regarding the sustainability of Indian agriculture. Issues such as falling groundwater levels in highly productive regions, declining soil fertility, reduced productivity of inputs, limited crop diversification, and escalating production costs have emerged as major challenges (Chhonkar, 2005). Collectively, these problems are making agriculture an increasingly unprofitable venture for many farmers (Save & Sanghavi, 1991).

The indiscriminate and long-term use of chemical pesticides has severely affected the natural ecological balance. It has led to the destruction of beneficial biological control organisms and increased pest resistance (Kasthuri, 2007; Ramesh et al., 2005; Pandey & Singh, 2012; Pandey & Pandey, 2009). Similarly, the unbalanced use of chemical fertilizers has

resulted in multiple nutrient deficiencies and an overall decline in soil productivity (Ramesh et al., 2008). One crucial observation is that the adoption of Green Revolution technologies has not only reduced agricultural yield in some areas but has also eroded traditional, eco-friendly indigenous farming knowledge (Ramesh et al., 2005). In response to these challenges, organic farming has emerged as a sustainable alternative. Organic farming avoids synthetic chemicals and instead relies on organic inputs such as compost, green manure, crop residues, animal waste, and crop rotation (Lotter, 2003; Padel, 2001; Ramesh et al., 2010; Menon, 2008; Chhonkar, 2003; Bhattacharya & Chakraborty, 2005).

This method emphasizes the use of legumes and natural biological controls to maintain soil fertility and pest resistance (Padel, 2001; Howard, 1940; Fukuoka, 1978). It promotes a philosophy of farming in harmony with nature—returning to the soil what is taken from it—thus treating the farm as a living, dynamic system.

Globally, organic farming covers approximately 24 million hectares. Australia leads with about 10 million hectares under organic cultivation, followed by Argentina (3 million hectares) and Italy (1.2 million hectares). In Asia, China, India, and Japan are among the top producers of organic crops. India currently has around 37,050 hectares under organic cultivation, and this area is steadily expanding (Sika et al., 2005; Singh, 2006). The country grows a variety of organic products including grains, tea, coffee, soybeans, honey, spices, fruits, and vegetables. Tamil Nadu, known for its agricultural richness and favorable climatic conditions, is also witnessing a growing interest in organic farming as a viable alternative to conventional methods. Various organic inputs are commonly utilized in organic farming practices, including farmyard manure, vermicompost, green leaf manure, green manures, neem cake, cow dung, poultry manure, wood ash, groundnut husk, paddy husk, sugarcane trash, molasses, cluster bean, oil cakes, press mud, and other naturally derived fertilizers (Ghosh, 2004). It is important to highlight that numerous studies, both within India and globally, have explored various aspects of organic farming. These studies have addressed a wide range of themes such as the opportunities and challenges in organic vegetable cultivation (Pandey & Singh, 2012), the technical efficiency of organic farming systems (Madhav, 2007), promoting sustainable agriculture through organic methods (Lampkin, 1994), the present scenario of organic farming in India (Bhattacharya & Chakraborty, 2005), and organic practices in rainfed agricultural regions (Ramesh, 2008).

In light of the existing literature, the current study takes a different approach by conducting an exploratory economic analysis aimed at identifying the key factors that hinder the adoption of organic farming in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts an exploratory approach and relies primarily on primary data. Information on the usage patterns of organic and inorganic inputs in agricultural production, availability of organic resources, and the challenges faced by farming households was gathered through a well-structured interview schedule conducted within the selected study area.

The survey design follows a four-stage sampling technique to ensure the collection of accurate and relevant data from the field in Tamil Nadu. The stages include: selection of a district within Tamil Nadu, identification of specific blocks within that district, selection of villages from those blocks, and finally, selection of both organic and inorganic farm households from the chosen villages using random sampling. The primary criterion for choosing the district and the blocks was the concentration of organic farmers in those areas.

A critical phase in this sampling process was identifying the farm households in the selected villages. In total, 222 farm households were surveyed—113 practicing organic farming and 109 practicing conventional (inorganic) methods. A notable aspect of the study is that the organic farmers selected from the Sirkazhi block are part of an experimental group, supported by institutions promoting and disseminating organic farming practices. Through recall-based

responses, it was found that these farmers have been engaged in organic farming for over seven years. Furthermore, they have adopted the Nammazhvar model in their agricultural practices.

**RESULTANDDISCUSSION**

This section highlights the key challenges hindering the adoption and practice of organic farming in paddy and turmeric cultivation across Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The main constraints identified include labour shortages, lack of subsidies, inadequate irrigation facilities, low prices for organic produce, insufficient marketing infrastructure, limited awareness, and weak government support for organic farming.

Table 1 outlines the primary difficulties encountered by organic farmers engaged in paddy and turmeric cultivation in both states. In Kerala, the most significant issue, reported by 28.24% of organic farmers, is the unremunerative pricing of organic paddy and turmeric. This is followed by 22.14% who pointed to the absence of dedicated marketing channels for organic products. Labour shortages were cited by 13.74%, while 10.69% noted a lack of awareness about organic farming. Additionally, 9.16% mentioned inadequate government involvement in promoting organic practices, and 6.87% raised concerns about the unavailability of subsidies. These findings indicate a consistent pattern of challenges faced by organic farmers in Kerala.

In Tamil Nadu, similar issues were observed. About 25% of organic farmers reported low market prices for their produce as the most pressing concern. This was followed by 20.31% who indicated a lack of marketing facilities, and 12.50% who highlighted limited awareness. Farmers also expressed dissatisfaction with the government's role in supporting organic farming and pointed to diminishing water availability for irrigation. These constraints mirror the issues faced in Kerala, particularly in the context of paddy and turmeric cultivation.

Table 2 presents the barriers preventing inorganic farmers in Kerala and Tamil Nadu from transitioning to organic farming. The leading issue reported was the lack of financial incentives, particularly subsidies. Farmers also expressed concerns about the low profitability of organic products, labour shortages, declining groundwater levels, and limited awareness about organic practices. A few farmers also criticized the inadequate support and involvement of government institutions in promoting organic agriculture.

The data suggest that inorganic farmers in Tamil Nadu clearly identified three major deterrents: low product prices, inadequate marketing systems, and insufficient government promotion of organic farming. Farmers believe that addressing these barriers could significantly encourage a shift from inorganic to organic farming, especially in paddy and turmeric cultivation.

In Kerala, inorganic farmers face similar issues, including labour shortages, lack of subsidies, poor pricing, inadequate marketing infrastructure, low awareness, and minimal government engagement in promoting organic practices. The evidence suggests that many of these farmers would consider transitioning to organic farming if these constraints were resolved.

When comparing both states, one notable difference is that awareness of organic farming appears to be higher in Kerala than in Tamil Nadu. However, both states face common issues, such as uncompetitive pricing and lack of marketing support. Therefore, addressing these shared challenges—alongside strengthening government involvement—could significantly enhance the growth and adoption of organic farming in both Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

**TABLE -1  
FACTORS INHIBITING ORGANIC FARMING UNDER PADDY AND TURMERIC  
CULTIVATION IN KERALA AND TAMIL NADU STATES**

State	InhibitingFactors	OrganicFarming		Total
		Paddy	Turmeric	
	Labour Shortage	5 (8.06)	13 (18.84)	18 (13.74)

Kerala	Non-availability of Subsidy for organic agriculture	8 (12.90)	4 (5.80)	12 (9.16)
	Water for irrigation	4 (6.45)	5 (7.25)	9 (6.87)
	Low Price for Organic Products	18 (29.03)	19 (27.54)	37 (28.24)
	Marketing for Organic products	13 (20.97)	16 (23.19)	29 (22.14)
	Awareness about organic farming	9 (14.52)	5 (7.25)	14 (10.69)
	Role of Government in promoting organic farming	5 (8.06)	7 (10.14)	12 (9.16)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62 (100)</b>	<b>69 (100)</b>	<b>131 (100)</b>
Tamil Nadu	Labour Shortage	7 (10.44)	10 (16.39)	17 (13.28)
	Non-availability of Subsidy for organic agriculture	6 (8.96)	9 (14.75)	15 (11.72)
	Water for irrigation	5 (7.46)	4 (6.56)	9 (7.03)
	Low Price for Organic Products	19 (28.36)	13 (21.31)	32 (25.00)
	Marketing for Organic products	15 (22.39)	11 (18.03)	26 (20.31)
	Awareness about organic farming	8 (11.94)	8 (13.11)	16 (12.50)
	Role of Government in promoting organic farming	7 (10.44)	6 (9.84)	13 (10.16)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>67 (100)</b>	<b>61 (100)</b>	<b>128 (100)</b>

Source: Primary data Figures in Parenthesised notes percentages

TABLE -2

**VIEWS OF INORGANIC FARMERS OVER ORGANIC FARMING IN PADDY AND TURMERIC CULTIVATION IN KERALA AND TAMILNADU STATES**

State	Inhibiting Factors	Inorganic Farming		Total
		Paddy	Turmeric	
	Labour Shortage	10 (15.38)	12 (19.05)	22 (17.19)
	Non-availability of Subsidy for organic agriculture	14 (21.54)	15 (23.81)	29 (22.66)
	Water for irrigation	7 (10.77)	8 (12.70)	15 (11.72)

Kerala	LowPriceforOrganic Products	13 (20.00)	9 (14.29)	22 (17.19)
	MarketingforOrganic products	12 (18.46)	8 (12.70)	20 (15.63)
	Awarenessabout organic farming	5 (7.69)	6 (9.52)	11 (8.59)
	Role of Government in promoting organic farming	4 (6.15)	5 (7.94)	9 (7.03)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65 (100)</b>	<b>63 (100)</b>	<b>128 (100)</b>
Tamil Nadu	Labour Shortage	16 (24.24)	13 (20.31)	29 (22.31)
	Non-availabilityof Subsidyfororganic agriculture	12 (18.18)	10 (15.63)	22 (16.92)
	Waterfor irrigation	6 (9.09)	8 (12.50)	14 (10.77)
	LowPricefor Organic Products	13 (19.69)	11 (17.19)	24 (18.46)
	Marketingfor Organic products	11 (16.67)	9 (14.06)	20 (15.38)
	Awarenessabout organic farming	5 (7.58)	7 (10.94)	12 (9.23)
	Role of Government inpromotingorganic farming	3 (4.55)	6 (9.38)	9 (6.92)
<b>Total</b>	<b>66 (100)</b>	<b>64 (100)</b>	<b>130 (100)</b>	

Source: Primary data

### CONCLUSION

Organic farming is experiencing a revival in India, with farmers increasingly recognizing its benefits. This positive trend is notably evident in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. While numerous studies have explored various dimensions of organic agriculture, the present study specifically examines the key obstacles hindering the adoption of organic farming in these two states. It also offers a comparative analysis of the constraints affecting both organic and inorganic farming practices in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

The study identifies several major challenges reported by farmers, which include labour shortages, lack of subsidies for organic agriculture, limited access to irrigation water, low market prices for organic produce, absence of a reliable marketing system, inadequate awareness among farmers, and insufficient governmental support in promoting organic practices. Among these, labour scarcity emerged as a particularly severe issue in both states. Moreover, organic farmers in both Kerala and Tamil Nadu highlighted the absence of premium pricing and effective marketing channels for their products as significant concerns. To overcome these barriers, it is essential that the governments of Kerala and Tamil Nadu intensify efforts to promote organic farming through better dissemination of information, improved marketing infrastructure, assured premium pricing, and enhanced awareness campaigns. With such support, both states have the potential to transition toward becoming fully organic, thereby

safeguarding their agricultural sectors from the negative impacts of conventional farming practices.

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