

## **Attitude of Vegetable Growers Towards Organic Farming Practices**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study was undertaken in Thiruvananthapuram district. One hundred vegetable growers were selected by using the proportionate random sampling technique. Sixteen independent variables were selected based on judges' relevancy rating and were quantified using measurement devices. The data were collected using a pre-tested structured interview schedule and suitable statistical tools were used to analyze the data. Majority of the respondents (64%) had a favourable attitude. Seven variables, namely, mass media exposure, innovativeness, market perception, self confidence, environmental orientation, awareness and knowledge showed a significant and positive relationship with attitude towards organic farming practices. Attitude is very important for success organic farming practices.

Organic farming is an age-old practice of natural farming, which avoids use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Scientists have realized that the green revolution with intensive inputs use has reached a plateau and is now sustained with diminishing return and falling dividends. So a natural balance needs to be maintained at all costs for existence of life and prosperity. The obvious choice for that would be reintroduction of organic farming without compromising agricultural production. India is the second largest producer of vegetables next to China. In the next decade it is supposed that there will be increased area under vegetable crops as vegetable farming is about 4-5 times more profitable than cereals and other field crops. Chemical-free vegetables, which are standardized, have more demand from the developed high-income countries due to health considerations. Organic farming in Kerala state is mostly in a traditional stage, but advocates of "less chemical-more natural" are on the increase. The Kerala State Department of Agriculture has started advocating organic farming practices on major crops like vegetables. With this background the study was undertaken with the following objectives:-

2. To study the attitude of vegetable growers towards organic farming practices
3. To find out the relationship between the profile characteristics of vegetable growers and attitude towards organic farming practices

### **METHODOLOGY**

Ex-post facto research design was used for this study. Thiruvananthapuram district was selected purposively since more number of agencies were involved in the promotion of organic farming, both technically and economically and there are several progressive farmers who follow organic farming practices. From the 12 blocks, four blocks having maximum area under vegetable cultivation namely, Parassala, Aryancode, Pallichal and Neyyattinkara were selected. The panchayat that had maximum area under vegetable cultivation was selected from each block. The selected panchayat(s) were Chenkal, Perurnkadavila, Kalliyoor and Venganoor respectively. One hundred vegetable growers were selected using proportionate random sampling method. Sixteen independent variables were selected based on judges' rating for the study and these variables were

1. To study the profile characteristics of vegetable growers

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quantified with the help of available measurement procedures. The dependent variable was attitude towards organic farming practices. To measure the degree of the farmers likeness or dislikeness towards organic farming practices, an attitude scale was constructed by the following the method of Likert summated ratings suggested by Edwards (1969). An attitude scale consisting of sixteen items were finally included in the study. Reliability was tested by means of split-half method. The scores obtained for odd and even numbered items were subjected to correlation analysis. The correlation value obtained was 0.923, which was found to be significant at one per cent level. Since the 'r' value was more than 0.8, the scale was considered to be reliable. Further the developed scale was tested for content validity. Since the items selected were from the universe of content, it was ensured that the items covered all aspects of organic farming practices in vegetable cultivation. The final scale, which measured attitude of vegetable growers towards organic farming practices, consisted of sixteen statements. Each statement was noted on a five-point continuum as strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree with scores of 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0, respectively for positive statements. The scoring was reversed in the case of negative statements. The score was obtained for each item and summed up to get the attitude score of a farmer. The maximum score was 64 and the minimum was 0. The data were collected from 100 vegetable growers through personal interview by using well-structured interview schedule. The data collected from the respondents were scored, tabulated and analyzed using suitable statistical methods.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Profile characteristics of vegetable growers

Majority of the vegetable growers (48%) belonged to old age category. Most of the vegetable growers (52%) had secondary school education. Forty seven per cent of them were having medium level of experience in vegetable cultivation. Most of the vegetable growers (64%) belonged to medium category with respect to area under vegetable cultivation. Nearly three-fourth of the respondents had medium level of livestock possession. Sixty one per cent of the vegetable growers belonged to medium category with respect to mass media exposure. Most of them (70%), had medium extension orientation. A higher percentage of the respondents (71 %) had medium level of economic motivation. Fifty seven per cent of the respondents had medium level of training followed by low level (33%). More than half of the respondents

(55%) had medium level of innovativeness.

Almost three fourth of the respondents (73%) had medium level of risk orientation. Fifty five per cent of the respondents had medium level of market perception. Most of the vegetable growers (63%) belonged to medium category with respect to self-confidence. Nearly three fourth of the respondents (72%) had high environmental orientation. Majority of the respondents had medium level of awareness and knowledge about organic farming practices.

### Attitude of vegetable growers towards organic farming practices

From table 2, it is clear. that majority of the vegetable growers (64%) had a favourable attitude towards organic farming practices followed by less favourable (22%) and most favourable (14 %) attitude. The awareness and knowledge about organic farming practices might have led them to develop an interest towards organic farming practices. The results born out of the intensive research in Kerala Agricultural University and disseminated in scientists meeting, research council and extension council meetings also proved the worthiness of organic farming practices. The recommendations of the meetings got translated into action in the field through the staff of State Department of Agriculture by giving them training. During monthly workshops and meetings, messages related to organic farming practices were finalized and disseminated among the farmers to create a favourable attitude. Publishing articles in newspapers and broadcasting and telecasting lessons on organic farming practices through All India Radio. Doordarshan and Asianet, besides training by Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council of Kerala (VFPCCK) officials, acted as catalysts in forming favourable attitude towards organic farming practices. Indiscriminate use of pesticides and fertilizers resulted in resurgence of pests and pollution of soil, water and air. Low application of organic manures and high use of chemicals in vegetable cultivation had affected the soil fertility status and resulted in the yield decline of the crops and poor quality of vegetable over the past few years. All the above factors might have made the farmers to develop a favourable attitude towards organic farming practices. The result was in agreement with the findings of Velusamy (1996) and Sriram (1997).

### Relationship between the characteristics of vegetable growers and attitude towards organic farming practices

The success of any agricultural technology depend upon the favourable attitude of the farmers. From Table

3, it is observed that seven variables, namely, mass. media exposure, innovativeness, market perception, self confidence, environmental orientation, awareness and knowledge showed a significant and positive relationship with attitude towards organic farming practices and the reasons are discussed below.

Mass media were capable of changing the farmers' attitude towards organic farming practices favourably by way of frequent reinforcement of the technologies through radio, television, newspapers etc. This might have been the reason that massmedia influenced the attitude towards organic farming practices. A similar result was reported by Vanna (1996) and Sriram(1997).

Farmers with more innovativeness were much interested to use all organic farming practices relatively earlier than others. So farmers would have always been ready to accept the technologies without any delay. This might have influenced the attitude towards organic farming practices. A similar finding was reported by Varma (1996), Sriram (1997) and Parvathy (2000).

Market perception was capable of changing the attitude towards organic fanning practices due to the high

demand for vegetables cultivated through organic farming practices. This might have changed the attitude of farmers.

Self-confidence of farmers would always have led to try organic farming practices even before they were convinced about the merits. This result was in line with that of Varma (1996), Syamkumar (1999) and Parvathy (2000).

Organic farming means natural farming, so more environmental orientation led to development of a favourable attitude towards organic farming practices.

High level of awareness might have led to develop a favourable attitude. Knowledge was found to have a significant and positive relationship with attitude. Having fully understood the organic farming practices through various extension methods and approaches, the vegetable growers might have automatically gone in for testing the same on an experimental basis. As the results were in conformity with the expected one, that is getting more profit and thereby increasing the standard of living, the farmers might have developed interest and attitude favourably towards organic farming practices.

**Table-1 Profile characteristics of vegetable growers**

Profile characteristics	Category	frequency	Percentage
Age	Young age < 34	20	20
	Middle age 35-44	32	32
	Old age >45	48	48
Education	Illiterate	4	4
	Primary level	34	34
	Secondary level	52	52
	Collegiate	10	10
Experience in vegetable cultivation	Low*	18	18
	Medium*	47	47
	High*	35	35
Area under vegetable cultivation	Low	7	7
	Medium	64	64
	High	29	29
Livestock possession.	Low	14	14
	Medium	70	70
	High	16	16
Mass media exposure	Low	16	16
	Medium	61	61
	High	23	23

Extension orientation	Low	12	12
	Medium	70	70
	High	18	18
Economic motivation	Low	17	17
	Medium	71	71
	High	12	12
Training attended	Low	33	33
	Medium	57	57
	High	10	10
Innovativeness	Low	24	24
	Medium	55	55
	High	21	21
Risk orientation	Low	13	13
	Medium	73	73
	High	14	14
Market perception	Low	32	32
	Medium	55	55
	High	13	13
Self confidence	Low	17	17
	Medium	63	63
	High	20	20
Environmental orientation	Low	28	28
	Medium	12	12
	High	60	60
Awareness about organic farming practices	Low	10	10
	Medium	73	73
	High	17	17
Knowledge about organic farming practices	Low	12	12
	Medium	70	70
	High	18	18

**Table 2. Distribution of the vegetable growers according to their attitude towards organic farming**

S.No.	Category	Score range	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Less favourable (<Mean-SD)	<34.31	22	22
2.	Favourable (Mean ± SD)	34.31-49.49	64	64
3.	Most favourable (Mean + SD)	>49.49	14	14
	Mean: 41.90	SD: 7.59		

**Table 3. Relationship between the characteristics of vegetable growers and attitude towards organic farming practices**

S.No.	Independent variables	Correlation coefficient (r)
1.	Age	0.0835NS
2.	Education	0.1853NS
3.	Experience in vegetable cultivation	0.1806NS
4.	Area under vegetable cultivation	0.0059NS
5.	Livestock possession	0.0202NS
6.	Mass media exposure	0.2540*
7.	Extension orientation	0.1944NS
8.	Economic motivation	0.0015Ns.
9.	Training attended	0.1885NS
10.	Innovativeness	0.3840**
11.	Risk orientation	0.1938NS
12.	Market perception	0.4199**
13.	Self confidence	0.2950**
14.	Environmental orientation	0.2139*
15.	Awareness	0.4599**
16.	Knowledge	0.4383**

Significant at 5 % level, \*\* Significant at 1 % level, NS-Non significant

### CONCLUSION

Attitude of the vegetable growers towards organic farming practices was found to be medium. Training institutions, NGOs and extension functionaries who are in constant contact with farming community need to take into account the profile characteristics of the vegetable growers while planning and executing the agricultural development programmes as these characteristics were found to influence their attitude towards organic farming practices. Attitude is very important for success of any innovation. Frequent reinforcement of ideas through mass media would create favourable attitude towards organic farming practices. Organic farming in vegetable cultivation is a viable alternative because it enlivens the soil, strengthens the natural resource base and sustains biological production.

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