

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANIC FARMING IN BHUTAN

CATEGORY:

POLICY RESEARCH FIELD CLIMATE

LOCATION/SCALE:

Bhutan (National)

IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATION:

Government of Bhutan

PERIOD:

2007 - now

IN A NUTSHELL

The government presented the National Framework for Organic Farming in Bhutan in 2007. Based on the framework, the National Organic Programme under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests has developed and promoted organic farming to produce safe and healthy food for local consumers as well as for other markets.

Investments are being made for capacity building, technology transfer, and market linkages. Additionally, unique affordable certification systems have been conceptualized and piloted.

In its recent 5-year-plan (FYP), the government of Bhutan plans to convert all farms to organic production by the year 2020. The national framework for this transition outlines several levers for a change to a more sustainable and productive agriculture.

Due to Bhutan's remoteness and restrictive policy, it is already organic for the most parts.

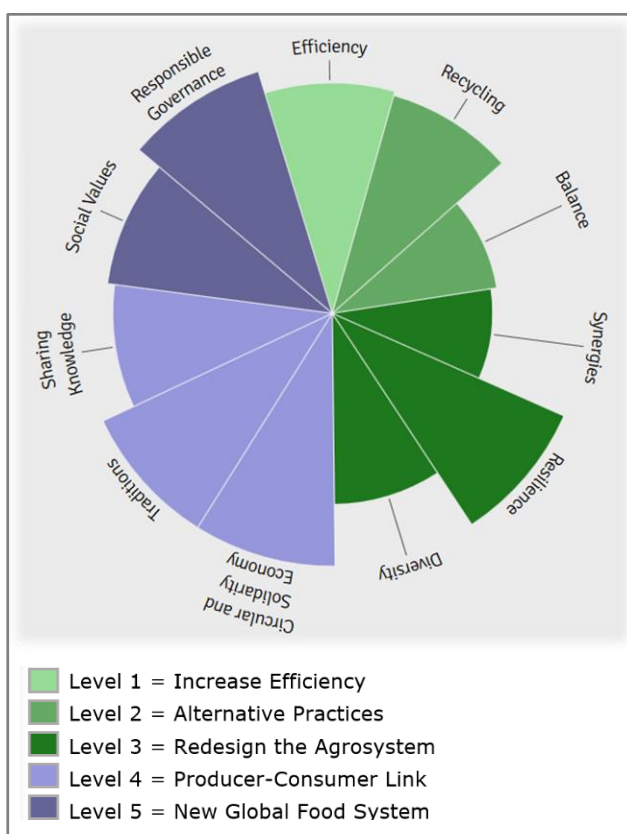


Figure: Assessment of the NFOFB based on FAO Elements of Agroecology and Gliessman's five levels of food system change

CONTEXT

In 2008, Bhutan officially introduced the "Gross-National-Happiness" Philosophy (GNH) and enshrined it in its constitution. It promotes that happiness of the people is more important than increased production or efficiency. Bhutan's landscapes consist mostly of mountains and valleys (only 3% of the area is used for crop production). Under such conditions, large-scale production is challenging. About 50% of food is imported nowadays. Until the early 1960s, Bhutan isolated itself and thus preserved much of its culture and traditional (organic) agriculture. An estimated 70% of all farmers already apply organic agriculture farming methods.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Bhutanese government is to reduce poverty in Bhutan and to preserve the health and happiness of the Bhutanese people by transforming the entire agriculture sector towards an organic agriculture-based production.

KEY INTERVENTIONS/RESEARCH

FARM LEVEL:

- Protecting the long term fertility of the soil by maintaining and increasing levels of organic matter, fostering soil biological activity and preventing soil erosion
- Achieving nitrogen self-sufficiency through crop rotation with leguminous and biological nitrogen fixation, as well as effective recycling of organic materials including crop residues and livestock wastes
- Responsible use of water resources
- Using renewable on-farm resources in locally organised farming systems
- Controlling weeds, diseases and pests by relying primarily on local formulations for plant protection, crop rotations, natural predators, diversity, resistant varieties, and by using local species of successful traditional seeds and crops

REGIONAL/NATIONAL LEVEL:

- Preserving and enhancing traditional and indigenous farming knowledge
- Developing the education curriculum to include subjects covering biodiversity and organic agriculture
- Developing a strategy with certified (for exports) and non-certified organic production
- Creating a "National Organic Programme Coordination Unit" (NOPCU) for research, policy coordination and extension

LESSONS LEARNED/CHALLENGES

The challenges that Bhutan is facing are a lack of clear regulation for pesticides and fertilizers as well as lack of external organic inputs, which the unfertile soil would desperately need. A further challenge is the work-force shortage since organic farming is labour-intensive. Finally, the consumer and the markets need time to adjust to organic production in order to generate more income to cover the extra costs.

RELEVANT LINKS & REFERENCES

- Bhutanese Government: "National Framework for Organic Farming in Bhutan"
<http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/bhu167577.pdf>
- ICIMOD: "Organic Agriculture Development Strategies"
http://lib.icimod.org/record/33841/files/icimodOrganic_strategy_BT-a.pdf
- S. Tashi: "Prospects of Organic Farming in Bhutan"
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305646604_Prospects_of_Organic_Farming_in_Bhutan_A_SWOT_Analysis

