PREFACE OF THE THESIS

Agriculture is the key economic activity and a source of livelihood for the majority of the population in Nepal. Out of 28.15 million populations, 67 percent works in the agriculture sector, accounting for 38 percent of the GDP. Historically, Nepalese farmers were following the same agricultural practice which is now called ‘organic farming’. Their production to feed themselves was enough and there was no question of food security. But with the growing population and to meet their food demands and the demand of cash income from agro products, government has focused the ‘agriculture prospective plan’ promoting directly and indirectly the intense use of agro-chemicals focusing mono crop high yielding varieties.

On the other hand, increasing market demand of organic produces, realization of human health hazards, deteriorating ecosystem and natural resources and ultimate economic losses in livelihood have advocated the need to change the agricultural system towards organic and sustainable production system.

Organic agriculture was first appeared as one of the priority sectors in Nepalese agriculture in the 10th Five Year Plan 2002-2007 (FY 2059/060-2063/064). While reviewing the agricultural and related policies organic agriculture has never seen as a focused program. The National Agriculture Policy (2061) states that the organic products are for foreign export market. Subsidies have been ‘mentioned’ for export commodities like coffee, tea, black cardamom, etc. Sustainable development plan for ‘domestic organic market’ is still to appear. The main objective of this study was to explore the socio-economic contribution of organic agriculture. The study was based on the pragmatic philosophy and theory of adoption or diffusion of innovation.

The study had applied the mixed method: quantitative and qualitative research design. It was deductive approach; theory testing process. The study had
covered the four districts: Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktpur and Dhading. Organic farmers were the primary respondents included in structured questionnaires survey and experts were secondary respondents included in face to face interview. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents. A total of 586 farmers were selected for the survey and 30 experts and farmers were selected for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Frequency table, mean value, ANOVA and Regression analysis were done to analyse quantitative data and thematic analysis of qualitative data were done to response the research questions.

The study found the significant contribution of organic agriculture to improve the socio-economic status of farmers. The farmers were using 1 to 55 ropani land for agriculture. Because of the great differences of land use resulted in the variation in annual income (NRS 2,000-30,00,000) of organic agriculture. The finding of ANOVA showed that there was significant difference (F = 13.901 & P = .000) between and within groups of farmers of four districts regarding the annual income of organic agriculture at 95% confidence interval. The findings of ANOVA had rejected the null hypothesis no. 1 of this study that there is no significant difference between the farmers of four districts regarding their income of organic farming because the P value was less than .05. From the analysis of linear regression, it is found that Socio-demographic variables (areas, age, sex, education, year of experience, total organic land of individual farmer) only explain 16.10% of the variation in the annual income of organic farming (dependent variable). Income of organic agriculture was known as the main motivational factor for farmers for involving in organic agriculture because in total 56% said that they involved in organic agriculture because income could be high from organic agriculture. From the data it was found that in spite of all the problems of organic certification, marketing,
transportation more than 95% farmers were satisfied. This data very strongly indicated the sustainability of organic agriculture in long run. In total, more than 90% farmers believed in contribution of organic farming in changes of economic status.

Regarding the challenges of organic farming in Nepal, the study showed that in total 42.7% had said that the 'high cost of production', 40.1% farmers said that 'lack of market', 46.9% said the 'low production', 11.2% said the 'less selling', 23.2% said the 'lack of labour for farming', 47.9% said the 'transportation and storage problem' were reported by farmers. Besides that, farmers and experts also reported the problem of organic certification in Nepal. Till, farmers or sellers could not ensure the quality of organic product to customers, there was problem to sell in market.

The Third Party Certification system is understood as the dominant means of Organic Guarantee for export trade but Nepali farmers are left behind to sell their local products as organic due to the absence of any easy accessible, understandable and affordable method of certification. The inherent expense and paperwork required in a multilevel system discourages most small organic producers from being certified at all. This limits domestic trade of organic products. The study found that majority of organic producers were satisfied from their business but on the other hand they were facing various problems while going through the certification system.

The study found many opportunities of organic agriculture in near future because the increasing level of consciousness among the people regarding their health, environment and socio-economic status. Demand of organic food is high in national and international market. Farmers can earn good amount of income. Organic agriculture can bring the changes in the economic and social life of farmers in long run. So this study developed the sustainability model of organic agriculture.
Considering the contribution of organic agriculture and its benefit in social life; the study had developed the sustainability model of organic agriculture. The main purpose of this model was to develop the theoretical knowledge of sustainable organic agriculture in the Nepalese context. Reliability of this proposed sustainable model of organic agriculture was tested from the ‘Validity Seminar’ organized among the academician and organic farming practitioners. The model was accepted, validated and recommended by the panel of experts involved in validity testing seminar for the further implementation to concerned authorities. The model has focused on the development of required physical infrastructures and policy and strategies from the active involvement and contribution of government, non-governmental organizations, private sectors, farmers’ community and consumers. Modern agricultural practices can be changed gradually by adopting the IPM system and finally pure organic agriculture can be done. As outcomes of pure organic agriculture; it can improve the ecological value, economic value and social value. The study recommended formulating the separate Organic Agriculture Development Board (OADG) to manage the problem of software and hardware of organic agriculture in Nepal. The study found that there was practice of ‘family farming’ system in Nepal which had to be restructured, modernized and should be managed by Farmers’ Cooperative through the active involvement of youth. Family farming system is the permanent institution of society so it can significantly contribute to sustain the organic agriculture system because ‘family farming is the basic building block of sustainable organic agriculture’.