ABSTRACT

This study examines the contribution of organic farming to the livelihood of Nepalese smallholders. It identifies challenges and opportunities of organic farming, and proposes the theoretical knowledge in the form of ‘Sustainable Model of Organic Agriculture’. There is a gap in scholarly literature on the effects of organic farming at grass-roots level, and this study comprehensively addresses that gap.

Agriculture is the main source of income for 28.15 million Nepalese, as well as constituting significant portion (38 percent) of country’s GDP; with young Nepalese leaving country to find gainful employment at an increasing rate, organic farming could provide more attractive employment opportunities for them. Hence, it is important to understand the impact of organic farming.

The study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. 586 organic farmers were selected from four districts for structured questionnaire survey and 28 key informants including Farmers(11), Activists (6), Agro Experts and Scientists(4), Authorities(4) and Policy Makers (3) for in-depth interview.

The study found organic farming has significant positive impact on socio-economic status of farmers. 95% farmers were very satisfied while 56% stated that they can generate higher income in organic farming. 90% farmers found that organic farming contributes to the positive change in their economic status.

It is recommended that a separate Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) should be established to manage issues of organic farming. Organic food has high demand in both global and domestic markets, and facilitating organic farming at grass-roots level can lead to significant economic change. Respondents raised a number of challenges of organic farming including high cost of production, lower yield, etc. Difficulties of organic certification was the major challenge. PGS could solve these problems and helps to bring organic products into main stream market. Considering the contribution of organic farming; the study has proposed the ‘Sustainable Model of Organic Agriculture for Nepal’ and the model has been tested to access reliability through validity seminar.