Introduction: Karnataka Organic Farming Policy
INTRODUCTION: KARNATAKA ORGANIC FARMING POLICY

‘The great poet, Rabindranath Tagore, referred not so long ago to our “sujhalam, sufalam” land. “Ours indeed was a remarkably fertile and prosperous country – with rich soils, abundant water and sunshine, thick forests, a wealth of bio-diversity, … And cultured, peace-loving people with a vast store of farming knowledge and wisdom. Farming runs in our blood. But I am sad that our (now greyed) generation of Indian farmers, allowed itself to be duped into adopting the short-sighted and ecologically devastating way of farming, imported into this country. – By those like you, with virtually zero farming experience!’
-Bhaskar Save, 29th July 2006

Background

Bhaskar Save, then 86 year old organic farmer from Gujarat wrote these lines in his ‘open letter’ to M.S. Swaminathan, the Chairman of National Commission on Farmers.¹ In the letter, he expressed concern over the increasing incidences of farmers’ suicides in the country, which he argued was a direct consequence of the agricultural policies followed in India since independence. He held Swaminathan responsible for the current crisis within agriculture and was clearly exasperated over Swaminathan’s appointment as the Chairperson of the National Commission on Farmers (NCF).² For having committed the ‘blunder’ of introducing the green revolution in India in the 1960s, Save was unsure of Swaminathan’s understanding of agriculture in India. As someone who has never practiced farming.

¹ Bhaskar Save is a farmer from Gujarat with 7 decades of experiments and experiences of growing diverse agriculture crops and practicing agricultural system including chemical farming in his agricultural land. In 1953, Bhaskar Save used chemicals on the rain-fed paddy land and his production had increased during that time. He was considered as a modern farmer in his locality since he introduced new technology in farming. Agriculture scientist visited his land for their field trials. During his experiments, he observed that to increase in his production he had to use more chemicals and hence his expenditure had increased. Influenced by Vinoba’s philosophy on farming and the Gandhian idea of personal experience, he shifted back to natural or organic farming in his paddy land. However, within in seven years (1960) he understood the significance of natural or organic manures and completely shifted to organic farming in his farmland.
² The National Commission on Farmers was formed in December 2004. In between 2004 to 2006, committee prepared five draft reports. Later based on the recommendation made by the Commission and suggestions received from the different ministries and departments the draft policy was revised.(Swaminathan Report Summary, 2006). Government of India approved the revised policy and it came to be known as the ‘National Policy for Farmers – 2007’ (See Appendix -1). The policy aims to improve the economic condition and net incomes of the farmers through improving the farm productivity and profitability. The policy has given emphasis to the land, water, minimum support prices for agricultural products, risk management in the farmers’ agriculture fields.
Swaminathan did not possess according to Bhaskar Save the necessary expertise to deal with the agrarian crisis. Swaminathan’s role in heralding the green revolution is well known. This, for activists and agricultural practitioners within the organic farming movement, has been the singularly most decisive policy shift in the history of Indian agriculture. Introduced in the 1960s, as a measure to increase the productivity and food security in the country, the green revolution in the long-term had adverse implications in terms of ecological, social and economic factors. The consequences of the green revolution has been discussed extensively, and many of the arguments against the green revolution philosophy and practice still find voice in the discussions on the spate of farmers’ suicides in the country in the last three decades. Driven by the logic of production, the green revolution increasingly integrated farmers into the modern agricultural market and thereby made them more dependent and vulnerable to the forces thereof. Assadi, in his analysis of farmers’ suicide in Karnataka, associates farmers’ suicide in the state with the capitalist class who, according to him, were the class that benefitted from land reforms and also benefitted from the opportunities offered by the green revolution by adopting the HYV (High Yield Variety) technology and shifting whole hog to commercial cultivation. With the withdrawal of state support to agriculture and exposure to the fluctuations in the international markets, agriculture was no longer commercially viable. The withdrawal of the state and public investment from agriculture and allied fields has directly reduced agriculture ‘performance’ and ‘growth’ in the rural economy. Most of the farmers had mounting debts, with no hope of being able to repay them. The cost of agricultural production far exceeded the returns. Going by Assadi’s (1998) analysis, then it is not surprising that farmers’ suicide has been highest in states like Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, which had initially experienced exponential agricultural growth in the country.\(^3\)

Vasavi (1994) highlights another dimension of the crisis. According to her, the widespread and incessant use of green revolution technology such as chemical fertilisers and pesticides have polluted agriculture land and decreased its productivity. Most importantly, it has simultaneously displaced traditional local knowledge systems associated with agriculture. Traditional knowledge systems and practices not only maintained diverse agro-systems but also supported farmers through times of agricultural

\(^3\) In between 1970-1990 Karnataka witnessed (3.2 per cent) growth in the economy, whereas Andhra Pradesh experienced (3.25 per cent) and Maharashtra had highest (4.27 per cent) economic growth in between 1970-1990 (Bhide, Chadha & Kalirajan; 2005: 64).
crisis. It took away the capacity of farmers to relate to agriculture as a cognitive system and associated practices. This feature for Bhaskar Save is reaffirmed in the palpable gulf between policy makers and the farming communities. The gut wrenching reference to the important and also the devastating role played by ‘zero farming experience’ policy makers in Indian agriculture only elevates the argument made by Vasavi to address the inability of policy makers to see value in local knowledge systems as well as to recognize the farming communities as cognitive partners (and not simply as recipients) in evolving agricultural policies in India.

Amidst these discussions on agriculture policy and practice in India, the central and various state governments have made a number of piece meal efforts to rescue the situation and mitigate the incidences of farmers’ suicide. The central government announced the Prime Minister’s Rehabilitation Package and state governments introduced similar financial packages to the families of the victims of farmers’ suicide. Karnataka in this regard went a step ahead when it introduced the organic farming policy in 2004—officially known as ‘Karnataka State Policy on Organic Farming – 2004’ (KSPOF).

In the popular media, the policy was discussed as a path breaking effort by the state government to shift the focus from commercial farming to organic farming, by involving local farming communities in both drafting and implementing the policy. At the face of it, the policy sought to address the recognised gap between policy formulation and local practices associated with farming. This triggered my initial interest in undertaking PhD research on organic farming. The policy provided the context to explore the interface between agricultural policy and practice, from the point of its formulation to the implementation. It also provided the context for exploring the on-going debates among farmers, experts and activists and various other actors on organic farming as well as explores the various dimensions within organic farming philosophy and practice. It is almost eight years since the implementation of the policy. When I started my research, it

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4 Vasavi in her Study on ‘Harbingers of rain: land and life in South India’ (1999) has explained as how dissemination of modern techniques of farming has its implications in the local knowledge system. In her study of Bijapur, she narrated how the modernization of agriculture has drastically changed the communities’ response to the droughts in the region.

5 The Prime Minister’s Rehabilitation Package was introduced in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, and irrigation and fisheries department. The Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore conducted a detailed evaluation study on the implementation of rehabilitation package in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra. As per the report, Karnataka has not yet fully capitalized the rehabilitation package in the state (Bhende & Thippaiah, 2011).


7 Various beneficiaries of organic farming are traders, certifying agencies, policy makers, and scholars.
was about four years since its implementation and a ripe situation for a study to comprehend its reception among farmers as well as agricultural experts.

The policy was first launched as a pilot project, to gauge the response of farmers to the policy as well as to assess its efficacy upon implementation. The pilot project was officially known as “Karnataka Organic Farming Project” and was introduced in one village in each district of the state. I did my fieldwork in Moodanahalli village, Bantwal Taluka (Subdivision of the district), situated in Dakshina Kannada district, also one of the 28 villages selected for the pilot project. Interestingly, the organic farming movement in the district began during the early 1990s even as agriculture in Dakshina Kannada was moving away from its traditional paddy cultivation towards arecanut plantation based farming. For this reason, the district now boasts of a strong export oriented farming sector. This makes the shift to organic farming in the state much more complex and debatable, as most farmers seek similar opportunities within organic farming. However, there are also significant pockets of farmers who are consciously cultivating traditional food crops despite concerns over its sustainability. Clearly, agriculture practices in Dakshina Kannada are quite diverse and there is no study in recent time that comprehensively engages with the concerns of farmers regarding the agricultural condition of the region as well as their future. Presented below is a brief overview of Dakshina Kannada district, i.e. the socio-demographic characteristics, topography and agro-climatic conditions, as a background to the study.

**Introducing the Site – Dakshina Kannada District**

Dakshina Kannada district is located in the southern part (see Figure1.1) of the Karnataka state. According to the 2011 Census of India, Dakshina Kannada is the eighth most populous district out of the total 30 districts in Karnataka as 3.41 per cent of the population are residing in this district. Dakshina Kannada is densely populated and has a population of 2,083,625 persons.

**Table: 1.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,083,625</td>
<td>1,032,577</td>
<td>1,051,048</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 2011

Of the total population, men are 49.6 % and women are 50.4 %, i.e. there are 1018 females for 1000 males, which is higher than the average national sex ratio of 940
females. However, in the last 10 years, there has been a gradual decline in the number of females per 1000 males within the district. In 2001, there were 1022 females for 1000 males. The total population growth of the district is 9.80 percent. The average literacy rate is 88.62 percent more than total literacy of Karnataka state (75.6 percent) with 93.31 percent male literates and 84.04 female literates (Census of India, 2011).

**Illustration 1.1**

Dakshina Kananda District located in Karnataka Map

![Karnataka Map](https://www.mapsofworld.com/images/India/Karnataka_map.png)

Source: Maps of World 2012 (Modified), Maps not to scale

Dakshina Kannada is considered as one of the more developed districts in the state, and is ranked second in the state Human Development Index. The main communities in the district are Hindus (68.59%), Muslims (22.07%), Christians (8.69%) and Jains (1%). The Hindu and Muslim population are dispersed across the district. Christians are concentrated in Mangalore, Bantwal, and Puttur, while Jains have settled mostly in Belthangdy Taluka. In the past ten years, Dakshina Kannada has made progress
in the secondary and tertiary sectors. The growth and development of infrastructure facilities and transport such as national highway 13, 17 and 48 and railways, connected Mangalore with rest of India. The existing port has increased the domestic and international trade and Bajpe International airport has provided an opportunity for the people to migrate to different parts of the world, especially to Middle Eastern countries. The growth of professional colleges has increased the flow of students from across India and abroad into the district. The development of small, medium scale enterprises, and construction industries in the district have also contributed in the economic growth of the district. Agriculture sector had witnessed a setback as more people have opted out of farming. This is evident in the changing land use pattern (see Table- 1.2) which suggests the diversion of land for non-agricultural purpose in the district. The land use pattern has changed over the years due to various reasons; the introduction of land reforms, shift from paddy to commercial cultivation propelled by the unavailability of the agricultural labour despite rise in the daily wages for the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use Pattern</th>
<th>Area (Lakh Ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forest land</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-agricultural land</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent pasture</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivable watershed</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous tree crops and groves</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barren and uncultivable land</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current fallows</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Fallows</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total geographical area</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Central Research Institute for DryLand Agriculture (2012)

Dakshina Kannada is in the South Western part of Karnataka, and is the coastal belt (Karavali) of the state. The boundaries of Dakshina Kannada have been reconfigured at different points in time. It came into existence as a district administration in 1862 after the split of the old Canara district of Madras Presidency as North and South Canara. During British rule, Dakshina Kannada was a part of Madras Presidency. However, with the formation of Karnataka state in 1956, Dakshina Kannada became a district of Karnataka. Dakshina Kannada however, this time round, did not include Kasargod, which
was included within Kerala. In 1997, the district got further bifurcated into Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, with the former being restricted to five talukas- Bantwal, Puttur, Sulya, Belthangadi and Mangalore. Recently (Feb 8th, 2013), the Chief Minister of Karnataka, Jagadish Shettar has announced the creation of two talukas in Dakshina Kannada namely Kadaba and Moodbidri. The district covers a total area of 4,559 sq. kms. It is bordered by Udupi district to the North, Chikkamangaluru district to the North East, Hassan district to the East, Kodagu district to the South East, and Kasargod district in Kerala to the South (see Figure 1.2). Mangalore is the districts headquarter. The district has 17 hoblis (cluster of villages), 368 villages, 35 Zilla Panchayat constituencies, 203 grama panchayats and 41 towns (Dakshina Kannada, 2011).

**Illustration 1.2**

**Dakshina Kannada District Map**

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8 Kasargod became part of the newly formed Kerala state during the state reorganization in 1956. However, dispute still exist over the inclusion of Kasargod with the Karnataka mainly because during the British rule, Kasargod taluka was part of Dakshina Kannada district for more than one and half century.

9 Udupi district had three talukas that is Udupi, Kundapur and Karkala and recently two more talukas were created namely, Brahmavara and Baingdoor.
It is flanked by the Arabian Sea and is divided into three topographical zones—Coastal, Middle (*Malnad*) and the Western Ghats. The coastal belt is thickly populated and fertile. The middle belt consists of hills, valleys, and the Western Ghats forms the eastern boundary of the district as it has evergreen forestlands with patches of paddy fields and scattered arecanut gardens surrounded by forests. The arecanut, coconut gardens and paddy fields are the main crops of the district. The important rivers are Suvarnanadi, Shambavi (Mulki), Gurpura, Nethravathi, Pavanje and Nandini. There are also innumerable streams that run through the district. Dakshina Kannada receives heavy rainfall through June and September. It receives an average rainfall of 3800-4600 mm annually. The climate is characterized by excessive humidity (78%) throughout the year. In terms of agro-climatic conditions, the district is divided into two regions—Coastal and Malnad region. The coastal region consists of Mangalore and the Malnad region consists of Belthangadi, Puttur, Sulya and Bantwal talukas.\(^\text{10}\)

**Karnataka State Policy on Organic Farming - 2004**

Karnataka has an agrarian economy; however, from 2001 to 2004 the state received less rainfall, failure of monsoon in semi-arid zone created drought that substantially decreased food grain production and finally affected the farmers’ economy in rural areas. The repeated failure of monsoon, droughts, crop failure and high production costs have created a farmers’ crisis in the state. The distress has manifested with the increased farmers’ suicide in the rural society. Since 1996, an estimated 11,000 farmers have reportedly committed suicide in Karnataka. In 1997, a Joint Legislative Committee was formed, which made 56 recommendations. It recommended for an expert committee to look into farmers’ suicide. In 2002, a High Power Committee on Farmers Suicide was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. G. K. Veeresh, a retired Vice Chancellor of University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) Bangalore, along with the academicians from ISEC, NIAS and NIMHANS and government officials became the members of this committee. The committee said that agriculture is not profitable for farmers due to soil degradation and over dependency of the agriculture on chemical manure for fertility and suggested the use of alternative approaches to get back the soil fertility and productivity (Hanchinal, 2007). The committee recommended the

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\(^{10}\) The term agro-climatic zones are different from the topography. Topography is related to land, its natural features and their association with the human being. Agro-climatic zones is a classification of the state based on rainfall pattern both its quantity and distribution, soil types and its features, elevation and topography, major crops and vegetation.
introduction of organic farming as an alternative to reduce production costs, as also to improve sustainability within agriculture.

Following the recommendations, Government of Karnataka constituted State level Empowered Committee (30-3-2004) under the Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner, and Dr. G. K. Veeresh headed Working Committee (07-06-2004) for the implementation of the policy (See Appendix -2). The committee consisted of officials from the agriculture and horticulture departments, experts and representatives of NGOs. Series of meetings were organised with the beneficiaries, agricultural universities, line departments and non-government organisations on organic farming and its inclusion into the policy framework for agriculture in the future. In the meeting, the agriculture department requested allied sectors such as horticulture, apiculture, animal husbandry and watershed development to prepare action plans to implement the projects within the state agro-climatic zones.\(^{11}\)

The draft policy has been framed from the experiences of Kerala and Uttaranchal with organic farming.\(^{12}\) After the formation and approval of the draft policy by the committee members, the agriculture department conducted programme to gauge the field view on organic farming and the proposed programmes from farmers and NGOs working in the local level. Later, the committee sent the draft policy to the State Cabinet; in March 2004, cabinet approved the policy and passed it as the ‘Karnataka State Policy on Organic Farming- 2004. Subsequently, on 1st November 2006, Karnataka government passed the ‘Karnataka Agricultural Policy -2006’, which also included organic farming as an important feature of the state’s future endeavours within agriculture. The philosophy of organic farming was discussed through the concept of ‘Pancha Sutra’, i.e. the five maxims of protecting and improving soil, conserving natural resource, providing credit in time, integrating post harvesting with production process and lastly transferring farm technology from lab to land. The policy recognised that the shift from conventional

\(^{11}\) The policy sought an integrated approach, by involving all the sectors within the purview of the policy and its implementation. Policy makers wanted each department to monitor the agriculture and allied activities of the agro-climatic zones, E.g. in the case of Dakshina Kannada, the horticulture department supervised the project, as the district have a large stake in the production of horticulture crops. Each department had 6 to 8 districts under its supervision.

\(^{12}\) Both Uttaranchal and Kerala involved NGOs, farmers' organizations, and Self- Help groups to implement organic farming initiatives at the local level. In Uttaranchal, the government proactively sought to work along with self-help groups whereas in Kerala, it was primarily a farmers’ initiative. It is only recently that the government of Kerala has ventured into organic farming by passing the Kerala State Organic Farming Policy Strategy And Action Plan, Government of Kerala, 2008.
farming practice required an integrated approach. The aim of the new policy was to achieve… ‘Holistic development of natural resources aiming at sustainable livelihood and security for all life forms in the region will be the focal point of the future strategy’ (Karnataka Agriculture policy 2006; 65). In 2006, organic farming became a part of the official discourse on agriculture in the state, with an official budget allocation introduced for the same from 2007 onwards.

The government provided both financial and institutional support for the promotion of organic farming in the state. For instance, in 2008, the State allocated a budget of Rs 10 crore for the promotion of organic farming. In 2009-10, the state government sanctioned Rs 100 crore for organic manure under Organic Agricultural Mission. In 2011, the then Chief Minister, B.S. Yeddyruappa created a separate budget meant solely for the improvement of the agricultural conditions in the state. As a part of the 2011 agricultural budget of Rs. 17, 857 crore, Rs 200 crore was set aside for the Organic Farming Mission with the purpose of promoting and developing organic farming in the state. Another 50 crore in the budget was allocated for “Bhoo Chetana” programme to create awareness among the farmers about the harmful effect of chemicals and pesticide use on farming.

The official deliberation on organic farming in Karnataka has been a protracted one. In the first phase, state government introduced the Karnataka Organic Farming Project for three years, from 2006 to 2009. Initially, it was introduced as a pilot project, where the state agriculture department selected 22 non-government organisations for the promotion of agriculture, organic farming or watershed development activities in the state. The project locations for ‘Organic Farming Village Programme’ were identified with the help of the selected NGOs. The areas were selected on the following criteria: least consumption of fertilisers and pesticides; crop diversification system and patterns; the potential for sourcing organic inputs; practice of farming systems such as agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, apiculture etc. It also looked into those areas that had the availability of infrastructure, presence of farmers’ group or Self Help Groups; potential

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13 Conventional farming system emerged with the green revolution and it can also refer as chemical farming or inorganic, non-organic farming. This farming is characterised by the mechanization, monocultures and use of synthetic inputs such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides with an emphasis on maximizing productivity and profitability.
export of organic products etc. Initially in 2006, the agriculture department implemented the pilot project in 100 hectares of land (usually comprises of one village) in each of the 28 districts (presently 30 districts) on an experimental basis. A separate wing called ‘Organic Cell’ was established to monitor as well as financially support the project. My field study area, village Moodanahalli, was a part of this phase of the project.

In 2008, the state government introduced the second phase of organic farming where it formed a state level Organic Farming Mission Empowered Committee. The Mission came into existence after the Haveri disturbance. In light of the shortage of chemical fertilisers in the state, the Mission was formed to provide an alternative and a sustainable option to farmers to overcome this crisis. The committee was headed by A. S. Anand, a convener of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak (RSS) organisation namely, Purshottam Rao Krishi Prayog Parivara (KPP) in Thirthahalli, in Shimoga District. The committee consists of 23 members of which 14 of them are organic farmers. State government made the committee responsible for all the policies, programmes and schemes planned and implemented in the state. With the instatement of committee, the state government disbanded the organic cell. Concomitantly, the committee also took over the responsibility of running the ‘Organic Farming Village Programme’. In 2008, the Organic farming Mission initiated its first project. It selected 100 farmers from each taluka to educate them on achieving self-sufficiency in agriculture though organic farming. The financial and executive details of the project are not known. Moreover, most of the transactions were in cash and there was no mechanisms set in place to ensure that the money was used to procure farm related facilities and equipment. The Mission was criticised severely for its arbitrariness, in the way finances were mishandled as well as for its lack of focus. Chukki Nanjundaswamy, member of Karnataka Riathu Raksha Samithi

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14 Farming system defines that, decision making unit comprising the farm household, cropping and livestock system that transform land, capital and labour into useful products that can be consumed or sold (Fresco & Westphal, 1988).
15 From June 3rd 2008, Haveri region in Karnataka State had received sufficient rainfall for farmers to start the agriculture activity in the district. However many farmers across the district could not start the sowing as they were in need of a chemical fertilizer namely Diammonium Phosphate (DAP) as a manure to the agriculture field. The shortage of chemical fertilizer in 38 government and 225 private stores across has left agriculture activities to be standstill in the district. Farmers demanded state government to intervene and supply the sufficient chemical manures to the district. The lack of immediate intervention by the state government has created a mob of violent protest by the farmers as they blocked roads, looted several shops, including fertilizer shops. To control the situation district administration has ordered for police open fire and lathi-charge the first victim of this incident was a farmer.
16 The mission had received the major responsibilities such as coordinating between different state and Central government agencies; fixing and introducing organic farming subsidies, planning marketing facilities for organic farm products, preparing the guidelines for organic farming, creating location specific committees, reviewing the organic farming progress in the state.
(KRRS) strongly criticised how the majority of the Savayava Krushi Trust Committees or ‘Krushi Parivaras’ established in over 176 talukas, as a part of the Karnataka State Organic Farming Mission, were controlled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rashtriya Swayam Seva members. In the last quarter of 2011, BJP government was accused of diverting Rs 300 crore meant for the development of the organic farming to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS. State government is now proposing to dissolve the Karnataka Organic Farming Mission (OFM) and transferring its functions to the Karnataka Amruth Bhoomi (organic farming) Project (KAP). However, Vivek Cariappa, an organic farmer and member of Organic Farming Mission disapproves of this move, as the Karnataka Amruth Bhoomi Project is no different from the Karnataka Organic Farming Mission; both are stooges of the RSS. Along similar lines, Krishan Prasad the director of Sahaja Samrudha, an organic farmers association from Bangalore states that the ‘Mission has become a rehabilitation centre for BJP workers. In the past three years, it has not produced a single training manual for organic farmers. The only proposals they have been working is on goshala. Hence, many members have left the Mission’ (Tehelka, 6 December 2011).

Clearly, the organic farming initiatives have taken on political hues, as the growing politicization of the latter has generated negative public opinion on its purpose and progress. Given this debate at the state level on the politicization of the Mission, I was interested in understanding its repercussions on the village level projects, i.e. in village Moodanahalli, where I did my field research.

**Organic Farming Policy- A Critical Review**

The organic farming village programme was introduced in each district as the village organic farming project. It was implemented by a local NGO, which undertook training programmes to guide farmers on how to change over from commercial farming to organic farming. The project was a joint venture of public-private partnership, with participation of local farmers, state agriculture department and the local non-government organisation. State government supported the project financially as well as by providing agriculture resources, whereas the NGOs were primarily responsible for implementing the project at the local level. Within the project, the local organisation was referred to or identified as the ‘service provider’. The state policy has 11 guiding principles (see box-1.1) that highlight the core value of organic farming.

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17 The Karnataka Government has set up a high-level board headed by the Chief Minister for effective implementation of the organic farming in the state as it aimed at boosting agricultural production.
Box- 1.1
Principles of Karnataka State Organic Farming Policy

1. Interact in a constructive and life enhancing way with natural systems and cycles.
2. Encourage and enhance biological cycles within the farming system involving micro-organisms, soil flora and fauna, plants and animals.
3. Sustain soil fertility and productivity.
4. Promote judicious use and proper care of water, water resources and all life therein.
5. Conserve soil and water.
6. Use renewable on-farm resources in locally organised agricultural systems.
7. Work with materials and substances which can be reused or recycled, either on the farm or from outside.
8. Integration of animal husbandry with the farm providing proper living conditions to livestock, which allow them to perform the basic aspects of their innate behaviour.
9. Minimize all forms of pollution that may result from agricultural practices.
10. To maintain the genetic diversity of the agricultural system and its surroundings including protection of plant, livestock and wildlife habitat.
11. To preserve and enhance the traditional and indigenous knowledge in farming besides seeds and crop varieties.

Source: Karnataka State Organic Farming Policy Document, 2004

Drawing from the principles of ecological farm philosophy, the policy sought a holistic approach in farming. By a holistic approach, the policy integrated the concerns of farming with the surrounding environment- the health and productivity of soil, microorganisms, plants, animals and people. For achieving its goal, the policy laid down mandatory techniques and guidelines for implementing the project, which necessarily excluded various existing agricultural practices involved in commercial farming. It laid down techniques such as crop rotation, recycling of organic matter, control of pests and avoiding chemical fertilisers for enhancing the soil fertility, development of habitat through restoring natural eco-system. Animal husbandry as a practice in agriculture that maintains diversification and balance within the ecological system was considered as an integral part of the organic farming initiatives. The Policy document highlights the importance of establishing the natural ecological balance by creating a ‘cordial relationship’ between crop production and animal husbandry. According to the policy, organic farming would eventually increase productivity and minimise environmental degradation. Giving importance to crop rotation, soil fertility, ecological balance and

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18 It is a holistic production system, promotes and enhances the ecosystem. It believes in following the natural way of production and minimizing the use of external input like fertilizers and pesticides.

19 Commercial agriculture is the large scale production of crops for the market and it aim for widespread distribution and whole sake marketing or having retail outlets exclusively for the purchase of these crops such as arecanut, cashew, rubber, coffee, banana and are sold in the world market.
development, animal husbandry, organic market, processing, certification and reduction in ecological degradation, the policy sought a multi-layered approach to introduce organic farming in the state. The objectives of the policy (see box-1.2) were drawn from the principles of Karnataka state policy on organic farming.

**Box- 1.2**

**The Objectives of Organic Farming Policy**

1. To reduce the debt burden of farmers and enable to achieve sustenance (Swavalambana) and self-respect (Swahimana)
2. To enhance soil fertility and productivity by increasing life in soil
3. To reduce cost of cultivation
4. Judiciously use of precious water resources and maintenance of production level
5. To improve farmers’ income through production of quality produce
6. Increasing the food security by encouraging the traditional crops and traditional food habits
7. Increasing the rural employment opportunity
8. To promote farmers’ Self-Help Group for most of their requirements
9. To make environment safe and pollution free and protect health of human beings and animals
10. Equip the farmers effectively to mitigate the drought prone situation in rainfed and drought prone area
11. To bring about sustainable institutional changes in teaching and research on Organic farming

Source: Karnataka State Organic Farming Policy Document, 2004

The policy laid emphasis on enhancing agriculture farmland, encouraging local consumption of agricultural produce, while providing avenues to farmers to sell their surplus produce in the market. It has proposed different components such as, biomass production, biodiversity, mixed farming, soil and water conservation, credit, marketing and facility in the project. Altogether, 32 different strategic areas were identified as a part of the project (Karnataka state policy on organic farming Document, 2004). Organic farming was projected as a promoter of rural development at the local level for its minimum dependency on chemical inputs; thus, safeguarding the quality of the products as well as nature. The labour intensive feature of organic farming has been identified as an important contributor towards tackling rural unemployment and poverty.

The policy on paper envisages a complete shift from the present system of commercial farming, which seems utopian and unrealistic given the realities of agriculture at the village level. Moreover, it does not provide the background and the motivation behind introducing the policy. In its discussion on organic farming, the Policy document does not engage with existing systems of organic farming such as nature
farming, homo farming, traditional farming, biodynamic farming and Vedic farming. As alternative systems of farming, these different forms of farming not only represent different interpretations of organic farming philosophy as also associated techniques of agriculture. This lack of discussion on existing systems of organic farming within the Policy document reflected poor research as well as the inability of the policy to recognise on-going initiatives within the state in organic farming. The much-hyped holistic approach to organic farming did not extend to integrating existing civil society and local initiatives within its purview. In this regard, the policy was still top-down; it was conceived and implemented independent of any meaningful interface with local experts in the field of organic farming.

While the state government ostensibly wanted to replace commercial farming with organic farming, it did not critically examine its existing policy towards commercial farming. It continues to support commercial farming in the state through its subsidies to chemical fertilisers and pesticides. In 2005-06 (when policy was introduced as project), the state observed a record increase in the utilisation of Nitrogen (N) of 14.9 per cent, phosphate (\(P_2O_5\)) of 18.9 per cent and potassium (\(KO_2\)) of 21.9 per cent in agriculture (Suma 2007). In the last 6 years, increase in subsidies has reflected in the high utilisation of chemicals within agriculture. Similar benefits have not been provided to organic farmers, i.e. no provisions have been made for organic manures for farmers to sustain them within organic farming. This is particularly so for farmers of the dry zone areas of Karnataka, where local environs do not provide for generating sufficient manure for farming. The question of why a farmer should give up commercially viable farming for organic farming remains unexplored, when the call for organic farming is not supported by adequate institutional mechanisms to secure livelihood concern of farmers. The dual policy of the state only dissuades willing farmers from making the shift to organic farming. My study of the project in Moodanahalli reiterates what I consider is a discrepancy within the agricultural policy of the state.

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20 Nature farming is an ecological farm approach introduced by a Japanese farmer and philosopher, Masanobu Fukuoka. He described his agricultural philosophy as the natural way of farming. The use of Homoeo Plant Protectors in agriculture as bio-fertilisers came to be known as Homoeo farming. Biodynamic farming emphasizes on the holistic development and interrelationships of soil, plants and animals as a self-sustaining systems in agriculture. Mohan Deshpande has propagated Vedic farming. This farming is known also as ‘zero budget farming’ as farmers do not need to invest on the raw materials to increase the soil fertility and farmers do not have to depend on external manures for the control of pest in the agriculture land.
The contradictions within the policy has had a cascading effect on the project since the villages have to contend with regular issues related to infrastructure support not only for farming but also for marketing organic produce. An interesting comparison can be made between Sikkim and Karnataka, in the way Sikkim sought to encourage local markets selling organic produce by restricting the role of the public distribution system (PDS) in the hilly areas (Sikkim organic farming policy-2011). The restrictions on PDS, which is dependent on external produce and products, have created greater opportunities for local farmers to sell their produce in the market. According to the Sikkim government policy document, farmers in rural areas have moved away from farming and have become increasingly dependent on the PDS for their daily sustenance. The organic farming initiatives, for the Sikkim government, are efforts to restrict the influence of the PDS among the people as well as to wean the people away from becoming, what it calls a ‘consuming society’. Karnataka clearly has no such vision. In fact, it has opted for a market-oriented approach in promoting organic farming in the state, wherein farmers would be provided with necessary certification to compete in the global market.

Another dimension, which is completely neglected within the policy, is a profile of farmers for whom this policy is directly relevant. The policy derives its context from the high incidences of farmers’ suicide as well as the growing concern over the condition of farming in the state. Nowhere, in the document is there a profile of farmers in Karnataka, let alone a discussion on the different kinds of farmers (across the different agro-climatic zones) within the state as well as their specific concerns regarding the agrarian crisis. Regional diversity, heterogeneous environment and the mindset of the farmers directly contribute towards the growth and performance of agriculture. This is especially important in the case of organic farming, where both the ‘genetic diversity of the agricultural system’ and the ‘traditional and local knowledge systems’ combine to provide the much discussed holistic approach within the Policy. Both these aspects are neglected within the policy. Even a cursory look at farmers in Karnataka reveals, at least based on my understanding, five broad categories of farmers reflecting on the diverse ways by which farmers have challenged, accommodated and experimented with the changes wrought by the modernization of agriculture in the state. I elaborate on the latter in the

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21 An agricultural system is an assemblage of components which are united by some form of interaction and interdependence and which operate within a prescribed boundary to achieve a specified agricultural objective on behalf of the beneficiaries of the system (McConnell & Dillon, 1997).
first chapter; therefore, I will not discuss it here, except to argue that the approach adopted by the state in this policy does not seem to be very different from previous agricultural policies. The organic farming policy like previous policies is concerned with integrating farmers with international markets. The only difference being that in this case, the reference is to the international organic market. According to the policy, the farmers are unaware of the market for organic produce, but seek to enhance the sustainability of agriculture in the long term by reducing chemical and synthetic inputs in farming.

The present movement silently taking place in Karnataka is not because farmers foresee a definite market for organically produced crops, but for production oriented reasons viz., reduction in the use of external inputs, improvement in the soil fertility, lower soil degradation, biological pest control and protecting the mother earth besides improving their economy (KSPOF, 2004:10).

The government then visualizes its role as a facilitator of the necessary conditions for creating a market within the state for organic produce. Yet again, farming is constructed as an ‘untapped’ market, a sector unaware of its potential, waiting to be exploited. The logic of production continues to dominate the discourse on farming, even while organic farming as a system is presented as an alternative to the crisis of production within the region. The policy reflects what could be termed as ‘historical amnesia’ in its naïve optimism of prospering in the international markets in relation to organic farming when the same has led to one of the worst crisis in the history of Indian agriculture. To quote the picturesquely presented back cover of the policy document, ‘Karnataka...heralding bounty and prosperity to farmers’ promises farmers with an abundant future by mentoring farmers into the unexplored and uncharted world of organic farming. The policy clearly lays out the role of the state in creating the market not just for organic produce (both in farming and in allied sectors within agriculture), but also for organic manure, certifying agencies to participate in the organic farming market, integrating domestic and international markets (see appendix-2). The state through the policy created the condition for its survival in a scenario where it has lost all credibility and purpose.

Karnataka state brought tremendous changes in its policy towards agriculture and allied activities; that ultimately affected the economy and social growth of farming community and state witnessed the incidence of farmers’ crisis. In the last 20 years, Karnataka agriculture sector has received negative growth in its agricultural and economic development.
The policy as mentioned earlier is essentially top-down, as it has a set text book definition of organic farming, with no references to real examples within the state where organic farming is being successfully practiced or at least is experimented with as an option to move away from commercial farming. Farmers in Karnataka, based on their experience and exposure to other approaches towards farming, have adopted combination of methods and approaches within farming. They no longer can be clubbed under the two extreme categories of commercial and traditional farmers. All farmers are commercial in that they market their produce, and yet differ in the way they engage with farming, the tools and techniques they adopt as well as the philosophies that inspire their practice. Based on my field research, I have identified three new categories of farmers- selective, conscious and entrepreneur farmers. These categories are not exclusive and overlap in many ways. The purpose behind this categorisation is to demonstrate how the profile of farmers has changed over time. These farmers are not only extremely aware about the latest technology and market trends but also in experimenting with both ecologically and commercially viable alternatives within farming.

I call the first category of farmers as selective farmer; these are the farmers, who emerged as a category in the post 1990s when they were most actively following the trends of the international market. This is the category of the farmers which was most affected by the fluctuation in the international agricultural market. Unlike other parts of Karnataka, which witnessed a spate of farmers’ suicide, Dakshina Kannada despite losses in agriculture did not have any case registered for the same. Probably this can be explained, since most of the selective farmers in Dakshina Kannada were from dominant agriculture classes such as Havyaka Brahmins and Bunts who could financially withstand the visible lull in agriculture in 1990s. Moreover, these communities are known for practicing traditional crops along with commercial ones, which kept them afloat through the crisis. I would like to give an example to illustrate how much of their agricultural decisions were informed by the prices of crops in the international market. In the 1990s, many farmers converted their paddy lands to arecanut plantations, with the increased demand for arecanut in the international market.

Along with land conversion, many farmers have made a choice between crops and in this process, the intercrops (crops that are grown in between arecanut and coconut plantation such as cocoa, coffee, banana etc) were destroyed. A number of such
incidences were recorded during 1995-96. The act of destroying the cocoa tree in the plantation was justified by many. One of the arguments was that ‘coco plants absorbs the chemical nutrients from manures which were used in the arecanut plantation and ultimately reduce the arecanut yield in the agriculture land’. However, there is no scientific explanation for this argument other than the fact that the market for the cocoa in the mid 1990s was low in contrast to the great demand for arecanut.

In recent times, Dakshina Kannada has experienced similar trends in the case of vanilla, cocoa and rubber cultivation. At present, rubber has high demand and there has been an observable increase in the price of rubber in the national and international market. This has created a situation in which many farmers have converted their fertile land to rubber plantations by cutting the tress in hilly region, replacing coconut plantations with rubber. This is despite the fact that rubber seedlings require seven years to give yield. With farmers, en masse shifting to rubber cultivation the market for rubber would probably dip with the supply overwhelming the demand for rubber in the region.

Agricultural pattern in the Dakshina Kannada district reflects the inconsistencies of the national and international market. The failure of the commercial market in national and international level has created a panic among rich farmers and they have opted for crop diversification like arecanut, coconut, cocoa, banana, vanilla, nutmeg, rubber, coffee etc. In recent time, there are cases where farmers have rotated crops such as cocoa, vanilla depending on the market trends to maintain the economic balance in agriculture. Among selective farmers, the selection of farming approach (conventional or traditional) and crops (commercial or sustainable) is mainly influenced by economic profitability and access to resources. Depending on their ideology and farm approaches, these farmers have used different technologies, farm manures and machinery. Agriculture has become capital intensive, which has made farmers more dependent on market.

23 Giriappa in his 1994 and 1995 published books on ‘Arecanut Production and Marketing in India ’and ‘Plantation Economy in India’ respectively, had conducted a detailed study of cocoa farming in different parts of Karnataka.

24 There is demand for Cocoa both in the domestic and international market. However, the highest demand is for the dry cocoa beans, which could fetch Rs 130-150 per kg. The highest yield of cocoa is during the monsoons, at a time when farmers are unable to put it out for drying. Therefore, they sell the wet cocoa beans at very low rates of Rs 20-40 per kg depending on its quality. Cocoa is also labour intensive and lack of availability of agricultural labour in the peak season has forced many farmers to shift to arecanut cultivation. There are also reports of the growing menace of wild monkeys destroying standing crops especially cocoa.

25 As in the present context, many farmers are cultivating cocoa in their agriculture land, as there is high demand for cocoa in the market.
Conscious farmers are primarily small farmers, whose source of livelihood was completely dependent on farming.\(^{26}\) In the initial years, they tried to cope up with the demands of the green revolution, however along the way many shifted to traditional farming as they could not cope with the high cost of the farming involved in the former. They have the knowledge of different farm approaches, crops and market for various agriculture products. They experiment with crops, products and follow cost-benefit analysis of the farming through input-output production and consumption in agriculture. We can refer to them as 'experimental farmers' as they practice new crop or farm approach in a small plot to know its impact on crop, production, land, investment and its overall benefit. Depending upon the result, they gradually shift their crop pattern or farm practice; these progressive farmers use technology in moderation for developing their farms and improving the economy. There are instances from across the state that can demonstrate that these farmers are conscious about agricultural practice.

Anitha and Prasad (2011) have pointed out that it is the small farmers, who practice mixed cropping and crop rotation in their land to preserve regional crop diversification.\(^ {27}\) They also discuss the existence of different traditional practices of paddy cultivation. Another instance is from Shimoga district in the Malnad region of Karnataka, where the farmers have shifted to cultivating the native seed varieties, which are pest-resistant, medicinal and have been developed locally to suit local conditions of agriculture.\(^ {28}\) Having observed the decline in the commercial production of paddy yield from 30 quintal per acre in 1970 to 8 to 10 quintals per acre, many farmers gave up the use of hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizers. There are cases where small farmers with half to two acres of land are growing more than ten different varieties of paddy crops in their agricultural land. These farmers are no longer the exporters of the food they produce; instead, they are concentrating on capturing the local market and indirectly contributing for the expansion of allied agricultural sectors in the village level. They have diversified their agricultural production based on local consumption demands, which has also boosted the economic prospects of the region. There has been a simultaneous growth of local services such as eco-tourism, organic and home based food industry. This

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\(^{26}\) Most of them got land during land reforms.

\(^{27}\) Depending on the agro-climatic zones, farmers have practiced mixed cropping or crop rotation such as different paddy varieties, cereals, oil seeds, and fish farming.

\(^{28}\) The native varieties such as 'Rathnachudi' paddy is known for its taste, ‘Mapillai Samba’, ‘Navura’ (good for joint pain), ‘Kalemme’ (cures piles), ‘Karigajavillie’ (good for lactating mothers), ‘Gändhasale’ (for its aroma) are some of the paddy seeds with the medicinal qualities.
transformation in agriculture is reflected in other aspects of the social life. NINASAM or ‘Neenasam’, a cultural organization based in Shimoga district was started in the 1960s by a farmer and the focus was on creating social and cultural awareness among the local people about culture, art, literature and politics through Tirugata (Kannada translation is travelling around), dramas and yakshagana (a popular folk dance of Costal and Malanad region). This for me is an example of conscious farmers who have consciously made a choice to be self-reliant and reduce their dependence on the state and the market for their livelihood. Conscious farmers practice agriculture holistically by simultaneously cultivating multiple crop varieties, practicing animal husbandry, apiculture, piggery, and water management. They do not depend on a single market, as there is a high chance of market or crop failure. They try to keep market risks at the minimum. Conscious farmers can be seen as moving away from the global market towards a local one.

The last category of the farmers that I would like to discuss in context of Karnataka is the entrepreneur farmers, who are primarily large farmers although it is uncommon to find small farmers among them. An entrepreneur farmer is one who engages in all activities within farming, that is, from cultivating crops to processing and marketing of the processed goods in the agriculture market. For example, the coastal and Malnad districts of Karnataka and Kerala are known for jackfruit production. Since it is perishable and abundant it would usually end up rotting in the farmers land.

However, from the past 2 to 3 years, there has been a movement to utilise jackfruit in the food processing industry. Jackfruit, which was once not even considered as a crop, has acquired the status of tremendous importance in the region. Farmers not only produce jackfruit but also process and sell its products in the regional, domestic and international market. In Dakshina Kannada, farmer journals are an important source of information for agricultural related news and market trends. I have discussed the details of farmer journals in the fifth chapter. It would suffice to state here that the explicit purpose of the journals is to provide relevant details needed for making informed decisions in the agricultural market. Supported by entrepreneurial farmers these journals are quite popular among farmers. Farmers now keenly follow the debates and discussions on the market for agricultural crops, agricultural processed goods and other latest developments in related fields.

In recent times, there has been the growth of agri-tourism a concept made popular by farmers in Uttar Kannada wherein plantation farmers are organizing home stays for
international and national tourists seeking the experience of living in a village and trying a hand at farming. Kodagu similarly has developed many agro-tourism activities in the coffee plantations. Given the scenic environs of Uttar Kannada and Kodagu, the entrepreneurial farmers see a great potential in agri-tourism. The home stays provides an opportunity for the community to create a market for local, agricultural and non-agriculture goods such as honey, jaggary, spices, coffee, cashew, fruit candies etc.\footnote{Homestay is a form of tourism that allows the tourists to rent a room from a local family. It provides the greater opportunity for the tourists to learn the authentic lifestyles, culture, cuisines and language of the region from a close proximity. There exists a cross cultural exchange between the host and guests and on other, by hosting the tourists, many families receive much needed additional incomes in the remote parts of the regions.}

The discussion so far highlights the existing diversity in farming practices as well as the different approaches among farmers. These categorisations reflects as how farmers are making efforts to overcome the constraints in farming, adopting technologies and practices given their preferences. These categories have emerged in concordance with various factors while analysing the farmers in Karnataka. In the case of \textit{selective} farmers, I have taken the caste-class and market perspectives to understand farmers’ stake in agriculture. The analysis reflected that, majority of them have financial stability in society as their family members are working in different sectors such as traders, engineers and doctors, so they can afford to \textit{gamble with the market} through commercial crop diversification (case of cocoa, rubber). While analysing the \textit{conscious or experimental} farmers, I have used their social status, knowledge and interaction in the market. Here, majority of them are small farmers (in context of Dakshina Kannada, before land reform majority of these farmers were landless labourers) with an expertise in the traditional knowledge (when they were landless labourers or tenants) and gained access to modern technology (when they received land from land reform) and who have cordial associations with the local market.

The farmers’ perspectives about agriculture, market, state and their access to resources and technology have become the important variables while analysing the \textit{entrepreneur farmers}. These farmers have emerged as a response to the changing dynamics of the state and the market. They have understood that, to sustain in agriculture they need to move beyond the boundaries of crop production to engage in value added agriculture (food processing industry) and market these commodities in the regional, national and international markets. Collective collaborations, access to natural resources (crops, facility), and the entry of information technology such as print (farm journals),
mass media, internet in the regional level contribute towards the emergence of entrepreneur farmers. Therefore, there is an urgent need to break the stalemate or stereotypes associated with farmers today, as clearly, they can no longer be homogenised or seen as hapless victims of state and market led agricultural development.

In conclusion, the main arguments of the introduction are as follows. From 1990s onwards, agriculture in India and especially in Karnataka has showed interest towards the commercialisation of farming practices and focused on the development of national and international market for agricultural commodities. The ultimate consequence of this agricultural development has been experienced by states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra in the form of farmers’ suicide. There are two strong critiques of agricultural development, which emerge from an analysis of the phenomenon of the farmers suicides. One comes from the academicians like Assadi, and Vasavi, who attribute farmer’s suicides and agrarian crisis to market driven policies and programmes of the central and state governments. Another comes from activists like Bhaskar Save who have associated farmers’ crisis to not only the faulty agricultural policies introduced by the government, but also to the concomitant shifts in farming practices in the countryside that have cut into self-sufficiency of farmers.

In the backdrop of these discussions, the study tries to the recently introduced Karnataka State Policy on Organic farming - 2004, which was posited as an alternative to farmers’ crisis in Karnataka. One of the main criticisms of the policy is has been that, Karnataka state government has introduced the policy universally across the state, without taking consideration of different agro-climatic zones and agricultural practices while framing and implementing the policy at the local level. In my field site, Dakshina Kannada there are different crop - based farming, such as arecanut, coconut, cashew, cocoa, rubber and traditional knowledge based practice such as paddy cultivation. The policy did not discuss these diversities or its contribution in the expansion and fulfilment of farmers’ needs and overall development of the locality.

Another issue that is central to the policy is the role of the state government in providing financial and institutional support for the promotion of organic farming in the state. I have discussed in the earlier section as to how the politicization of Organic Farming Mission in Karnataka, has generated negative public opinion especially among farmers and activists. Lastly, this chapter also highlights the fact that organic farming policy did not give emphasis to the profile of farmers for whom the policy was drafted.
and introduced. Agrarian studies and public policy deliberation have observed farmers as repressive and as an inactive class in society. However, the characterization of farmers’ as dormant in state led agricultural policy and programme is a questionable identity, as farmers’ over the decades have experienced socio-political and economic transformation in society. As Gupta (1998) pointed, the development approach, agrarian capitalism and technological changes have transformed the structural, material conditions of farmers, their epistemologies and identities in society. In post independent India, farmers have experienced changes with the introduction of rural development programmes land reform, green revolution and adoption of modern technologies. Indian social science discipline and rural peasant studies have discussed the transition of rural societies and farmers through commercialization, individualization of agriculture, and disintegration of rural economy (Byres, 1981; Bharadwaj, 1985; Hauser, 1993; Brass; 1995).

Therefore, in the present context, farmers are not a homogenous category; new categories of farmers have emerged in the contemporary agriculture society that I have tried to categorise in the context of my field sites earlier in this introduction. Today, agriculture and allied sectors are observing fast changes in the land use (crop production to agri-tourism), crop use (paddy to plantation crops) and farming practices (traditional, conventional, corporate or organic). These have necessarily entailed a shift in farmers’ perspectives on farming. Hence, I have made a conscious effort to keep the same in mind while analysing the Karnataka state organic farming policy initiatives as well as the analysis of my field research.

The Study: Research Aim, Objectives and Methodology

Introduction: This section discusses the methods and techniques that have used in the research. Further, in this section I elaborate on the rationale, question, objectives and methodology of research. I described in detail the research design, participants, sampling, and methods of data collection and data analysis that were used in the research. The final section explains the limitation and the significance of the study, and concludes with an outline of the thesis where I have briefly given an overview of each chapter in the thesis.

Rationale for the Study

Public policy is a well-discussed subject in the social sciences. It is a conscious, careful and planned decision taken by policy makers (Government, Non-government organisations, committees) at the regional, state, national or international level for
addressing issues and for providing an alternative solutions or benefits to the progress of individuals, groups or communities in the society. In my study, Karnataka government has introduced uniform state level policy on organic farming. However, as I have discussed above, it did gave scope for a discussion on a divergent agricultural knowledge, practices and farm level experiments and various socio-cultural nuances of farming communities. It is unfeasible to discuss the philosophy and practice of organic farming in isolation from social, economic, political and cultural features as these are socially constructed in the day-to-day life of the farmers. Critical reflection on the philosophy and practice of ‘organic farming’ in India, indicates that, the concept is not clearly discussed in social sciences, while in the agricultural sciences; the focus is on the technical and scientific aspect of farming. The interface between the theoretical, practical, state, central and farm level ‘perspectives’ on organic farming is missing in all these fields.

A public policy can be analysed in various ways. According to Shore and Wright there is a tendency to treat policy as "politically and ideologically neutral" within the social sciences (1997:5). While arguing for Anthropology of public policy they stress on the need to question the underline “the assumptions of the policy as a legal, rational way of getting things done” (Wedel, 2005:30). Analysing policy through this framework provides an opportunity to explore and examine the existing debates and discourses, which have created the context for the emergence of public policy. This approach tries to explore as how the state, policy makers and agencies of development at varies level influence policy. Finally it is important to understand “how state policies and government process are experienced and interpreted by people at the local level, keeping in mind that anthropologists are recasting the local or the community to capture changing realities” (ibid:35). The implementation of the state policy as a project programme in regional or local level is a complex process due to its practical constraints. A project is restricted by internal (agency, policy makers) as well as external (socio-political and economic) factors. During policy formation, a general inclination of the policy maker is to give emphasis on the expansion and development of their area and eventually this leads to the fragmentation of the policy and partial development of the project. The narrow specialization of the experts, lack of practical knowledge of the ‘field’ creates obstacles in the policymaking and project implementation process. The overlap, misguidance and the lack of actors in the formation of policy and implementation of project actually dilutes the vision of development.
The politicization of organic farming has contributed towards the development of organic market in the state and institutionalisation of organic farming through state policy has brought different actors (policy makers, service provider to certifying agency) to farmers' field in the local level. The existing debate, discourses on organic farming in Karnataka demonstrates that there exist contestations between the state, civil society and practitioners (farmers) about the conceptualisation and practice of organic farming. It becomes an interesting subject of inquiry; to explore the existing dichotomies of the organic farming philosophy and practices through perceptions of the actors and agencies in the state led agriculture. Hence, it is essential to scrutinize the whole process of Karnataka state organic farming initiative to reflect on how the policy project is operationalised at the regional level.

Research question and objectives: The key question is to explore the Karnataka state organic farming policy-2004 and its implementation as well as to understand farmers’ perspectives on farming in this context. The specific research objectives are as follows;

1. To present a historical analysis of agriculture in Karnataka
2. To analyse the context and text of Karnataka Organic Farming Policy 2004
3. To study the implementation of Karnataka organic farming project in one of the project villages, that is Moodanahalli in Dakshina Kananda.
4. To understand farmers perspectives on the project as well as farming in general.

Methodological Approaches

Exploratory research: This is an explorative research, with main interest in exploring the ideology and practice of organic farming in Karnataka. Organic farming as a social phenomenon in Indian agriculture is still unexplored and different dilemmas exists in relation to its ideology and practice. The use of explorative design would elicit the uncharted areas of organic farming in the research. The research took my study in a different path and now it broadly falls under the larger area of public policy and rural studies. This research is not contesting established disciplines; rather it is exploring knowledge that is drawn from various disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, economics, development studies and history.

Qualitative Research: The study is qualitative in nature. It takes into account the everyday life of the villagers, farmers' perspectives on organic farming in Moodanahalli and Bettadka, in Dakshina Kannada district in Karnataka. Today, organic farming has
become part of larger rural development discourses, where it involves different actors, perspectives and politics. The research constructs meanings in society from the perspectives of different actors who are involved in the process of research. The use of qualitative research in this study therefore has try to present an emic view (insider’s view) with prominence been given to the different perspectives of actors on associated with the study. Constructivism assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects’ meanings’ (Charmaz, 2000:510). The constructivist paradigm linked to the creation of relationship and community feeling between the respondent and the researcher. The research redesigns therefore flexible assumptions, to accommodate issues in their specific context and in the process presents multiple perspectives on the subject. This study was conducted within in the constructivist framework. Here, reality is subjective and multiple and constructed socially by the participants and researcher in the study (Bryman, 1984; Silverman, 1993; Creswell, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Krauss, 2005).

Fieldwork: The fieldwork was conducted for more than 14 months (August 2008 to November 2009) in Dakshina Kananda District (See Appendix-3 & 4). I started my fieldwork in August 2008 when Moodanahalli and Dakshina Kannada district was slowly recovering from Chickengunia. In the initial 3-4 months of fieldwork, I was under the impression that I did not do anything related to my research. I participated in village activities, festivals, visited farms and there were days when I did not go out into the village or farmers’ fields due to heavy showers due to the heavy showers during monsoons. I used to mostly stay indoors with the family who hosted me. During those initial months, it was a state of dilemma, uncertainty, anxiety about fieldwork and data collection and questions such as ‘am I in the right direction? Why am I not doing fieldwork or asking farmers about the organic farming policy?’, troubled me regularly. But on hindsight, I realise that I was in fact doing fieldwork or what Fetterman calls ‘big net approach’ (1989:42) which is casually usually mixing and mingling with the people in order to create greater familiarity necessarily for research. After the initial 4 months of fieldwork, I had developed an informal relationship with the villagers. My initial

30 Chickungunya is a viral disease that is spread by mosquitoes. It causes fever and severe joint pain. Other symptoms include muscle pain, headache, nausea, fatigue and rash. The disease shares some clinical signs with dengue, and can be misdiagnosed in areas where dengue is common. There is no cure for the disease. Treatment is focused on relieving the symptoms (WHO, 2008).
interactions were useful in developing rapport with the community, people and it gave an insight into the project, village and organic farming. I conducted the fieldwork as an independent researcher in the village.

**Multi-sited Ethnography Approach:** In the process of my fieldwork, I made a conscious decision to look at organic farming, and not the farmers, as the object of the study. I was interested in understanding their perspectives on farming. Therefore, during my fieldwork I gave more emphasis on farmers’ experiences and perceptions of farming in the state. Farmers where then not the object of the study instead I propose to see them as respondents to the object of my study which was organic farming. This was my attempt to overcome the dualism between subject-object, researcher-research and subjective-objective.

I was aware that I need to explore beyond the physical or geographical boundaries of my field site; which I could achieve by interacting with different actors and agencies of organic farming in the state. On the other hand, Public policy research mainly gives emphasis on people’s perspectives, and participants have multiple perspectives that are influenced by their actions, experiences in society. With an interest to collect wide variety of peoples’ perspectives on organic farming, I have used the Multi-sited Ethnography approach. The multi-sited ethnographic approach is the study of social phenomenon that does not focus on a single site or space, as phenomenon people and ideas move far beyond actual physical sites and locations. As stated by Marcus, the ethnographer can follow the people, a ‘thing’, a metaphor, story or conflict, connection, association, relationship to understand and analyze the social phenomenon, across space and time. With this approach, research studies have focused on the phenomenon of modernity and transitional mobility like international agencies, sex workers, tourists, (Martin 1994; Lock 2002; Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant 2002). Nevertheless, the study of rural, agrarian issues through multi-sited perspectives are uncommon, primarily because of the assumption that rural communities are rooted within specific geographical peripheries and are less mobile and lacking in global influence. In the globalised world, rural communities are fast transforming, influenced by national and global developmental changes that are evident in communities’ landscape and agricultural practices. I have used multi-sited ethnography in my study to engage contextually with the subject, to move

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31 It is the new school of thought emerged in the last decade. George E. Marcus in the 1995 Annual Review of Anthropology used this approach for first time.
away from the particular field site, communities, development actors, to gather rich descriptive experiences and perspectives of the people engaged in the organic farming policy and project.

Multi-sited ethnography research does not engage with sampling procedure; however, I have used sampling as a technique for guiding me during the fieldwork. The research sampling procedure varied, depending on the context. Initially, snowball-sampling technique was followed and later purposive sampling technique was used to select the study respondents for in-depth interviews, as I recognised them as valuable informants in the study. As Patton (1990:169) explains: "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth." This meant that of the many farmers with whom I interacted, I visited their farms regularly and interacted with them in various contexts. I met the same farmers repeatedly at village, market, meetings and events, and thus built friendship and acquaintances with them during the course of my fieldwork. At the local level, research involved participant observation in terms of attending village functions, farmers’ cultural programmes and religious activities to get a sense of social and religious life of people. In the process of my research, I have used a combination of field techniques such as informal, unstructured in-depth interviews, observations and field visits. Silverman (1993) calls the interview a ‘conversation’ as it is a sustained relationship and sharing between the informant and researcher. All together, I have conducted 25 in-depth informal interviews with the interlocutors of my research. I gave emphasis on interlocutors such as farmers (conventional and organic), villagers, service provider (Varanashi Research Foundation), field officials of Varanashi Research Foundation, development activists, officials from agricultural department, academicians from organic research institutes and policy makers of Karnataka organic farming policy to understand their perspectives on organic farming.

Later, in my fieldwork the emphasis shifted from Dakshina Kannada district to Karnataka state, from village level farmers to organic market, consumers, from local service providing agency (Varanashi Research Foundation) to State and National Conferences and Fair Trade Exhibitions to comprehend the organic farming from all perspectives. I participated in the national, regional conferences and fair trade programmes to grasp the existing discourse on the organic farming, current trends and

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32 From rich cases, one can learn a great deal on the issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Marcus, 1995).
33 Interlocutors are people who take part in the discourse.
state perspective on agriculture development. The discussion presented in the chapter on village (3) as well as chapter on project (4) draws upon Norman Longs’ (2001) ‘Actor-Oriented Approach’, which focuses on how internal, and external factors as well as state policies influence local perspectives. The actors’ oriented approach reiterates the need to analyse not only the external development interventions but also to reflect on the local power dynamics that reconfigures the same in the context of everyday life and politics. Through this methodology, I was able to capture people’s perspective on organic farming in multiple sites and my participation in these sites helped me to surmount fieldwork anxieties over understanding the complexity my research question.

I need to acknowledge that, this study is not associated with all organic farmers in the region, rather in Moodanahalli situated in Dakshina Kannada where the state level organic farming project was implemented. Along with the organic farmers, non-organic farmers were also interviewed to capture their views and approaches on the idea of organic farming and significance of conventional farm practices in the village. Whenever possible, the interview was conducted at the respondent’s residence. This process of conducting interviews in the respondents’ homes gave a direct access to their immediate surrounding and socio-economic circumstances.34

The active participation is essential for the researcher to be familiar with the material, and social circumstances of the respondents. The project participants were interviewed in an attempt to discover farmers’ identity (as organic farmers) and their interaction with state and market institutions. Allowing participants to narrate the experiences in their own words, instead of a predetermined set of questions enabled them to reflect on the subject as well as the complexities underlying social conditions affecting organic farmers. Lastly, I collected local literature - books, documents, information brochures, paper clippings and videos, on agriculture, socio-economic and cultural narratives of the community and the district.

**Research Analysis and Writing**

For interpreting the my field notes, I maintained two set of notes, one I used while conducting interview and another for keeping records of my field observations and field insights. My informal interactions, involvement in the everyday activity of the village and my familiarity with the social and cultural life of Dakshina Kannada was helpful in

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34 The worldview of the farmer differs depending on their access to the natural resources and market.
developing the preliminary understanding about the village. The notes were useful during and after the fieldwork as I gave emphasis on, as much as possible, to provide ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of my field. My Social work experience also helped me in conducting my research, as tried to comprehend the everyday life and politics of the farmers.

After fieldwork, I shifted back to Mumbai. Soon after my return from the field, I felt like writing a small piece about the field and organic farming, and I wrote a blog in Kannada (Beautiful thought). Now when I re-read my blog, I realise that my perspective has changed and became more receptive. I transcribed my field interviews from Kannada, Tulu to English, as most of my interactions were in the local language. It is only after that did I start writing my chapters on the Karnataka Organic farming project. One of the striking feature of my fieldwork and analysis was how there were diverse perspectives among farmers on the issue of organic farming. It was then important for me to represent this diversity in my chapter on farmers’ perspective. Clearly, the history of agriculture in Karnataka was complex and there was a need to understand it to comprehend the complex nature of the debate on organic farming in the village. With this intention, I began to explore the history of agriculture of Karnataka, wherein the question that guided my exploration was- how does one understand this diversity in farming philosophy and practices historically. In this sense, even the village chapter, i.e. chapter 3 is also an enunciation of the history of agriculture in the village, on how changes in agriculture have altered and changed villagers’ relationships with each other, as well as with farming. The village chapter actually presents cultural specific categories of local agricultural history, farming in the village, which reflected on the colonial and post-colonial policies and programmes and their significance to the village economy. Chapter 5 on farmers’ associations is a continuation of the same theme, where I argue how there are newer forms of associations that have emerged among farmers in keeping with the changes within agriculture as well as the changing profile of farmers. Here again, I have tried to demonstrate how farmers are cognizant of the conditions and constraints of agriculture as they negotiate for a better position in the agricultural market. Thus in the analysis of my fieldwork and field notes I consciously tried to accommodate multiple perspectives on farming, on the organic farming project even as I try to seek patterns, broad consensus among farmers on the same.
**Limitations of the Study**

The primary limitation of this research is my closeness to the participant and the subject-material of research itself. Closeness with the subject and knowledge of the region, allowed me to recognise the potentials of the subject, knowledge and people. On the other hand, since I am belong the region and I am as familiar to the people in my research site in terms of my caste identity as they are to me, overcoming the caste divide was serious concern in the beginning of my research. However, over time as my research progressed research gained more important than my consciousness of identity, and how people would react to it.

Each story of research is divergent and depends on where we begin our search for knowledge, in a similar manner each network what we develop at the local level differ depending on how and where we have entered the field. My entry into the organic village programmes was through Varanashi Research Foundation, which assisted me in getting access to institutions and initial contacts with the farmers. My interaction with the Varanashi Research Foundation has doubtlessly coloured my reception and gained respect from the members of the Varanashi Organic Farmers Association. This has delimited my access to those who were unaffiliated with the service provider or who criticised their work in the region. Although, I have used multi-sited ethnography, it does not guarantee a representative sample of organic farmers in the region. However, by interviewing key and vocal informants I tried to best fulfil the aim of capturing the different voices and their understanding of organic farming, development project in the form of organic project, market and certification. I have tried my best to bring out the field nuances of the organic farming initiatives.

**Chapter Outline of the Dissertation**

Chapter one on the *History of Karnataka Agriculture Policy*, provides a historical context for the Karnataka agriculture policy. The chapter traces the history of agriculture from colonial Mysore Kingdom, post independent Mysore state to present-day Karnataka. In this context, I discuss the main programmes in agriculture that were responsible for shaping agricultural practice in the state, such as land reform, institutionalised cooperatives and more recent Karnataka state agriculture policy initiatives. These represent significant policy shifts within agriculture, which have influenced the
agricultural development of Karnataka. The new economic policy, social transformation and shift in state agricultural perspectives have brought changes in rural life, which is reflected in the way farmers relate to choices and decisions pertaining to farming.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the agricultural policy development under the Maharaja of Mysore (1900-1947). During this period, the state observed transformation in its infrastructure, irrigation development, cooperative movements under the Maharaja and his Dewans, who worked towards the creation of modern Mysore State. The second section discusses the Karnataka Agriculture Development and Policy Initiatives after Independence (1948-1989). Here, I briefly discuss the main thrust of the different five-year plans, rural development programmes, and along with it the creation of regional disparities and agricultural imbalance within the state, particularly after the unification of the state. The section also discusses the Karnataka land reform policy and its implementation. The third section focuses on Karnataka Agriculture Development from New Economic Reforms to State Agriculture Policy (1990 – 2006). This section highlights the agricultural policy changes that have taken place in the past 15 years in Karnataka. The last section is on my field location, Dakshina Kannada, here I have discussed the transition of agriculture from land reform to the contemporary issues associated with agriculture.

The second chapter is *Reflection on the Concept of Development: Review of Literature from South India*, explains that, the policy, as it reads now, does not engage with the history of agriculture policy of the state nor does it critically engage with the issues that affected the emergence of Karnataka State organic farming policy. However, there have been regular criticisms against state led agricultural development, of which I present two in this chapter. One, I focus on the critique offered by the organic farming movement against conventional farming. In fact, organic farming first emerged as a movement against state led conventional farming. And in being so, it presents a strong critique of modern development. Two, there has also been a number of studies, largely by anthropologists, that have reflected on the field view of development, on how people in the villages view development programmes and policies of the state, as well as on how agricultural policies of the state have aggravated agrarian inequalities. In the chapter, I have focused on these two sets of literature, one the organic farming movement and its critique to mainstream conventional farming. Two, village studies particularly in south...
India as they present *the field view of development* as a critique to agricultural policies and programmes of the state.

In my research on organic farming policy, the discussion of ‘development’ has wider scope for analysing the existing realities of the policy process, people’s perspectives on policy and organic farming practices from different development sites. Agricultural policies and projects connects different actors, influence culture and alter power dynamics at the village level. Karnataka state organic farming initiative as a developmental project proposes to redefine agricultural practice and therefore unleashes a host of processes that would shape and influence village life. This reflection on the concept of development broadens my vision to include existing critiques of state led agriculture development within the purview of my analyses.

In the third chapter, *Village Society: Land, Culture and Ecology*, I have introduced the project village in the thesis. The chapter brings out three aspects of the Moodanahalli as how agriculture and development are reflected in the rural life. The first section presents a brief history of the village as well as provides a general description of the village and village life. The religious beliefs and practices in the village are closely related to the agricultural practices. The chapter briefly describes the different ritual and cultural practices associated with farming, since they are significant events in the agricultural calendar of the village. Lastly, the chapter discusses the shifts in the village vis-a-vis farming practices, land holding patterns, cropping patterns as well as its impact of land-labour relations in the village. The main argument of this section is that, colonial and postcolonial developments in agriculture and allied sectors have directly influenced village life in Dakshina Kannada.

In the chapter four *Karnataka State Organic Farming Project from Moodanahalli*, I have discussed the *‘Karnataka State Policy on Organic Farming Project’*. This policy was introduced as a project by the Karnataka State Agriculture Department and as an experiment in the ‘Moodanahalli village’ in Dakshina Kannada district. Taking ahead the discussion on the policy, this chapter tries to comprehend and present as to how the Karnataka Organic farming policy was received and operationalised at the village level. It presents the villagers' perspective on the policy as well as implementation of the project in the village. The villagers' perceptions become relevant to elaborate how the state government development programmes have conceptualised and implemented organic farming in the village.
The chapter discusses some important themes such as farmers’ choice of farming, their perspectives on the chemical use and the different farm approaches prior to the project implementation to elicit the perspectives on farming. Further, it also describes the work of the Varanashi Research Foundation (VRF) in the village as service providers in the organic farming project. They introduced different programmes in the village to popularise and initiate farmers in to organic farming. This becomes important as it presents VRF’s understanding and practice of organic farming. Finally the chapter analyses the narratives of farmers on organic farming and the implementation of the village organic farming project, particularly in the light of the fact that the project was declared as a success in the village by the state government.

The chapter five ‘Farmers’ Association in Dakshina Kannada District’, discusses the phenomenon of farmers associations which are probably not peculiar to Dakshina Kannada district or to other parts of India. Nonetheless, this has not received the kind of attention in academic literature as farmers’ movements. Farmers’ associations are set up by farmers to further their agricultural prospects. Farmers’ associations are the foundation for the farmers’ collective in Dakshina Kannada district. I argue that these associations emerged with the development of the market economy, which made it difficult for individual farmers, particularly small and marginal farmers to cope with the demands and conditions of the ever-growing agricultural market. This chapter elaborates three formal farmers’ associations and one non-formal association. I primarily highlight farmers associations to explain as how they have played an important role in the lives of the farmers in their decisions, choices and investments within agriculture. Dakshina Kannada farmers are basically interested in capitalising their agriculture as they are more inclined towards commercial crops. However, commercial crops depend on the international market. These farmers though farmers associations try to negotiate with the state and market for their agricultural commodities and facilitate farmers' access to the market, and equip them to maximise their returns.

In the conclusion chapter Rhetoric and Reality of Karnataka Organic Farming Policy and Project, I reflect upon what I consider are the drawbacks of the project, both in terms of its design and implementation. The project from the point of conception itself was essentially top-down. In being so, the state government failed to foresee some of the problems that it could face over the years, particularly, in terms of financial accountability, technological assistance, extending organic market facilities such as
certification for organic products etc. Moreover, deliberating at the policy level over the future of farming in the state, this as of now is in a state of confusion, unsure over the efficacy of either organic or conventional farming. In conclusion, I also present some of the latest developments, both in my project village as well as at the level of agricultural policy, particularly to understand the future of state led organic farming in Karnataka.

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