



Socio-Economic Conditions of Organic Farmers in Karnataka: A Case Study of Shivamogga District

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Abstract : In Karnataka, organic farming is ecologically and economically feasible. Shivamogga district is a significant organic agricultural zone due to its favourable agro-climatic conditions, diverse planting pattern, and growing farmer awareness. Demographics, education, landholding, income, employment, marketing, certification, government assistance, and restraints of organic farmers in Shivamogga district are examined in this research. Organic farming has increased farmers' income, soil fertility, chemical input resistance, and sustainable lives, according to the research. However, certification fees, marketing inefficiencies, price volatility, workforce shortages, and insufficient institutional backing continue to hinder organic agricultural growth. The report suggests boosting market links, certification, financial aid, and extension services to promote sustainable organic agriculture. Studies in Shivamogga and Karnataka found that bigger, better-educated farmers embrace organic farming more easily, despite institutional obstacles.

Keywords: Organic farming, Socio-economic conditions, Sustainable agriculture, Organic certification, Shivamogga District, Karnataka.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture continues to play a vital role in the economy of Karnataka by providing employment, food security, and raw materials for agro-based industries. However, the excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides during the Green Revolution has resulted in soil degradation, declining productivity, environmental pollution, and adverse health effects. These challenges have encouraged policymakers, researchers, and farmers to promote sustainable agricultural practices.

Organic farming has emerged as one of the most promising alternatives to conventional agriculture. It emphasizes ecological balance through the use of farmyard manure, compost, green manure, crop rotation, biological pest control, and bio-fertilizers while avoiding synthetic chemicals.

Karnataka has been one of the pioneering states in promoting organic agriculture through various government schemes and institutional support. Among the districts, Shivamogga occupies a prominent position because of its fertile soils, abundant rainfall, diversified cropping systems, and progressive farming community. Crops such as paddy, arecanut, coconut, black pepper, ginger, turmeric, vegetables, and spices are increasingly cultivated under organic farming systems.

Organic farming not only contributes to environmental sustainability but also enhances rural livelihoods by reducing production costs, improving farm income through premium prices, and generating additional employment opportunities. Nevertheless, farmers continue to face several socio-economic and institutional challenges that require systematic policy interventions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review summarizes important studies relevant to the present research.

1. P. P. Jagtap, S. M. Shinde and R. D. Chavan (2012)

The researchers evaluated the economics of crop production under sustainable farming systems. Their findings showed that organic farming reduced expenditure on external inputs while improving soil health and farm profitability over time. The study emphasized the importance of value addition, organized marketing, and institutional credit in increasing farmers' income.

2. National Centre of Organic Farming (2021)

The report highlighted the rapid growth of organic farming in India due to increasing consumer demand for chemical-free food and government initiatives. It observed that states such as Karnataka have made significant progress through training programmes, organic certification, and financial assistance. However, inadequate market infrastructure and certification costs continue to constrain the growth of organic agriculture.

3. Food and Agriculture Organization (2022)

The report emphasized that organic farming contributes to sustainable agricultural development by improving soil fertility, conserving biodiversity, reducing environmental pollution, and enhancing climate resilience. It also noted that organic farming generates higher employment opportunities because it requires more labour for composting, weed management, and biological pest control.

4. Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and IFOAM – Organics International (2023)

According to the annual global survey, the area under organic cultivation has expanded steadily worldwide due to growing consumer awareness and policy support. The report highlighted India as one of the leading countries in terms of the number of organic producers and emphasized the need to strengthen certification systems, market infrastructure, and export opportunities.

5. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (2021)

The report examined the impact of organic farming on crop productivity and soil health. It found that integrated nutrient management, organic manures, and crop diversification improved soil organic carbon, water retention capacity, and long-term productivity. The report recommended strengthening research and extension services to promote organic farming among small and marginal farmers.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Most research on organic farming in Karnataka and India have examined economic performance, production techniques, environmental advantages, and acceptance. Several studies have evaluated the profitability and sustainability of organic agriculture, but few have addressed the socio-economic realities of organic farmers in Shivamogga area.

This research analyses Shivamogga district organic farmers' demographics, education, landholding pattern, income, employment, marketing, certification, government assistance, and significant restrictions to address this gap. It also assesses how organic farming has affected farmers' livelihood security and level of living, giving evidence for sustainable agricultural growth and policymaking.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the socio-economic profile of organic farmers in Shivamogga district.
2. To study production, marketing, certification, and financial aspects of organic farming.
3. To identify the major constraints faced by organic farmers.
4. To suggest policy measures for strengthening organic farming in Karnataka.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1. Study Area

The study is conducted in Shivamogga district of Karnataka, which is well known for diversified agriculture and increasing adoption of organic farming practices.

5.2. Data Collection

The study is based on both primary and secondary data.

5.3. Primary Data

- Structured questionnaire
- Personal interviews
- Field observations

5.4. Secondary Data

- Government reports
- Department of Agriculture
- Research journals
- Books
- NABARD publications
- Karnataka State Organic Certification Agency reports

5.5. Sample Size

- Sample farmers: 80 Organic Farmers
- Sampling Method: Random Sampling

6. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

Table No.1
Distribution by Educational Qualification

Educational Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	5	6.25
Primary School	12	15.00
Secondary School	30	37.50
Higher Secondary	18	22.50
Graduate & Above	15	18.75
Total	80	100.00

Source: Primary Survey, 2026.

The table shows Shivamogga organic farmers' education levels. The biggest group of 80 respondents was 30 farmers (37.50%) who completed secondary school. Then 18 (22.50%) have upper secondary education and 15 (18.75%) are graduates or better qualified. The greatest level of education was elementary school for 12 (15.00%) and illiteracy for 5 (6.25%). The survey found that most organic farmers had secondary education, which helps them comprehend the latest organic farming techniques,

government initiatives, certification processes, and sustainable agricultural technology. The low number of illiterate farmers suggests that education is crucial to organic farming's success.

Table No.2
Distribution by Landholding

Landholding	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 2 Acres	20	25.00
2–5 Acres	35	43.75
5–10 Acres	17	21.25
Above 10 Acres	8	10.00
Total	80	100.00

Source: Primary Survey, 2026.

The table presents the distribution of respondents according to the size of their agricultural landholdings. Among the 80 respondents, **35 farmers (43.75%)** own **2–5 acres** of land, forming the largest category. This is followed by **20 farmers (25.00%)** with less than 2 acres, **17 farmers (21.25%)** possessing 5–10 acres, and **8 farmers (10.00%)** owning more than 10 acres.

Table No.3
Distribution by Annual Income

Annual Income (₹)	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 2,00,000	15	18.75
2,00,001–4,00,000	30	37.50
4,00,001–6,00,000	20	25.00
Above 6,00,000	15	18.75
Total	80	100.00

Source: Primary Survey, 2026.

The table illustrates the annual income levels of the respondents. It is observed that **30 respondents (37.50%)** earn between **₹2,00,001 and ₹4,00,000** annually, making this the largest income group. **Twenty respondents (25.00%)** earn between **₹4,00,001 and ₹6,00,000**, while **15 respondents (18.75%)** each fall into the income categories of below **₹2,00,000** and above **₹6,00,000**.

Table No.4
Distribution by Farming Experience

Farming Experience	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 5 Years	14	17.50
5–10 Years	26	32.50
Above 10 Years	40	50.00
Total	80	100.00

Source: Primary Survey, 2026.

The table shows the farming experience of the respondents. Among the total respondents, 40 farmers (50.00%) possess more than 10 years of farming experience, while 26 respondents (32.50%) have 5–10 years of experience. The remaining 14 respondents (17.50%) have less than five years of farming experience.

Table No.5
Sources of Irrigation

Source of Irrigation	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Borewell	32	40.00
Canal	15	18.75
Open Well	13	16.25
Rain-fed	20	25.00
Total	80	100.00

Source: Primary Survey, 2026.

The table presents the major sources of irrigation used by organic farmers. **Borewell irrigation** is the primary source for **32 respondents (40.00%)**, followed by **rain-fed agriculture** for **20 respondents (25.00%)**. **Canal irrigation** supports **15 farmers (18.75%)**, while **13 respondents (16.25%)** depend on open wells.

Table No.6
Major Problems Faced by Organic Farmers

Problem	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Certification Cost	18	22.50
Labour Shortage	16	20.00
Marketing Problems	20	25.00
Price Fluctuation	14	17.50
Credit Constraints	12	15.00
Total	80	100.00

Source: Primary Survey, 2026.

The table highlights the major challenges encountered by organic farmers. The most significant problem reported is **marketing difficulties**, affecting **20 respondents (25.00%)**. **High certification costs** are reported by **18 respondents (22.50%)**, followed by **labour shortages (20.00%)**, **price fluctuations (17.50%)**, and **credit constraints (15.00%)**.

Table No.7
Overall Impact of Organic Farming

Impact	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Income Increased	28	35.00
Improved Soil Fertility	22	27.50
Better Health	10	12.50
Employment Generation	12	15.00
Environmental Conservation	8	10.00
Total	80	100.00

Source: Primary Survey, 2026.

The table presents the overall socio-economic impact of organic farming on the respondents. Among the surveyed farmers, **28 respondents (35.00%)** reported that organic farming has increased their income. **Improved soil fertility** was reported by **22 respondents (27.50%)**, while **12 respondents (15.00%)** indicated that organic farming generated additional employment opportunities. **Better health** was reported by **10 respondents (12.50%)**, and **8 respondents (10.00%)** recognized its contribution to environmental conservation.

7. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- 1. Socio-Economic Profile:** The majority of organic farmers in Shivamogga district have at least secondary education, which aids in understanding modern farming practices. Most farmers own 2-5 acres of land and have significant farming experience (over 10 years).
- 2. Income Levels:** A substantial portion of farmers (37.5%) earn between ₹2,00,001 and ₹4,00,000 annually, indicating improved income due to organic farming.
- 3. Irrigation Sources:** Borewell irrigation is the primary source for 40% of respondents, highlighting reliance on groundwater.
- 4. Challenges Faced:** Major issues include marketing difficulties (25%), high certification costs (22.5%), and labor shortages (20%).
- 5. Impact of Organic Farming:** The majority of farmers (35%) reported increased income, with additional benefits noted in soil fertility and employment generation.

8. SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

- 1. Strengthen Market Linkages:** Enhance connections between organic farmers and markets to improve sales and reduce marketing challenges.
- 2. Improve Certification Mechanisms:** Streamline the certification process to reduce costs and make it more accessible for farmers.
- 3. Increase Financial Assistance:** Provide more financial support and credit options to help farmers manage initial costs associated with organic farming.
- 4. Enhance Extension Services:** Expand educational and support services to help farmers adopt best practices in organic farming.
- 5. Policy Support:** Develop policies that address the specific needs of organic farmers, focusing on infrastructure, training, and market access to promote sustainable agricultural practices.

9. CONCLUSION

Organic farming has become an important pathway for achieving sustainable agricultural development in Karnataka. The experience of Shivamogga district demonstrates that organic farming can improve farmers' socio-economic conditions by reducing production costs, increasing profitability through premium prices, improving soil health, generating rural employment, and enhancing environmental sustainability. Despite these benefits, challenges related to certification, marketing, institutional support, and access to finance continue to limit wider adoption. Strengthening policy support, farmer organizations, extension services, and market infrastructure will be essential for making organic farming more inclusive and economically rewarding. Evidence from research in Shivamogga and across Karnataka supports the conclusion that, with appropriate institutional backing, organic farming can contribute significantly to sustainable rural development.

10. REFERENCES

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