

Organic Moringa Cultivation – A Success Story of a Salem Farmer

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Organic agriculture started a century ago in the European Countries. Though it was neglected initially, the importance of organic cultivation of agricultural and horticultural crops has been accepted in the last two decades and given much importance. The hazardous effects of the chemical fertilizers on human as well as on environment has created awareness among the farming community in switching over to the organic cultivation practices. Also use of organic fertilizers would also reduce the depletion of natural resources.

Organic farming systems mainly rely upon crop rotations, crop residues, animal, manures, legumes, green manures, off-farm organic wastes, mechanical cultivation, powders of mineral bearing rocks and biological pest and disease management

methods. These components maintain soil productivity and tilth, supply plant nutrients and help to control insects, weeds and other pests.

Among the vegetable crops, moringa can fit very well as a candidate crop for organic cultivation. India is the largest producer of this nutritionally and medicinally important, fast growing, drought tolerant, hardy crop capable of getting adapted to varied ecosystems.

Area under vegetable crops is more than 15250 ha and area under Moringa cultivation in Salem district is around 50 ha. The farmers growing moringa in Salem district especially in Veerapandi block and Kadayampatti blocks, are only small and marginal farmers and are getting only lower net profit (in spite of better yield) because of the involvement of middleman in the supply chain of moringa as vegetable to the consumers. There is a huge scope in organic moringa due to its nutritional richness with medicinal properties too. Hence Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Salem, intervened with on campus and off campus trainings on moringa cultivation in organic manner. Apart from these regular trainings, KVK, Salem also organized many training programmes like Skilled trainings, Sponsored trainings and Entrepreneurship Development programmes for farmers, farm women and rural youth on production of organic inputs, organic farming and value addition etc. and different ways and means for marketing of the products. One of the impacts of the above initiatives of Salem Krishi Vigyan Kendra, a farmer named Sakthivel. M from Govinthapuram village near V. Muthampatti of

Kadayampatti block turned into an organic farmer to cultivate organic moringa pods and leaves for more than four years. Recently he has got an organic certification for his moringa products also.

He planted perennial moringa type at a distance of 6 x 6 m distance with two plants in pit at 2 feet distance. Planting of two plants at a pit resulted in providing tolerance against heavy wind. Regarding intercultural operations pinching was done at 30 days after planting at 20 days interval. It has been carried up to 4 months to get around 50 to 60 branches per plant. For flowering it takes only 75 days after pruning. He observed three seasons of flowering in a year (January - February, June and August) which resulted in three harvesting seasons such as March - May, July - August and October-November respectively. Among these three seasons, March to May harvesting is the main and extended season of fruiting.

He applied 10 kg of farm yard manure per plant with drip irrigation once in 10 days. It is recommended to apply additional 5 kg of vermi compost and each 100g of biofertilizers like Azospirillum and Phosphobacteria. Besides application of 3 % panchagavya as foliar spray resulted in better growth and development. For plant protection aspect, for managing moringa pod fly attack, he used to prepare his own pest repellent using urine of indigenous cattle breeds and plant leaves such as Adathoda, Vitex (nochi), Calotropis (Erukku), Wrightia tinctoria (veppalai) etc.,



Regarding the marketing of moringa, he relies only the markets of Salem and nearby districts like Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri etc., He also supplies the moringa pods and leaves to Sarabanga Farmer Producer Company in which he is also one of the members.

By witnessing the success of organic moringa production, many fellow farmers are also started cultivating moringa and trying to turn into organic methods of moringa cultivation. Thus, he is one of the pioneers in organic moringa cultivation in Salem District. The mentality of the farmers of other blocks of Salem district, like Veerapandy, Peddanayakkanpalayam also has slowly changed towards organic moringa cultivation.

Hence, demonstrations and trainings conducted by Salem Krishi Vigyan Kendra imparted knowledge of moringa growers on cultivation techniques of moringa in organic manner for both pods and leaves. It ultimately resulted in improving social status of the farmers apart from increasing their income and net profit.
