

A Study on Market Availability of Organic Food Products in Upper Assam

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Abstract

The definition of the word “Organic” is an ecological management production system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It is based on the minimal use of off-farm inputs (Savithri, N. & Lavanya, B, 2019). Organic food is a term given to food which is prepared without using any harmful foreign substances, such as pesticides and preservatives. Organic farming is a system of production that relies on animal manure, organic waste, crop rotation, legumes, and biological pest control. Organic foods are produced through traditional and natural methods, sustaining the procedures of organic farming which minimises the use of synthetic chemicals. Thus Organic Food Products (OFP) are nutrient-rich and free of chemicals and pesticides. Over the decades due to increasing disposable income it made major influence on purchasing power of Indian consumers have shifted their preference and buying behaviour from traditional food to modern nutritious and hygienic food. Assam has tremendous potential to grow crops organically and emerges as a main supplier of organic products in the World’s organic market. Assam hold the third position among the Northeastern states in the area under organic farming. Currently, Assam has an area of approximately 28234.66 hectares under organic certification (CSIR-North East Institute of Science & Technology, 2014).

Objectives: The main goal of the present study was (a) to analyse the availability of organic food products in selected districts of Assam. (b) To explore the awareness level of consumers of organic food products in selected districts of Assam.

Methodology: This study was systematic and scientific in nature. Different methods and techniques are used by researchers at different stages of research to accomplish the objectives of the study. The detailed plan and structural framework used for gathering information. For this study, a purposive cum multistage random sampling design was adopted. Primary data were collected using a specially designed pre-tested schedule and questionnaire through personal and group interviews. The data received from various sources and websites were tabulated and interpreted using standard statistical tools as the Likert 5 point scale, averages, T- test, correlation and regression, cross-tabulation, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and SPSS. The data trend and past history was used to arranged at various conclusion and were interpreted in respective chapter. To conduct the survey, a standard structural questionnaire was prepared, which was divided into four different sets and comprised the required number of questions for each set, as follows.

Findings: The present study found that majority (51.66 percent) of the respondents opined that organic fruits and vegetables markets are significant. The study also indicated that consumer awareness of organic products is an important point. The analysis found that the majority (49.62 per cent) of respondents were aware of all organic food products. This study examined the opinions and perceptions of organic food product retailers, traders, consumers, farmers, and government stakeholders. The study shows that there is good potential for organic food products in Upper Assam, as there is a gradual increase in regular demand. Knowledge and awareness of organic products were quite good in the study area among customers. The study also found that the success of organic food products depends on a proper market structure and efficient supply chain management. Therefore, the government should take the initiative with proper measures and policies to promote organic products.

Implication: The present study will be helpful to future researchers for further in different directions in organic products. Policymakers and government stakeholders may use data and findings for arbitrary strategies.

Future research directions include Sustainability and Environmental impact, Nutritional and Health Benefits, Consumer Behaviour and preferences, Market Trends and Opportunities, Market segmentation and targeting, Assessing Distribution Channels, Barriers to market Entry, Impact of policy and Regulation and Consumer’s willingness to pay.

Keywords: Organic Products, Market Availability, Consumer Awareness, Upper Assam, Benefits of Organic Food, Consumer Preference, Organic Food Product Store, Information Seeking Behaviour, Organic Farming, Human Health

Introduction

Organic foods are produced through traditional and natural method sustaining by the procedures of organic farming which minimize the use of synthetic chemicals. Thus Organic Food Products (OFP) is nutrient rich, chemical and pesticides free (Suman, K.M., Ganapaty, M. S., 2023). The definition of the word “Organic” is an ecological management production system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity. It is based on the minimal use of off –farm inputs (Savithri, N. & Lavanya, B, 2019). Organic food is a term given to food which is prepared without using any harmful foreign substances such as pesticides, preservatives etc. The term “Organic” refers to the way agricultural products are grown and produced with natural manure. Organic food is produced through organic farming practices. Organic farmers must not use synthetic products, including chemical fertilisers, pesticides, waxes, and preservatives. They must also not use genetically modified organic seeds. It is an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles, and biological activity of the soil. India Produced approximately 2.67 MT of OFP in 2019, compared to 1.70 MT in 2018 which includes different varieties of cereals, oilseeds, beverages, pulses, millet, medicinal plants, vegetables, fruits, and organic cotton fibre. (APEDA, 2019). The organic market is also witnessing a tremendous increase in the number of organic producers. There are 2.8 million farmers worldwide practising organic farming, of which 47 percent of them are from Asia. India ranked first with 1,149, 371 producers in 2018. Over the decades due to increasing disposable income it made major influence on purchasing power of Indian consumers have shifted their preference and buying behaviour from traditional food to modern nutritious and hygienic food. This transformation grasps the path for increasing organic food production and marketing (Tabasum and, Sadia. 2020). The high nutritional value of organic products is the main reason why they are in demand in the domestic and global markets. Organic products offer trade opportunities for farmers in developing and developed countries. This organic market expansion

allows farmers to reap the benefits of trade with a relatively high price premium. Moreover, this market is not well known to most farmers, especially those living in developing countries. Therefore, it is essential for key players promoting organic farming to have up-to-date information on the available opportunities and trends in the organic market. Therefore, the dissemination of information about the opportunities and challenges for Indian organic products in the domestic and international markets is of fundamental concern to allow the continued development of the organic agriculture movement in this country (Garibay, V. Slavador, Jyoti. Katke, 2003). Due to increase in disposable income the Indian consumer have changed their preferences and consumption behaviour from the traditional staple food to modern nutrient, healthy and hygienic food (Singh, V., Joseph, S. 2014).

Reasons for the Study

The present study has been explored based on the research gaps identified in the literature review. Currently, organic food products have become popular and are in growing demand due to their awareness, health benefits, and consumption by many environmentally conscious people. The increasing use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides causes serious damage to the environment and human health. Therefore, it is high time to combat the adversity caused by conventional farming methods. Although nascent, the Indian organic sector is growing rapidly and has already made inroads into the world organic sector. Although the Indian organic food product market is growing, the biggest hurdle for the export of organic produce is the lack of processing, packaging, storing, supply chain management, and transportation of international standards. Once these infrastructural facilities are developed, the country can look forward to a prosperous future for organic product exports. Today a large portion of consumers are not aware about organic food products this is due to less quantity of production and availability in the market where overall consumption is still on the down side. There is a need for strong support and awareness-building in this regard. Hence, the present study attempts to provide a holistic understanding of the comprehensive issues related to the availability

of organic food products in the market. The study also attempted to examine the emerging market and marketing system of organic food products with reference to Upper Assam, considering retailers/traders, farmers, consumer awareness, and government initiatives for the promotion of organic food products.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the broad objectives of this study:

1. To analyse the availability of organic food products in selected districts of Assam.
2. To explore the awareness level of consumers on organic food products in selected districts of Assam.

Research Questions

As the study is exploratory in nature, the following research questions were framed instead of hypotheses:

1. Is there an availability of organic food products in the study area?
2. Are consumers aware of organic food products in the study area?

Data Sources and Methodology

The present study was systematic and scientific in nature. The different methods and techniques used by researcher at different stages of research to accomplish the objectives of the study. This study specifically focused on the market availability of organic food products in Assam. In this study, there is a need for different factors and elements, processes, and variables to make up the concept of the market. This study was based on both primary and secondary data. The detail plan and structural framework used for gathering information. For this present study a purposive cum multistage random sampling design was adopted. The primary data were collected with the help of a specially designed pre-tested schedule and questionnaire by personal interview and group interview method. Secondary data were collected from the concerned government departments or related agencies. To carry out the present study, three districts were selected in the state, and 300 samples were collected, comprising 135 nos. consumers,

120 nos. of farmers, 15 nos. of retailer and 30 nos. of govt. officials (Agricultural Development Officers) from all selected districts.

Sample Size

The purposive random sampling method was adopted so that the respondents could represent all selected districts. Thus the size of the total sample from each selected.

Name of Study Area	Particulars	Numbers of Sample Size
Golaghat District	Organic Farmers/ Producers	40
	Consumers	45
	Organic food retailer/ Traders	05
	Government Official (Agricultural Development Officers)	10
Jorhat District	Organic Farmers	40
	Consumers	45
	Organic food retailers/ Traders	05
	Government Official (Agricultural Development Officers)	10
Sivasagar District	Organic Farmers	40
	Consumers	45
	Organic food retailers/ Traders	05
	Government Official (Agricultural Development Officers)	10
Total		300

Tools and Techniques for Data Analysis

The data received from various sources and websites were tabulated and interpreted using standard statistical tools as the Likert 5 point scale, averages, percentage, T-test, correlation and regression coefficient analysis, cross-tabulation, ANOVA, and SPSS. The data trend and past history were used to arrange various conclusions and were interpreted in the respective chapters.

Price Spread

It represented the difference between the net prices received by the producers – seller (PNP) and the price paid by the final consumers i.e. difference between producer's net price (PNP) and Retailer's Selling Price (RP)

$$PS = RP - PNP$$

Where PS = Price Spread

RP = retailers Selling Price (Rupees Per kg)

PNP = Producer's Net Price = Producers Selling Price – Marketing Cost (Rs. per kg)

Producers Share in the Consumer Rupee (PSCR)

It was the percentage of net price received by the producers (sellers) to the price paid by the consumer or selling price of the retailer.

$$PSCR = PNP / RP \times 100$$

Where PSCR = Producer's Share in the Consumer Rupee (Rs. per kg)

RP = Retailer's selling Price (Rs. per. Kg)

PNP = Producer's Net Price (Rs. per kg)

Review of Literature

Gendall Philip and Betteridge Kerry (1999), in their study, "The Japanese Market for Organic Fruits and Vegetables", revealed that awareness of the organic food system in Japan was low and there was confusion amongst respondents about what the terms organic meant and low this differed from chemical free and natural. When asked what they thought the term organic meant, respondents had the option of choosing any combination of natural chemical –free, traditional mystical, and not sure. Most respondents indicated that the term organic encompasses the concept of both natural and chemical-free.

Chang Christe & Girifit. R. Gary (2003), in their study, "An overview of organic food products market in Australia" had found that globally, the demand for organic products appears to have very quick in the path decade from the consumer perception that organic products are safe, clean and ethical. Their study predicted that organic products worldwide would grow at a rate of approximately 10-20 percent per annum in the next few years. The study stated that growth will occur primarily in countries such as the United States, Western Europe, and Japan, unlike

the United States or European Union. They found that income and price were important factors in determining the demand for organic products a few years ago but are significantly less important now.

Kicher, Lukas. Khanna, Ranjan., & Richter, Toralf (2004), in their studies "The organic market in Switzerland and the E.U- overview and market access information for producers and international trading companies", explained that organic agriculture has undergone dynamic development in Switzerland over the last 10 years, since the early 1990 it has been acknowledged and promoted by politician and government bodies. The area of agricultural land farmed according to organic standards is expanding rapidly.

Salvador. V. and Jyoti and Katke (2003), in their paper, "Market Opportunities and Challenges for Indian Organic product" revealed that organic products produced in India are tea, spices, fruits and vegetables, rice, coffee, cashew nuts, oil seed, wheat, pulses, cotton, and herbal extracts. Their study found that India has a rich heritage of agricultural traditions which are suitable for designing organic production systems. The Indian government has started supporting organic agriculture on a large scale and at various levels. Their study also revealed that the market has not grown large so far due to the lack of marketing initiatives from players, low awareness of organic products from customers, and higher prices.

Reddy, Amarendra, A. (2013), in his article, "Role of Institutions and support system in promoting organic Farming: A case study of organic producer groups in India in Uttarkhand." revealed that organic farming has started slowly making inroads into Indian agriculture due to increased costs of inputs of conventional agriculture coupled with environmental and health concerns associated with it. Their study found that the producers engaged in organic production were typically small in holding size and in the productive age group, and the cost price squeeze put financial pressure on producers to sustain for a longer period. To enhance the adoption of organic farming. It is necessary to ease the technical and institutional constraints. According to his study, it can be concluded that federating the OPG's into a supply cooperative is an option for upscaling the activities of the producers group, encouraging the

producers to form into institutions through group-based subsidy programs is also needed.

Sharma. N. (2018), in her paper, “A market study of organic food products available in Udaipur city” reported that changing consumer attitudes toward sound health and environmental issues have impacted organic food consumption. The demand for organic food products is increasing nationally. However, there is still a need for more certified organic shops in the market. The market for organic food is limited and needs to be promoted by the government among farmers (producers) and consumers so that a profitable business can be run successfully.

Doel and Mukarjee (2012) examined the changing consumer behaviour towards organic food in their research paper, “Impact of Consumer Behavior on Organic Food Consumption in selected cities in Maharashtra” Earlier consumption of food was mainly based on price, whereas there is an emerging category of consumers who are willing to pay for better quality and notorious food. These consumers are well-educated and affluent. The study indicated that the number of organic food users was small. The study observed that Indians seem to be more conscious about nutritional value in food than issues that pertain to farmers, bio diversity, certification, chemicals used or even taste.

Bonia. Bharat. (2019). In his journal titled “Organic farming in Assam: Prospect and challenges,” emphasised that Assam’s potential for organic farming is enormous, as it is naturally organic by default and can be gauged from the extremely low consumption of fertilisers in the region. According to their study, they found that the net cultivated area of 4.3 million hectares around 30.90 lakh hectares has never seen the use of chemical fertilisers. They also found that conscious organic farming has suddenly increased across Assam, especially among those cultivating ginger, turmeric, oranges, black pepper, and pineapple, since the demand for organic food is increasing worldwide.

Bora, S., Das, P.K., and Barman, I (2021). In their article on “Farmers information seeking behavior in relation to organic vegetables production in Assam”. Besides having tremendous potential to grow crops organically, organic farming is yet to taste success in Assam. In their study They found that information is

currently seen by many as the main limiting factor to growth in the organic sector in the state. In their conclusion, they suggested that there is a need to equip farmers with the necessary information related to organic cultivation and certification processes with respect to important vegetable crops.

Mishra., Rekha. Kausikh and Neeraj (2013) explained consumer behaviour and attitudes toward organic food in their article titled, “Consumer Insights for Organic Food Market. Today, however, marginal growth is slowly becoming evident in the increase in organised producers, retailers, and product offerings in the market, where the movement had previously been driven entirely by the spirit of individual initiatives of the farmers. Their survey revealed that India was among the top ten countries where consumers demanded health food, including organic food.

Behera, U.K., & Shahane, Amit, A (2012), in their study entitled, “Significance of Promotion and Awareness Creation of Organic Certification Procedure in Meghalaya state,” have reported that production and marketing of organic products which lacking in certification of organic products in the state of Meghalaya. Due to the lack of a proper market structure, the produce was mostly sold in the local market at normal prices. The lack of premium prices for production arises because of the difficulty in claiming the produce as organic due to the non-monitor production system which is organic by default and not by choice. Their study mentioned that the certification is produced by a third party (NPOP) that provides written assurance that products, processes, or services conform to certain standards. For the study, 120 organic farmers, 135 consumers, and 30 government officials were selected. officials and 15 nos. of organic retailers were selected for the study.

Das, Suryatapa and Chatterjee, Annalashkhimi (2020), in their paper, “Organic farming in India: A vision towards a healthy nation,” have explained that food quality and Safety are two important factors that have gained ever increasing attention in general consumers, Conventionally grown food have immense adverse health effects due to the presence of higher pesticide residue, more nitrate, heavy metals hormones, antibiotic residue and also

genetically modified organisms. The popularity of organically grown foods is increasing daily owing to their nutritional and health benefits. India is a country with indigenous skills and the potential for growth in organic agriculture. Although India was far behind in the adoption of organic farming due to several reasons, it has achieved rapid growth in organic agriculture and is now one of the largest organic producers in the world. Their study found and made a conclude with that farming yields more notorious and safe food. The popularity of organic food is growing dramatically as consumers seek organic foods that are thought to be healthier and safer; thus, the organic farming process is more eco-friendly than conventional farming. Moreover, the organic produce market is expanding globally, including in India. They encouraging organic farming in India can build a nutritionally, ecologically, and economically healthy nation in near future

Bardhan, Tannishtha., Singh, Premalata et al. (2020), in their paper “A study on perception of urban consumers regarding organic food in Eastern India,” Their study have analyzed that all over the world the food consumption pattern is changing speedily due to growing consciousness on health issues, environmental safety issues and food safety issues and now people are showing greater concern regarding consumption organic food. In their study, perception can be operationalised as the way urban consumers interpret or understand the consumption of organic food as being good for health. The results show the percentage of respondents agreeing or disagreeing with different statements, and the mean perception scores (MPS) show the extent to which people strongly perceived those facts regarding organic food. Their findings suggested that the majority of the respondents strongly perceived that organic foods are eco-friendly and safe, and that more awareness is needed regarding organic foods in nearby areas. Most of the respondents agreed that organic foods are natural, healthy, and prevent diseases, and they desired to adopt them. People are undecided regarding factors such as the longer shelf life of organic foods regarding their purchase preference. Respondents disagreed with the notion that consuming organic food is a status symbol. They strongly disagreed with the factors that consuming

organic food would lead to malnutrition and will lead to food deficit.

Bordoloi, Popiha. & Singh, N.D (2020), in their research “ Present Status, Prospect and Challenges of Organic farming in North Eastern India,” have attempted to understand that the North East region of India is mostly rain-fed and agricultural practice is almost organic in nature to restore the loss which achieved by wisdom. They depicted that the total cultivated organic area of India is 4.72 M hectare (2013-2014) out of which 69.45 thousand hectares fall under North Eastern India. Northeastern India is the Hub for growing famous and in-demand crops. It is suitable for growing some demand crops. It accounts for 45 percent of total pineapple production and is the fourth largest producer of organic products in India. Their study also mentioned that it is for some niche crops with high market demand, such as Assam Lemon, various types of medicinal plants and passion fruits, Zinger, and Turmeric, known for their quality. Although there are many prospects in organic farming, some challenges hinder its development of organic farming in this area. There is an urgent need for farmers friendly government policy and strategies, awareness about the proper nourishment of crop and pest & disease management, implementation of early organic land certification process, development of marketing channels for making the organic farming in North Eastern India and to cite causes and remedies of such challenge

Das, Debasish (2021), in his research article, “Government of Assam Initiatives Towards Organic Agriculture.” have stated that the growing demand for organic products in international markets has opened up new space and scope for Assam to fulfil the demand of the customers or consumers. He expressed that the farmers of the land are still dependent on age-old practices to grow their food which is largely organic. From his study it was cleared th0at in growing global organic food markets, the government of Assam in cooperation with the government of India has been taking many initiative to increase the production of organic products, setting the goal to capture the global organic market, Many scheme such as Paramparagat Krishi Vikash Yojana (PKVY), Rashtriya Krishi Vikash Yojana (RKVY), Mission Organic Value Chain Development (MOVCD) have

already been implemented to achieve the goal, his also study also found that although Assam is blessed with fertile land has enough potential for organic hub but some of the constraint in this way such as lack of marketing facility, lack of exposure of the high quality organic product of Assam in the mainland, lack of financial, technological and infrastructure support, lack of advertisement and brand building.

Das, Debasish (2022), in his research paper, "Organic Farming: A Study of Ginger Cultivation in the District of Karbi Anglong, Assam," have explained on the fertile land of Karbi Anglong has enough potential in the field of organic farming to meet the increasing demand for organic products in the international market. The ginger produced in the district has already been tagged with Geographical Identification status after all the quality checks. The ginger produced in Karbi Anglong has huge demand in the national and global markets of the Middle East due to its organic characteristics and medicinal benefits. He also analysed the existing conditions of organic practices in the district, where access to loans was facilitated by an MoU signed by Grin-Fed with the State Bank of India and Longpi Dehangi Rural Bank. International funding organisations such as IFAD (International Funding for Agricultural Development) also collaborated with the state government, which helped Grin-Fed set up the collection. The involvement of multiple bodies, such as district administration, NGOs, banks, and international organisations, in the ginger supply chain provided a big push to ginger cultivation in the region, with production increasing from 17,312 metric tons in 2007 to 32,000 metric tons in 2012. During his study, he observed some unavoidable challenges, such as lack of marketing, lack of advertisement, lack of policy for encouraging the spirit of farmers for promoting organic agriculture, lack of infrastructure facility, and lack of storage facilities in the district. He suggested that proper implementation of government schemes and the right strategies in the field of marketing will provide organic ginger a boost in the global market which in turn will help in reviving the economic scenario of the district, state, and nation as a whole.

In his paper titled "A study on consumer behavior towards organic food in Guwahati", Basumatary

(2022) found that consumer awareness has started to transform towards organic products over the decade. This is particularly true for food consumption. Most consumers believe that eating organic food is beneficial to their health. The study found that 58 percent of the respondents chose to consume organic food to maintain excellent health. His findings also revealed that because the price of organic products is so high, consumers are hesitant to purchase them as the product is not affordable to the average person, and consumers are unfamiliar with the concept of organic products. The study showed that India has enormous potential for a great revolution in organic agriculture. The government should also make more efforts to simplify the regulatory system for improving organic products and raising awareness among local customers for domestic consumption to help organic farming flourish more quickly. He concluded that the organic food market must be creative and dynamic to compete with urban and rural residents' purchasing habits in the organic food sector.

Tabbasum, S., Sheriff, M. Aisha (2020), In their study entitled "Marketing of organic food products in Mysore District", has explained the various concept on marketing of organic food products such as awareness, availability, accessibility, affordability and reliability. Factors affecting the purchase and willingness to pay for organic products were also systematically analysed. Their study found that availability and accessibility are not limitations for enhancing the market for organic products in Mysore. Their study suggested that there is a good potential for organic food products in Mysore city, as there is a regular demand for and adequate supply of organic food products. Furthermore, their study found that product certification, reliability, health concerns, quality, and taste of organic food products play a vital role in the promotion of organic food products.

Chanda. Punam., Islam Ashraful. (2022) In their paper titled "Organic farming in North-East India: Prospects and Challenges". have emphasised that in the global market, organic produce is more expensive than conventional goods, as organic farming enables farmers to profit and establishes a national organic hub. There is an urgent need for farmers to promote

the use of organic manure to maintain soil fertility and productivity. Their study also revealed that the rain-fed tribal north-eastern and hilly regions of the country, where negligible chemicals are used in agriculture, have been practising subsistence agriculture for a long period. Their study found that the need of the hour is adequate capacity building and providing technology for backstopping to stakeholders. Marketing and value addition were important areas of concern for farmers to obtain the actual benefits of organic farming. They also suggest that a close public-private partnership is warranted to achieve the desired momentum. Certification of organic products by farmers is another major area of concern. This can pave the way for sustainable agriculture and protect people's health.

Annand. Mukesh., Srivastava. S. Kumar (2023) In their paper entitle "Organic Food Product Market in India" Have revealed that organic food has grown substantially approval to multiplicity of motives which in chance has extended the native as well as worldwide sustainable food market. They collected and observed significant information and facts associated with Indian organic products at a single locus, and production and export values were analysed for the purpose of the study. They focused on government policies related to the organic food market using secondary data. Their study found that the production and export of organic food markets indicated growth over a period of six years (2017-2023). However, it also indicates a slight decline in production and export in the year (2021-2022 taken by government 3). Their study also mentioned information related to various government schemes and policies and initiatives taken by the government for the development of the organic food industry in India. They also stated that the scheme was similar to certification. Their study also found that the growth rate was low in the current period. However, it also indicates the huge scope of this industry in the long run.

Mahajan. Dipti., Swapnil., Kasande. Shailash. P, (2025) Their research article titled "Consumer Behaviour Regarding Organic Food in India: A review Scholarly Insights and Future Directions". This study aims to examine the behaviour of Indian

consumers towards organic food, exploring the factors that influence their purchasing decisions and the challenges faced by the industry. Their study found that while the growing consumer demand regarding various motivators for purchase, such as health, the environment, and demographic variables, are important. Their study also found that psychological, socio-demographic, and structural influences were critically evaluated, and motivators and barriers were highlighted to describe the underlying reasons that lead consumers towards or away from consuming organic food products. In the context of education and place of residence, consumers may experience different motivators and barriers that can influence their organic food consumption.

Kazi. Mohammed Imran., Katkade, Maruti B.(2024) In their paper titled "Organic Food Product-Astudy on Consumer perspective in Uddir Town of Maharastra" they revealed the increasing demand and requirement for eco-friendly organic food products in the Indian market. Their study examined key factors influencing consumer choices, including perceived health benefits, environmental impact, and the importance of ethical sourcing. The findings also revealed a growing trend towards prioritising eco-friendly products, suggesting a shift in market dynamics that could influence future agricultural practices and food production.

Result and Discussion

Result

Availability of Organic Food Products

The present study aimed to analyse the availability of organic products in selected districts in Assam. Fruits and vegetables, spices, Millets, Oil products, milk and dairy products, and processed food products are the most common organic items sold by retailers and traders. Most retailers and traders dealt with fruits and vegetables due to the availability of production and procurement. In the study areas, there is a need for proper facilities for marketing organic products. Some outlets or respondents replied that the instability of the stock of perishable products leads to losing customers because most customers wish to shop for their required products from one place. The availability of organic food products

was analysed by understanding the consumers and farmers responses on the availability of shops in the respective areas where they are staying and come from, place of availability, and availability of different varieties in the retail store or traders.

Table 1 Distribution of Place of Availability of Organic Food Products in Selected Districts (In numbers and percentage)

Place	Description	Consumers Opinion		Farmers Opinion		Retailers Opinion		Govt. Official Opinion		Total
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Mall	Frequency	60	75	88	32	11	4	22	8	300
	Percent	44.45	55.55	73.33	26.67	73.34	26.66	73.34	26.66	
Organic Store	Frequency	95	40	92	28	13	2	25	5	300
	Percent	70.37	29.63	76.66	23.34	86.66	13.34	83.33	16.67	
Farmers Shop	Frequency	94	41	97	23	12	3	22	8	300
	Percent	69.62	30.38	80.83	19.17	80	20	73.33	26.67	
Online Shop	Frequency	97	38	94	26	10	5	23	7	300
	Percent	71.85	28.15	78.33	21.67	66.67	33.33	76.67	23.33	
Farm Gate	Frequency	96	39	95	25	14	1	26	4	300
	Percent	71.12	28.88	79.16	20.84	93.33	6.67	86.66	13.34	

Source: Field survey, 2023-2024.

Table 2 Distribution of Numbers of Organic Store Available in the Study Area

Numbers Distribution	Frequency				Total	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
	Retailers	Consumers	Farmers	Govt. Official			
Zero	1	10	12	2	25	8.33	...
One to two	2	45	39	7	93	31	39.33
Two to four	8	55	48	15	126	42	81.33
More than Four	4	25	21	6	56	18.67	100
	15	135	120	30	300	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2023-2024.

Table 3 Perception of Retailers/Traders on Organic Products on the basis of Age wise

Statement	Test Value = 0					
	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Age	23.008	14	.000	3.667	3.32	4.01
Based on experience you belief on products as (a) Organic Fruits, (b) Organic Vegetables and (c) Spices are dominant in existing market	28.983	14	.000	4.000	3.70	4.30

Source: Field survey, 2023-2024

Table 4 Correlation Matrix for Factors Influencing the Retailers Perception on Organic Food Products Correlation

Statement	Belief in organic products	Consumer willingness to pay for	Procure organic products from farm gate	Follow distribution channel	As per demand products are not available	Market concentrated in local state, national, International market	Challenges facing in present market
Belief in organic products. Sig.(2- tailed N)	1 .930** 000 15	.930** 000 15	.955* .000 15	.960** .000 15	.977* .000 15	.962** .000 15	.957** .000 15
Consumer willingness to pay for. Sig.(2- tailed N)	.930** 000 15	1 000 15	.959** 000 15	.917** 000 15	.922** 000 15	.947** 000 15	.914** 000 15
Procure organic products from farm gate. Sig.(2- tailed N)	.955** 000 15	.959** 000 15	1 000 15	.931** 000 15	.941* 000 15	.952** 000 15	.919** 000 15
Follow distribution channel. Sig.(2- tailed N)	.960** 000 15	.917** .000 15	.931** 000 15	1 000 15	.979** .000 15	.938** 000 15	.959** 000 15
As per demand products are not available. Sig.(2- tailed N)	.977** .000 15	.922** .000 15	.941** .000 15	.979** .000 15	1 .000 15	.948** .000 15	.984** .000 15
Market concentrated in local state, national, International market. Sig.(2- tailed N)	.962** .000 15	.947** .000 15	.952** .000 15	.938** .000 15	.948* .000 15	1 .000 15	.956** .000 15
Challenges facing in present market. Sig.(2- tailed N)	.957** .000 15	.914** .000 15	.919** .000 15	.959** .000 15	.984** .000 15	.956** .000 15	1 .000 15

Source: Estimated by researcher, 2023-2024.

Consumer Awareness on Organic Food Products

The major challenges in reaching more organic consumers are the lack of awareness and the difficulty of meeting consumers' needs regarding product range availability, quality, and price. Although awareness of organic products is spreading in India, and the topic has begun to receive more attention from the mainstream media, there is still a huge unmet need for information among consumers. The majority of the population is not aware of the harmful effects of non-organic agriculture and the existence of organic farming. Among those who are aware of and interested in organic products, there is a lack of information on where they can be purchased. There is no comprehensive, up-to-date, and user-friendly online directory of organic food retailing in India. Now a days People are becoming conscious

and aware of the harmful effects of inorganic crops and food products and the benefits of organic food items. Therefore, people are gradually turning to organic products which are not treated with any kind of chemical substances during the process. Consumer awareness of organic products is the first step in developing demand for organic products (Arun et al., 2023).

Table 5 Awareness Level of Consumers on Organic Products

Varieties of Organic Products	Nos. Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Vegetables	21	15.55	...
Fruits	14	10.37	25.92
Spices	12	8.88	34.8

Cereals & Pulses	9	6.66	41.46
Oil products	8	5.92	47.38
Beverages	4	2.96	50.34
All of the above	67	49.62	100
Total	135	100	100

Very low	-	5 (1.6%)	-	-
Low	-	4 (1.33%)	-	-
Total	300 (100%)	300 (100%)	300 (100%)	300 (100%)

Source: Field survey, 2023-2024.

Table 6 Distribution of Overall Respondent's Awareness Level on Organic Food Products

Knowledge	Eco Friendly	Effect of Chemical food	Organic food	Sustainability
Very High	155 (51.66 %)	102 (34%)	111 (37%)	114 (38%)
High	119 (35.73%)	157 (52.33%)	161 (53.66%)	160 (53.33%)
Moderate	26 (8.66%)	32 (10.66%)	43 (14.33%)	26 (8.66%)

Table 7 Sources of Awareness about Organic Food Products (In Numbers and Percentage)

Source of Awareness	Frequency	Percent
Media/ Television/ Radio Magazine	40	13.33
Friends/Family/Reference	184	61.33
Newspaper	28	9.33
Trade Fair	16	5.34
Advertisement of Social Media	32	10.67
Total	300	100%

Source: Field survey, 2023-2024.

Table 8 Distribution of Consumers Awareness on the basis of Both Income and Experience Wise

Case Processing Summary						
				Cases		
				Valid	Missing	Total
				N	Percent	N
Consumer experience * Consumer income * Your perception on organic products as A. pesticide and chemical free B. No adulteration, C. Eco friendly. D. more nutria.						32
				135	93.8%	2
					6.2%	100.0%
Consumer Experience * Consumer Income * Your perception on organic products as A. pesticide and chemical free B. No adulterations, C. Eco friendly, D. More nutrias.						
Your perception on organic products as (A) pesticide and chemical free (B) No adulteration, (C) Eco friendly, (D) more Nutrias				Consumer income		
				Rs.0 to 20000	Rs. 20001 to 30000	Rs. 30001 to 40000
				Rs.40001 to 500000		Total
Strongly Disagree	Consumer experience	3 to 6 years	Count		1	
			% within Consumer experience		100.0%	100.0%
			% within Consumer income		50.0%	50.0%
			% of Total		50.0%	50.0%
		6 to 9 years	Count		1	1
			% within Consumer experience		100.0%	100.0%
			% within Consumer income		50.0%	50.0%

Disagree	Consumer experience	3 to 6 years	Count		2		2
			% within Consumer experience		100.0%		100.0%
			% within Consumer income		100.0%		100.0%
			% of Total		100.0%		100.0%
		6 to 9 years	Count	0	2		2
			% within Consumer experience	.0%	100.0%		100.0%
			% within Consumer income	.0%	100.0%		66.7%
			% of Total	.0%	66.7%		66.7%
	Total		Count	1	2		3
			% within Consumer experience	33.3%	66.7%		100.0%
			% within Consumer income	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%
			% of Total	33.3%	66.7%		100.0%
Neither disagree nor agree	Consumer experience	0 to 3 years	Count	0	1	0	1
			% within Consumer experience	.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
			% within Consumer income	.0%	100.0%	.0%	12.5%
			% of Total	.0%	12.5%	.0%	12.5%
		3 to 6 years	Count	1	0	0	1
			% within Consumer experience	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
			% within Consumer income	20.0%	.0%	.0%	12.5%
			% of Total	12.5%	.0%	.0%	12.5%
		6 to 9 years	Count	2	0	0	2
			% within Consumer experience	100.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
			% within Consumer income	40.0%	.0%	.0%	25.0%
			% of Total	25.0%	.0%	.0%	25.0%
		9 to 12 years	Count	2	0	2	4
			% within Consumer experience	50.0%	.0%	50.0%	100.0%
			% within Consumer income	40.0%	.0%	100.0%	50.0%
			% of Total	25.0%	.0%	25.0%	50.0%
	Total		Count	5	1	2	8
			% within Consumer experience	62.5%	12.5%	25.0%	100.0%

			% within Consumer income		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
			% of Total		62.5%	12.5%	25.0%	100.0%
Agree	Consumer experience	0 to 3 years	Count	0	1	1	0	2
			% within Consumer experience	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
			% within Consumer income	.0%	33.3%	10.0%	.0%	11.8%
			% of Total	.0%	5.9%	5.9%	.0%	11.8%
		3 to 6 years	Count	1	0	0	0	1
			% within Consumer experience	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
			% within Consumer income	50.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	5.9%
			% of Total	5.9%	.0%	.0%	.0%	5.9%
		6 to 9 years	Count	0	1	4	0	5
			% within Consumer experience	.0%	20.0%	80.0%	.0%	100.0%
			% within Consumer income	.0%	33.3%	40.0%	.0%	29.4%
			% of Total	.0%	5.9%	23.5%	.0%	29.4%
		9 to 12 years	Count	1	1	5	2	9
			% within Consumer experience	11.1%	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%	100.0%
			% within Consumer income	50.0%	33.3%	50.0%	100.0%	52.9%
			% of Total	5.9%	5.9%	29.4%	11.8%	52.9%
		Total	Count	2	3	10	2	17
			% within Consumer experience	11.8%	17.6%	58.8%	11.8%	100.0%
			% within Consumer income	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
			% of Total	11.8%	17.6%	58.8%	11.8%	100.0%

Source: Estimated by Researcher 2023-2024

Discussion

Table 1 shows the place and type of store where organic products are available. It has been found from the table that organic products are largely available in online shops (71.85 percent) followed by farm gate (71.12 percent), Organic food store (70.37 percent) and farmer shop (69.62 percent) respectively. As depicted in the table, the consumers opined and replied that the major availability place for organic products was online shops (70.85 percent). According to farmers, the major availability place for organic products was at the Farm Gate

level (79.16 percent). For retailers, it was at farm Farm gate level (93.33 percent). As per government officials, the major place for availability was also at the farm gate level (86.66 percent). The study found that the majority of the respondents opined that the major availability platform for organic products was at the Farm Gate level.

Table 2 shows the respondents' opinions on the number of organic stores available in the study areas. According to the data, 42 per cent of respondents replied that there are at least two to four organic stores in their locality, 31 per cent of respondents

replied that there is at least one to two organic stores in their locality, and 18.67 per cent of respondents replied that there are more than four organic stores in their locality. Hence, there are not enough organic stores. Therefore, retailers and traders should focus on this line.

Table 3 shows the perception of retailers/traders on organic products by age using a one-sample test. The result is statistically significant as the P value is less than 5%. This means that there are differences in age groups and beliefs regarding the dominance of organic products in the market. This indicates that retailers/traders behave differently regarding organic products based on age groups. Most retailers with lower ages prefer organic products.

Table 4 depicts the correlation matrix computed to identify the relationship among the different factors. The aforementioned table depicts a positive and strong correlation among the variables. The table found that a significant positive relationship between respondents belief on organic products as Fruits, Vegetables and Spices are dominant in existing market and respondents observation on consumers are willing to pay for Organic Products

[$r(15) = .930^{**}$, $p = .000$], significant positive relationship respondents belief on organic products as Fruits, Vegetables and Spices are dominant in existing market and As per the demands of the market Products are not available supply, [$r(15) = .977^{**}$, $p = .000$], significant positive relationship between respondents belief on organic products as Fruits, Vegetables and Spices are dominant in existing market and follow the distribution channel as Producer-Retailer-Consumers, [$r(15) = .960^{**}$, $p = .000$], significant positive relationship between significant positive relationship between respondents belief on organic products as Fruits, Vegetables and Spices are dominant in existing market and respondents product markets is concentrated within. Local market, state market. National market and international Market [$r(15) = .962^{**}$, $p = .000$], significant positive relationship between respondents belief on organic products as Fruits, Vegetables and Spices are dominant in existing market and Challenges are facing in the present market. [$r(15) = .957^{**}$, $p = .000$].

Regarding consumer awareness of organic food products, see Table 5. found that the majority (49.62

per cent) of respondents were aware of all organic food products, as mentioned in the table. Out of total respondents (15.52 per cent) of them were aware about vegetables as organic food products, (10.57 per cent) of respondents were aware about fruits as organic food products, (8.88 per cent) of respondents were aware spices as organic products, out of them (6.66 per cent) were aware about cereals and pulses as organic products, (5.92 per cent) were aware as edible oil is organic products respectively. The study mentioned that there is ample scope for increasing awareness of organic products among consumers and society.

In table 6, it is noticed that knowledge of organic products is very important for purchase and consumption from the point of respondents. table it was found that the consumers, farmers, retailers, and government officials had a very high level of awareness about the eco-friendliness of organic products (51.66), followed by high (35.73%) and moderate (8.66%) awareness. The knowledge of consumers on the effect of chemicals in food was high (52.33 %), followed by very high (34 %), moderate (10.66 %), very low (1.66 %), and low (1.33 %) attention. The respondents knowledge of organic products was high (53.66%), followed by very high (37%) and moderate (14.33 %) attitudes. The respondents' knowledge of sustainability was high attention (53.66%), followed by very high (38%) and moderate (8.66%) levels of attention, respectively. Thus, respondents have better knowledge and awareness of concepts such as eco-friendliness, the effect of chemical food, organic food, and sustainability features.

Table 7 depicts the sources of information regarding awareness of organic food products. Appropriate information collected regarding organic food products is important for retailers and traders to build strategies and convince customers. The table shows that most (61.33 percent) respondents obtained information from friends and family members, followed by (13.33 percent) from sources like media, television, radio, and magazines, (10.67 percent) from social media, (9.33 percent) from newspapers, and (5.34 percent) from trade fairs. Thus, friends and family members play an important role in disseminating information about OFPs. It

has been inferred that friends, family, and reference groups are important sources of information for influencing consumers' awareness of organic food products.

Table 8 depicts the distribution of consumer awareness based on income and experience. According to the information, there was a significant relationship with all variables, highlighting that 100 per cent of consumers with 6–9 years of experience were totally aware of organic products. On the other hand, about 66.7 per cent of consumers with an income of 40001–50,0000 lakhs were highly aware of organic food products compared to other income groups.

Recommendations

1. The government should support and cooperate with retailers to encourage them to expand their offerings and improve access to organic products in the market.
2. There are concerns about health and environmental aspects which signify the consumption of organic food products. Therefore, consumer interest must be considered when advertising organic food products in the market.
3. The study revealed that fruits and vegetables were more available than other organic food products. In addition, processed food products are also needed in the market. Therefore, farmers should be encouraged and supported to produce other organic foods which are equally important for the human diet.
4. There are limited organic food product outlets in Upper Assam. Therefore, retailers and traders should take momentum in this field.
5. Trust is an important factor for every customer before buying. Therefore, traders should ensure reliability by selling certified products with organic brands.
6. To promote awareness, the government should arrange as many platforms as possible which can be beneficial to both farmers and retailers.
7. There should be a provision by the Assam government for the export of organic products from the state as a whole.
8. There is a need to create awareness programs for the public about organic food products, their benefits, importance, and certification.

Conclusion

Organic Food Products (OFP) are nutrient-rich and free of chemicals and pesticides. Over the decades due to increasing disposable income it made major influence on purchasing power of Indian consumers have shifted their preference and buying behaviour from traditional food to modern nutritious and hygienic food. Assam has tremendous potential to grow crops organically and emerges as a main supplier of organic products in the World's organic market. The present study systematically analysed the issue of organic food product market availability in Upper Assam. The study used systematic methods and methodology for sampling, selection of sample, and sample size. This study examined the opinions and perceptions of organic food product retailers, consumers, farmers, and government stakeholders. This study collected primary data from retailers, consumers, farmers, and the government officials. The study used appropriate and standard statistical tools for analysing and interpreting the data. The study used likert5 point scale, correlation regression analysis, cross-tabulation, and factor analysis. The study found that respondents highly opined that organic fruits and vegetables were more available in the study area. The findings indicate that there is good potential for organic food products in Upper Assam, as there is gradually increase in regular demand. Knowledge and awareness of organic products were quite good in the study area among customers. The present study found that the majority of the respondents (51.66 percent) opined that organic fruits and vegetables markets are significant. The study also indicated that consumer awareness of organic products is an important point. The analysis found that the majority (49.62 per cent) of respondents were aware of all organic food products. The analysis found that organic products are largely available in online shops (71.85 percent), followed by farm gate (71.12 percent), organic food stores (70.37 percent), and farmer shops (69.62 percent). As depicted in the table, the consumers opined that the major availability place for organic products was online shops (70.85 percent). According to farmers, the major availability place for organic products was at the Farm Gate level (79.16 percent). For retailers, it was at the farmFarm gate level (93.33 percent).

According to government officials, the major place for availability was also at the farm gate level (86.66 percent). The study found that the majority of the respondents opined that the major availability platform for organic products was at the Farm Gate level. The study also found that collecting appropriate information regarding organic food products is important for retailers/traders to build strategies and convince customers. The data reveal that the majority (61.33 percent) of respondents obtained information from friends and family members, followed by (13.33 percent) from sources like media, television, radio, and magazines, (10.67 percent) from social media, (9.33 percent) from newspapers, and (5.34 percent) from trade fairs. Thus, friends and family members play an important role in disseminating information about OFPs. It has been inferred that friends, family, and reference groups are important sources of information for influencing consumers' awareness of organic food products. The study also found that price hikes and production availability are not limitations for enhancing the organic food products market. Product certification, reliability, health concerns, environmental concerns, quality, and taste of organic products play a significant role in the promotion of organic food products. The study also found that the success of organic food products depends on a proper market structure and efficient supply chain management. Storage facilities, processing, packaging, labelling, grading, cleaning, and collection centres should be established in every district to ensure the possibility of timely procurement of organic food produce and distribution to retailers and wholesalers which brings sustainability to the supply chain. Therefore, the government should take the initiative with proper measures and policies to promote organic products. The study further indicated that organic food products should be less expensive, and that customers should have beliefs and trust in them. This study interpreted various concepts and issues related to market availability, marketing of food product awareness, retailers/traders availability, marketing channels, accessibility, and affordability. Consumer demand and awareness were analysed to determine the knowledge of organic food products.

Future Research Direction: The findings and limitations of the present study on the market

availability of organic food products in Upper Assam are as follows. The following are some possible future research areas of investigation that can further understanding and applications in this field.

Consumer Behaviour and Preferences:

Understanding consumer behaviour, attitudes, perceptions, buying habits, and purchase decisions related to organic products.

Market Segmentation: Identifying specific consumer segments and their interests or preferences for organic food products to inform targeted marketing strategies.

Distribution Channels: Identifying and investigating the soundness and effectiveness of various distribution channels (e.g. online systems, supermarkets, specialty stores) for organic food products.

Problems to Market Entry: Examining the barriers and challenges faced by small-scale organic farmers or producers and small retailers in accessing mainstream markets.

Consumer Willingness: Investigating consumers' willingness to pay a premium for organic food products and the factors influencing this decision.

Organic Food Production and Certification:

Developing healthy and effective organic farming practices, as well as improving certification processes and standards.

Thus, these research directions can provide valuable insights for stakeholders, such as farmers, retailers, policymakers, and consumers, to improve the availability and accessibility of organic food products.

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