

SAVE THE EARTH, SAVE YOUR LIFE, GO ORGANIC!

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ABSTRACT

There are positive signs that sustainable organic farming is feasible and will benefit not only the farmers but also the environment and the life of people as well. Organic farming may be employed in: 1) building the soil and 2) natural pest control.

In order that farmers may be encouraged to switch to organic farming, it is necessary that there be initiatives to support the project. This way, the positive response of the farmers and the people to the Go Organic movement can become a way of life. It does not only mean producing nutritious food on the table, but also making food production economically viable and environmentally beneficial to everyone

INTRODUCTION

Our mother earth, with its beauty and splendor, was once upon a time a nice place to live in. The air around it was cool, pure and unpolluted. The meadows were clean and green. Different animals were seen grazing and very free to move around it. Birds while singing were happily flying from tree to tree. It is so nice to see the shady and healthy trees, the swaying grass due to wind blowing from different directions, waters of the oceans, seas, rivers, lakes and streams were crystal clear and abound with schools of fish. No factories threw its waste products. No human wastes and plastics floated in bodies of water. Above all, acid rain hazardous to all living matters was absent in this planet called earth.

Now, are they still there? The old shady trees are gone; their absence brought about many changes. Animals that roamed the place are now becoming extinct; very thin because of very little food to eat. They are starving. Even flowers wilt. This place we called forest that once was heaven to animals was a nice place to live in.

SAVE THE EARTH AND SAVE YOUR LIFE

Signs of the times call for urgent action; an overhaul of values that would bring people to the realization of what is important for the succeeding generations. People never gave any importance to the ozone layer until the ill-effects of climate change began to

pound in history. The environment was placed on a second fiddle.

People have to be re-educated. People have to be taught of means how to transform environment. This is the best time to wake up from a very deep slumber and wake up to before it is too late to know the roots of environmental destruction.

Drastic climate change is destructive. If nothing is done, mother earth will be damaged. Later, health of the people will be adversely affected.

Health is wealth. We must preserve it for life to move on.

GO ORGANIC

What can be done to save the earth as we preserve our health? Go Organic! Farmers have a decisive role in saving the environment, and in the end, saving lives. Empowering the farmers for rural development is a big boost in saving our environment.

In developing countries, we have seen that agriculture is not just food production; it is about survival and a way of life. Farmer-developed technologies are actual manifestations of the coping mechanism of farmers to a myriad of environmental challenges. These technologies are shared freely between community members and passed on from generation to generation.

In the Philippines, there emerged organizations seeking alternative solutions. Highly successful among these is the Farmer-Scientist Partnership for Development (MASIPAG), started in 1985 as a response to growing concerns by farmers over their dependent situation.

The phenomenal growth of MASIPAG farmers is due to its commitment to improving the quality of life of resource-poor farmers through supporting their participation and empowerment in the development process. (Medina, 2002)

At the farm level, each MASIPAG rice farmer plants at least three rice varieties to ensure varietal

diversity as an ecological design in preventing outbreak of pests as well for genetic conservation. Farm diversification and integration of farming components and processes are also incorporated to avoid external chemical inputs and increase sustainability. Thus vegetables, trees and fruit trees are also consciously integrated in farm diversification. In some places where water is not a problem, rice fish aquaculture has been incorporated into the farming system and recently a livestock component has also been initiated. Without chemical inputs and with nutrient cycling in place, natural soil fertility has been improving. Through the help of these MASIPAG farmers, the start of "Go Organic" became a way of life here in the Philippines.

MASIPAG farmers practice alternative pest management where the focus is on maintaining ecological balance in the farm. Pesticides are completely eliminated from the food chain and farmers are no longer exposed to toxic chemicals. This has allowed the return of diverse food sources, contributing to better nutrition of the farming family. Going organic is a good start in saving the environment, and in the long run, saving lives.

A study shows positive signs that sustainable organic practice is feasible and will benefit not only the farmers but the environment and the life of people as well. According to the study, rice production resulted in a higher number of tillers, percent productive tillers, panicle length, filled grains, 1,000 seed weight, and grain yield with lower costs of production and high return on investment. Organic farming makes use of organic fertilizers and pesticides which the farmers themselves can produce from raw materials that could be found in their respective farms such as rice straw, rice hull and animal manure. (Mayuga, 2009)

WHY ORGANIC FARMING?

Organic farming is environmentally friendly. This is achieved in a number of ways. One is building soils – fertilizing and building soil organic matter through the use of cover crops, composts to ensure the plants are adequately nourished. Secondly, natural pest control using pest-resistant varieties as well as medicinal plants and plants with natural pesticidal

properties, is an integral part of any organic farming system. Natural pest control is cheaper than using synthetic pesticides and many treatments are available locally. Further, the practice of natural pest control minimizes pollution of soil groundwater. Organic farming fertilizers are made from materials found on the farm. This kind of fertilizer is known as compost and is better for crops because of the way it feeds the soil. Compost is a cheaper source of fertilizer and contains all the nutrients that are needed by plants. The use of composted material is environmentally friendly and results in cheaper fertilizer costs for farmers.

In order to encourage farmers to convert to organic production, a number of initiatives have been provided to them. Several governments and retailers in Europe have developed initiative to aid farmers to convert organic production. (www.agrinetguyana.org.gvy)

The positive response of farmers and people to commit Go Organic! becomes a way of life. This only means producing nutritious food in a economically viable and environmentally beneficial to everyone. At the end, we see that consumers are turning to organic food because they believe it to be tastier, as well as healthier, both for themselves and the environment. Despite the higher cost for organic products, consumers are willing to pay for their preferences. In the Philippines, the advocacy of Go Organic! is large. The end result of going organic is we save our environment and we save lives.

REFERENCES

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