

**OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL FOR ORGANIC
FARMING IN THE ARID LANDS OF JORDAN**

BY:

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Abstract

Certified organic farming is developing rapidly world-wide and has become of interest to many farmers, politicians, environmentalists and governments and is practised now in nearly all countries of the world. However, adoption of certified organic farming is not an easy option for farmers and it carries with it several barriers such as technical, economic, social, cultural or legal. The Jordanian Government is interested in proposing organic farming to farmers, but without initially investigating whether or not organic farming will be a suitable system for farmers. Therefore, this research is based on the need to investigate the main barriers and to evaluate opportunities and potential for organic farming in Jordan's arid lands and to propose an adoption model based on local farmer participation, using farmers' local knowledge and their initiative, as well as institutional participation. To do so, a two-stage research methodology was employed in this research to gain the necessary data during two periods of fieldwork, April to September 2004 and July to September 2005. During this fieldwork, interviews with 46 farmers using an open questionnaire and interviews with discussion groups and government officials were conducted to investigate barriers and potential for organic farming in Jordan. Also, a national workshop was conducted attended by the Minister of Agriculture and stakeholders to evaluate and to ensure the sustainability of the proposed model.

Respondents reported that the main barriers to adopting organic farming included perception, technical, nutrient availability, cultural/social, marketing, economic, institutional, lack of national regulation and lack of information and advice, but that labour was not a barrier. Findings also showed that despite barriers the area has potential for organic production owing to its extensive area, good water quality, potential farmers and international agreements. Based on the results obtained from this research, a suitable organic farming model for Jordan, and other countries having similar conditions, was developed. The model is divided into four levels: government, field, academic and regional and international, and the role of each level and its relationship with other levels is explained.

The research shows that the success of this model with delivery of its objectives does not rely on the work of only the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) or any other single body, but on everyone involved in the provision of organic farming in Jordan. Moreover, the model suggests a potential framework for an action plan on the subject of Jordan and organic farming. Also the methodology developed in this research is considered to be a great help for future researchers wanting to conduct research on organic farming or research related to sustainable agricultural development in the developing world context.