



ASSESSMENT OF ORGANIC PRODUCE DEMAND OF HIGH- END HOTELS IN SELECTED DZONGKHAGS

June 15, 2019

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Abstract

This research survey was conducted to study the scope of Ministry of Agriculture and Forests' "Flagship program on Organic Sector Development for Sustainable Food Security and Livelihood" that aspires (i) to expand organic production on commercial scale for domestic market and export; (ii) to create livelihood, employment and business opportunities to farmers, including youth and women; and (iii) to enhance domestic production, availability and access to bio-inputs.

The objective of the study is to find market demand for organic products in the country and to further disseminate the information to production department and other implementing agencies. To start the program the initial survey is being focused to hoteliers of the selected dzongkhag.

The study reveals that, 100% of the respondents are aware of organic products in the country and majority (91%) respondents are interested to buy organic products provided these products are supplied with favorable price, improved quality, readily available and better shelf life. Further, it was also mentioned that they would highly appreciate to get the commodities with proper seal and labeling to indicate the place of origin and to gain trust and confidence on the produce/product.

Abbreviation

DAMC	Department of Agricultural Marketing and Cooperatives
DoA	Department of Agriculture
MoAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forests

TCB Tourism Council of Bhutan

1. Introduction/Background

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests has come out with the "Flagship Program on Organic Sector Development for Sustainable Food Security and Livelihood". The objectives of the proposal are to (i) expand organic production on commercial scale for domestic market and export; (ii) create livelihood, employment and business opportunities to farmers, including youth and women; and (iii) enhance domestic production, availability and access to bio-inputs.

In implementing the Organic Flagship Program, the role of the Department of Agricultural Marketing and Cooperatives would be to lead in facilitating marketing of organic produce/products both in the domestic and export markets. Therefore, to begin with, the demand survey for organic produce/products was carried out in high-end hotels (3 stars and above) in selected Dzongkhags and urban areas.

Market demand of organic produces/products will drive the production based on production potential, proximity to market and transportation convenience. Asparagus and buckwheat will continue to remain as main crops identified for commercialization. Organic vegetables, selected fruits, selected cereals and legumes, honey and other niche livestock products will be developed for specialized markets¹. As per the "*Strategy for Research and Development of National Organic Programme (NOP) -12th Five Year Plan (FYP) and beyond*", production of organic produce is growing, which are scattered in all 20 Dzongkhags. The range of organic products is increasing and therefore the demand for organic products is expected to increase over the years. Productivities of organic crops are not much different for most of the crops except for potato and a few other food crops. There are 10 certified organic products including Lemongrass oil and *Rhododendron anthopogon*. While the formers ones are certified by NOP and BAFRA, the latter two are certified by Institute for Market Ecology (IMO) for Bio-Bhutan. This is an international agency for inspection, certification and quality assurance of eco-friendly products.

¹ Strategy for Research and Development of National Organic Programme (NOP) -12th Five Year Plan (FYP) and beyond

2. Objective

The objective of this study is to determine the market demand for organic produce/products in the country and to further disseminate the information to production Department and other relevant agencies.

3. Methodology

Mixed methods are employed to encompass the broader perspectives and fulfill research questions. It required gathering data through both quantitative and qualitative approach. Although survey questionnaire represents more longitudinal study, the cross-sectional survey method was used. It provided the leverage to determine the relationship between factors involved in production and consumption of organic/domestic produce. The survey questionnaires were developed using closed question methods, with many questions represented by statistical figures. The survey questionnaire covered the following broad topics:

- General characteristics: Includes the general perception about the organic products by the respondent while providing services to customers.
- Consumption pattern: It includes the quantity of different commodities by the hotels in a week.
- Interest to purchase: This section offers an expression of interest by the hoteliers to procure organic produce

It was presented to the Department for discussion and piloted within the Department. All necessary comments were incorporated and reviewed. Once endorsed by the Department, the questionnaire was dispatched electronically to the Managers of 121 hotels (3 star and above), out of 128 registered with the Toursim Council of Bhutan (TCB) and based in Paro, Thimphu, Punakha, Wangdue, Chukha, Bumthang and Mongar. Considering negligible distribution costs and validation of data responding through only "acceptable" answers, electronic email survey was administered. However, only 34 hoteliers responded to the survey questionnaires. All the findings of this study are thus based on this sample size.

The survey frame is random stratified sampling by rating of three stars and above hotels based on Tourism Council of Bhutan's grading.

The acquired data was processed using Microsoft Excel for basic statistical analysis.

The data included both qualitative and quantitative information, which were analyzed to generate the report.

4. Analysis and Findings

The analysis and findings chapter attempt to capture the general perception of organic produce, consumption pattern and finally the interest to procure organic produce, if available and the expectations of buyers for organic produce. The issues discussed under this chapter are intended to provide insights to develop strategies to link organic farmers/growers with high premium price markets.

4.1 Three Star Rated Hotels

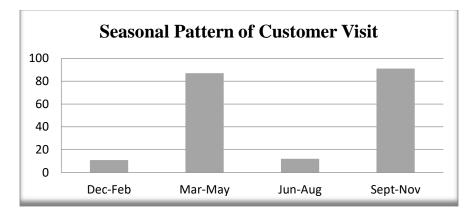
There are 128 Three Star and above rated hotels registered with the Tourism Council of Bhutan. Majority of these hotels are located in Thimphu, Paro, Chhukha, Bumthang and Punakha. These hotels serve as one of the major markets for fruits, vegetables, cereals, meat and dairy products. As the focus of this study is to find out the markets for organic produce in the hotels, it is imperative to first discuss the perceptions of these hotels on organic produce, their consumption pattern and the willingness to procure organic produce.

Sl.no	Dzongkhag	Registered Hotels (3 Star and above)	Total respondents
1	Thimphu	43	13
2	Bumthang	19	5
3	Chukha	6	1
4	Paro	28	7
5	Wangdi	9	1
6	Punakha	14	6
7	Mongar	2	1
	TOTAL	121	34

Table 4.1 Hotels Surveyed

4.2 Seasonal pattern of customers

Since majority (20) hotels receive international group of customers (accounting for 50-75%) followed by regional customers, the customers are also seasonal in nature. The numbers of visitors are more in spring (March to May) and autumn (September-November). It is during these months the hotels provide meal services to the guests. The meals served are not restricted to organic produce only.



From the chart, it is evident that most of the international customers are in spring and autumn seasons.

4.3 Customers served in a day

An attempt was made to find out the average number of customers served in a day in these respondent hotels. Around 38 percent of the hotels served more than 20 customers a day while 35 per cent served less than 10 customers a day. Another 17 percent served between 11 to 15

Number of customers	Hotels	0
5 to 10	12	35.
11 to 15	6	17.
`16-20	3	8.
Above 20	13	38.

customers a day while eight percent served between 16 to 20 customers a day.

Judging by the number of customers served in a day, it can be assumed that there is stiff competition amongst the different hotels. It was also stated the business is not sustainable unless they also venture into catering and that the increase in the number of hotels is not proportionate to the increase in number of tourists. With 128 hotels that are registered with the TCB and assuming that the country

receives 250000 guests a year, these hotels would be receiving only five customers a day.

4.4 Consumption of food commodities by the hotels

An attempt was made to find out the consumption of different food commodities in a week by the respondent hotels. This was arrived at by considering the number of hotels that bought a certain quantity of food commodities per week. These hotels were broken into four categories, i.e. consuming over 15 kilograms, 11-15 kilograms, 6 to 10 kilograms and below 5 kilograms.

4.4.1 Weekly consumption of vegetables, spices and others

Taking potato as an example, the survey results pointed out that 22 hotels had each consumed 18 kilograms per week while seven hotels had each consumed 13 kilograms in a week. Likewise in the lower consumption group, three hotels consumed eight kilograms and two hotels had consumed three kilograms a week. This resulted into total consumption of 517 kilograms of potato by the 34 hotels in a week resulting into an average weekly consumption of 15.21 kilograms by each hotel.

With one hotel consuming over 15 kg of potatoes a week, it can be easily said that the total consumption by the 128 hotels rated three stars and above and registered with the TCB would be consuming 1,920 Kg per week. This translates into an overall demand by these hotels for over 93 metric tons of potato a year.

Sl. No	Vegetables	Quantity/Week (Kg)	Average Weekly Quantity Per Hotel (Kg)
1	Potato	517	15.21
2	Chilli	352	10.35
3	Cabbage	447	13.15
4	Cauliflower	414	12.18
5	Carrot	377	11.09
6	Bean	347	10.21
7	Broccoli	377	11.09
8	Asparagus	279	8.21
9	Cucumber	342	10.06
10	Lemon Grass Oil	85	2.50
11	Honey	241	7.09
12	Ginger	269	7.91
13	Garlic	274	8.06
14	Turmeric Powder	123	3.62

Table 4.4.1 Weekly consumption of vegetables, spices and others

It can be also deduced from the table that there is market for assorted vegetables that are grown locally and can potentially substitute imports.

4.4.2 Weekly consumption of cereal

Amongst the cereals, rice tops the chart followed by lentils and buckwheat. The average consumption of rice is around 14.8 kg a week and the total consumption of it would be around 91 metric tons for the 128 hotels. It can be assumed that the consumption of rice could be partially replaced by Quinoa that is gaining popularity in the country. The demand for Kharang or maize

grits is the lowest and this could be because of the fact that it is not served a standalone cereal but mixed with rice in small quantities.

Sl. No	Cereals	Quantity/Week (Kg)	Average Weekly Quantity Per Hotel (Kg)
1	Rice	504	14.82
2	Kharang	58	1.71
3	Dal	367	10.79
4	Buckwheat	107	3.15
5	Quinoa	69	2.03

Table 4.4.2 Weekly consumption of cereal

4.4.3 Weekly consumption of fruits

Regarding consumption of fruits, banana dominates with a weekly consumption of 9.91 kg by a hotel followed by orange and apple.

Sl. No	Cereals	Quantity/Week (Kg)	Average Weekly Quantity Per Hotel (Kg)
1	Apple	327	9.62
2	Orange	329	9.68
3	Mango	261	7.68
4	Banana	337	9.91
5	Pine Apple	258	7.59

4.4.4 Weekly consumption of meat and dairy products

For livestock products as depicted in Table 4.4.4, chicken is the most popular meat served followed by pork and fish. Amongst the dairy products, the consumption of milk is around 13.7 litres per week per hotel followed by butter at 9.62 kgs and cheese at 9.32 kgs per week. The average consumption of eggs by these hotels is about 11.82 trays a week.

Sl. No	Livestock Products	Unit	Quantity/Week	Average Weekly Quantity Per Hotel
	Fish	Kg	181	5.32
	Pork	Kg	308	9.06
	Chicken	Kg	451	13.26
	Butter	Kg	327	9.62
	Cheese	Kg	317	9.32
	Milk	Litre	469	13.79
	Eggs	Tray	402	11.82

Table 4.4.4 Weekly consumption of meat and dairy products

4.4.5 Weekly consumption of vegetable, fruits, spices and other for selected Dzongkhags

The major tourist destinations are Thimphu, Paro, Bumthang, Punakha and Wangdue valleys. These are also the regions where most of the hotels are concentrated. Based on the limited samples, an attempt was made to find out the weekly consumption of assorted food items.

Sl. No	Commodities	Thimphu	Paro	Bumthang	Punakha- Wangdue
1	Potato	15.31	15.86	15.14	14.00
2	Chilli	9.54	11.57	11.57	9.00
3	Cabbage	13.00	15.14	11.57	13.00
4	Cauliflower	11.23	15.14	13.00	9.00
5	Carrot	11.46	13.00	10.86	8.00
6	Bean	10.69	11.57	10.14	7.00
7	Broccoli	11.08	11.57	13.00	9.00
8	Asparagus	9.54	9.43	6.14	6.00
9	Cucumber	11.08	8.00	8.71	10.00
10	Lemon Grass Oil	2.77	4.00	2.14	0.00
11	Honey	6.62	5.86	9.43	7.40
12	Ginger	9.54	6.57	8.00	4.40
13	Garlic	8.77	7.29	8.71	4.40
14	Turmeric Powder	3.92	3.71	4.00	2.40
15	Apple	9.15	10.86	7.29	12.00
16	Orange	8.92	10.86	7.29	12.00
17	Mango	6.38	7.29	7.29	10.00
18	Banana	9.54	10.14	10.14	10.00
19	Pine Apple	8.92	8.00	3.57	9.00

 Table 4.4.5 Average Quantity Consumed/Week/Hotel (Kg)

4.5 Food storage in hotels

Fresh vegetables in most urban towns are available only during the weekends and consumers as well as hoteliers have to stock it up. However, in Thimphu the Centenary Farmers' Market remains open throughout the week except on Tuesdays. All the hotels use deep freezers and refrigerators and it is interesting to note that around 30 percent of the hotels also use improved cold storage facility

4.6 Future Markets for Organic Produce

Bhutan continues to be an attractive tourism destination. This is evident from the increase in annual arrivals. As per the Bhutan Tourism Monitor of the TCB, around 274,097 foreign individuals visited the country in 2018, an increase by 7.61 percent as compared to that of 2017. The number of visitors is expected to increase and one way to attract visitors with more spending power is through highlighting the importance of improving the gastronomic offer in tourism. Tourists during their stay in Bhutan must satisfy their physiological needs for food which are increasingly found in food of organic origin. Food is one of the important factors that affect the perception of the destination by tourists. The activation of a certain area by tourists could contribute to agriculture, food industry and hospitality industry, making food an important resource for tourism.

Through interview with the hotel managers, it became clear that guests look for food based on organic products offered in 62 percent of the facilities and that such request are becoming more and more frequent every year. At the same time, the hospitality sector is also well aware about food of organic origin with hundred percent of them knowing about it and its benefits.

More than understanding what food of organic origin is about it is important to understand whether these facilities are interested in serving it or not. It is very encouraging to note that 91 percent of the hotels are interested and willing to serve dishes prepared from organic produce provided it is made available in the market. There is also a question whether the food commodities sold as organic are indeed organic or not. There is confusion between organic and naturally grown commodities. Only 17.6 percent of the respondents believe that commodities sold as organic are truly organic and 20.6 percent do not believe it to be organic. The rest that accounts to 61.8 per cent are not very sure about it.

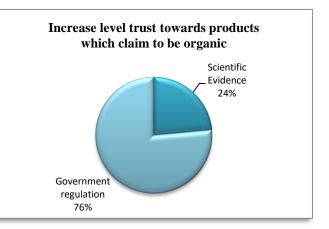
Currently, only three hotels have menu for organic dishes. These three make weekly purchase from the local markets.

4.7 General Perception of Hotels Organic Produce/Products

It is encouraging to note that all hotels that responded are aware of what organic produce means.

However, 65 per cent of the respondents are not sure whether the produce that are available in the markets are organic or not as there is no authentication to prove it.

Around 76 per cent of the respondents feel that there should be a certain certification by the government or provide valid seal/stamp to the sellers while 24 per cent feel that the packaging should provide scientific evidence.



4.8 Interest of hotels in serving organic products

The survey results indicated that around 62 percent of the customers (mainly international tourists) visiting the respondent hotels inquired about the availability of organic menu. From the total respondents, 21 hoteliers reported that it was mainly the international customers that inquired about organic based recipes followed by Bhutanese and then Regional.

4.8.1 Factor affecting demand

Following are the conditions expressed for the purchase of organic vegetable, fruits, dairy products and spices.

Table 4.8.1 Factor affecting demand

Sl No	Factors	Respondent percentage
1	Readily available	61.8
2	Favourable Price	58.8
3	Improved Quality	38.2
4	Improved packaging	14.7
5	Longer shelf life	5.9

While the hoteliers are interested in the purchase of organic produce to serve dishes out of it, there are certain concerns expressed by them. One of their major concerns is the availability. It is evident that organic commodities are not easily available as 61.8 per cent of the respondents reported that it should be made readily available for them to have organic menu. Readily available here refers to making it available throughout the year especially during the peak tourist seasons

Price: Perception were also drawn on the price of the organic products wherein majority (82%) of the respondents reported that the price is very high. It is also an indication that the existing market rates for organic produce are much higher as compared to imported conventional commodities. Likewise, 58.8 per cent of the respondents feel that the price should be affordable for organic produce to gain higher share in the market.

Quality of produce is another factor that would determine the demand for organic produce by the hoteliers. Around 38.2 per cent of the respondents felt that the quality of produce should be improved while another 14.7 per cent also expressed the need for proper packaging,

4.9 Target Customer in the future

While majority of customers in the selected hotels are International visitors, their target for the next five years would remain more or less the same that the hotels that are rated three star and above target International (53%) followed by Bhutanese (29%) and then Regional customers (18%).

The flow of tourists is seasonal and around 50 per cent of the hotels in order to sustain have to carry out catering services. The frequency of catering food differs amongst the hotels. For those who provide catering services, only 7.6 percent of them cater more than 20 times a year, 11.7 per cent cater 16-20 times and 11-15 times a year while 58.8 per cent cater only five to 10 times a year.

5. Limitations

Considering that only 34 of 121 three stars and above hotels have responded to survey questionnaires, the scope of generalization has been reduced grossly. The representation of probable respondents does not signify the majority, limiting the outcome of this study to fewer hoteliers and consumption practices.

Further, it's only assumed that all respondents have engaged reliable methods and systems to answer the questions since survey questionnaire was not administered under supervision or time bound.

6. Conclusion

The analysis and findings from the three broad topics which covered the general perception of organic produce, consumption pattern, their interest to procure organic produce and finally the conclusion section were used to identify potential interventions that could be initiated by agencies concerned and stakeholders.

100% of the respondents were aware of organic products in the country and 91% respondents are interested to buy organic products with certain terms and conditions. To this effect, production departments should create awareness and assist farmer in producing diversified quality products. DAMC need to encourage farmer in taking organic farming through contract farming.

Establishment of different market/store/outlet for organic products at different locations will ease the system of certification of organic production which will enable transparency and accountability between the consumer and producer. If provided with an adapted strategy, quality products and good marketing methods, our domestic production can capture large share of the demand for local produce and increase rural livelihood.

The study revealed that hotels have and will have demand for local/organic produce/products, provided these products are supplied with favorable price, improved quality, readily available and better shelf life. Further, it was also mentioned that they would highly appreciate to get the commodities with proper seal and labelling to indicate the place of origin and again trust and confident on the produce/product.

As international and other regional customers are expected to increase over the years- with more concerned with food safety, the demand of organic menus in the kitchens of the hotels are expected to increase. On the other hand, as the area under organic production over the years is expected to increase, there will be increase in the quantity of organic production in the country too. The process and system of certification of organic production is also expected to expediate in the near future.

The wide range of vegetables, fruits, dairy and livestock products produced by our small holder farmers through value addition has the opportunity to diversify their income options through linking to markets such as high-end hotels. However, to translate this opportunity into reality would require production, post-harvest management and marketing strategy based on reliable assumptions and risks of the potential market (s) backed by timely information on the nature of demand.

The findings of the survey are only confined to the responses received and may not accurately reflect the real market demand in its truest sense- for market demand is affected by various factors at various points of time. However, one general deduction which can be made from this study is that we do have scope for import substitution in terms of supplying our local/organic products to the markets provided we are competitive in terms of price, quality and supply consistency. This study has been carried out only to get the feel of demand and current use of organic produce/products in the high-end hotels of selected Dzongkhags only and further in-depth study would be necessary before venturing into large scale organic production.

Annexure 1

Average weekly consumption of fruits by region (Kg)

Sl. No	Commodities	Thimphu	Paro	Bumthang	Punakha-Wangdue
1	Apple	9.15	10.86	7.29	12.00
2	Orange	8.92	10.86	7.29	12.00
3	Mango	6.38	7.29	7.29	10.00
4	Banana	9.54	10.14	10.14	10.00
5	Pine Apple	8.92	8.00	3.57	9.00

Annexure 2

Average weekly consumption of cereal by region (Kg)

Sl. No	Commodities	Thimphu	Paro	Bumthang	Punakha- Wangdue
1	Rice	14.43	13.29	15.69	14
2	Kharang	2.00	2.71	1.08	0.6
3	Dal	10.14	12.29	11.08	7
4	Buckwheat	8.71	3.14	1.15	0.6
5	Quinoa	1.14	5.29	1.85	0

Annexure 3

Average weekly consumption of meat and dairy products by region (Kg/Litre/Tray)

Sl. No	Commodities	Thimphu	Paro	Bumthang	Punakha- Wangdue
1	Fish	2.86	4.86	5.46	10.00
2	Pork	10.86	6.86	8.92	9.40
3	Chicken	12.29	11.14	14.31	15.00
4	Butter	11.57	11.57	10.31	5.00
5	Cheese	8.00	10.86	9.92	6.00
6	Milk	13.71	14.43	14.31	12.00
7	Eggs	8.71	13.71	13.38	10.00

<u>Questionnaire to determine demand for organic products and</u> <u>purchase intention for organic products by the 3 star Hotels and</u> <u>above</u>

Questionnaire for organic demand survey forms No:

Name of respondent:

Contact No.

Name of the Hotel /Restaurant:

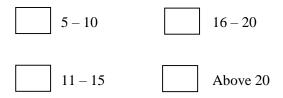
Date:

Dzongkhag:

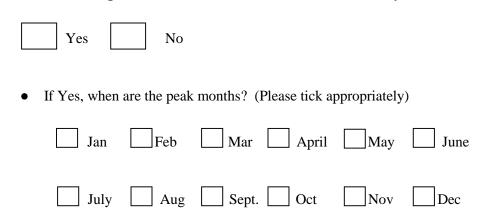
Objective: To determine demand for organic produce and to study purchase intention for organic products in three star and above hotels of Thimphu, Chukha, Paro, Punakha, wangduephodrang and Bumthang

Section A: – General

1. How many customers do you serve in a day on an average?



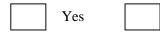
2. Is there a seasonal pattern in the number of clients/customers in your hotel/restaurant?



3. What percentage of your customers are? (Please tick appropriately)

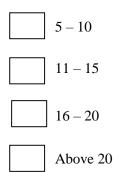
Customer	0-25%	25-50%	50-75%	Above 75%
Bhutanese				
Regional				
International tourist				

4. Do you provide food catering service? If no, skip the following question



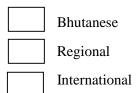
• If yes, what is the frequency per year?

No

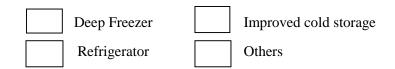


15

5. Which group of customers do you expect to target in the next 5 years? (Please tick appropriately)

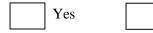


6. What storage facilities do you have?



No

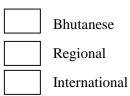
7. Do you know what Organic Produce means?



8. Does your customer demand or enquire about organic food? If no, skip the following question.



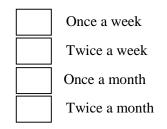
• If yes, which group of customers enquire or show more interest in Organic food? (Please tick appropriately)



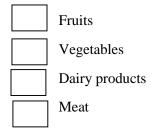
9. Do you have a separate menu for organic dishes? If no, skip question number 10, 11 & 12



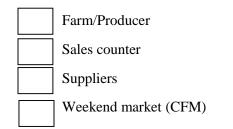
10. How often do you buy organic products?



11. Which of these organic products do you buy the most?



12. Where do you usually buy organic products?



13. What is your perspective on the cost of the organic food?



Low

Don't know

14. Do you think the produce available here are organic?

Yes No

Not sure

15. If organic produce is available in Bhutan, would you be interested to serve organic food in your hotel? If no, skip Section B



16. What would help increase your level of trust towards products which claim to be organic?

Scientific Evidence on packaging
Government regulation or official stamp
Other, please specify

Section B: - CONSUMPTION PATTERN

Sl. No	Particular	Quantity consumed/Week(Kg)									
51.110		1-5	6-10	11-15	More than 15	None					
1	Potato										
2	Chili										
3	Cauliflower										
4	Cabbage										
5	Carrot										
6	Broccoli										
7	Beans										
8	Asparagus										
9	Lemongrass Oil										
10	Honey										
11	Ginger										
12	Garlic										
13	Turmeric Powder										
14	Apple										
15	Orange										
16	Mango										
17	Banana										
18	Pine apple										
19	Cucumber										

1. kindly specify the quantity of vegetables, fruits and Spices & others consumed in a week (quantity in Kgs)

CI						
SI. No	Particular	1-5	6-10	11-15	More than 15	None
1	Fish (Trout)					
2	Pork					
3	Chicken					
4	Butter					
5	Cheese					
6	Milk					

2. kindly specify the quantity of vegetables, fruits and Spices & others consumed in a week (quantity in Kgs)

3. kindly specify the quantity of vegetables, fruits and Spices & others consumed in a week (quantity in Kgs)

Sl	Particular		None			
No		1-5	6-10	11-15	More than 15	
1	Rice (White or Red)					
2	Kharang					
3	Dal					
4	Buckwheat (Sweet or Bitter)					
5	Quinoa					

4. kindly specify the quantity of eggs consumed in a week (tray)

Sl. No	Particular	1-5	6-10	11-15	More than 15	None
1	Eggs					

SECTION C: - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST TO PURCHASE ORGANIC PRODUCE.

1. Would you be ready to purchase of organic products? If no, skip the following questions



No

2. If yes, what are the conditions applied? (Please tick appropriately)

Particular	Improved packaging	Improved quality	Readily available	Favourable price	Shelf life
Vegetables					
Fruits					
Cereals					
Livestock products					