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Factors affecting non-adoption of organic farming: A systematic literature review

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Abstract

Organic farming has become a viable alternative form of farming that can assist in creating environmental preservation, soil health and food security in the long-term, yet it has not been extensively adopted by farmers in most parts. This paper assists in the systematic examinations of reasons behind the failure of organic farming uptake by drawing on the evidence provided in the literature review. The systematic literature review method was taken in which 130 articles were first measured using Google scholar and research gate and through a serious screening process using specific search criteria including and exclusion criteria 36 valuable articles were determined to be finally analysed. The results indicate that non adoption is caused by numerous inter-related factors such as ignorance and training, the unavailability of organic inputs, low consumer demand, marketing, issues of profitability, insufficient policy and institutional accommodation, risks of yield during the conversion period, complexity of certification, and resources and labor shortages. Based on these knowledge gaps, economic and market related challenges were the most common barriers that came out in the reviewed studies. This work completed emphasizes the role that both farm level and Brader institutional and market systems have in the adoption decisions. The results may indicate the need to enhance the training programs, reinforce the input supply systems as well as improve the market infrastructure and policy support to encourage the adoption of organic farming.

Keywords: Organic farming, non adoption, Systematic literature review, adoption barriers, sustainable barriers, Farmers perception etc.

Introduction

The agricultural sector is very significant in food security, the environment and livelihoods of rural people globally (Sujianto *et al.*, 2024) ^[32]. Due to the over-use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in traditional farming methods, the environment has been contaminated, and people have health issues (Fisher, n.d.) Consequently, organic farming has become one of the responsible alternatives to agricultural systems that promote environmental harmony and encourages soil wellbeing (Bottazzi *et al.*, 2023) ^[5]. Although organic farming is environmentally and health-wise beneficial, its adoption rate has been lower in lots of the regions (Dubey & Nabi, n.d.). When converting a traditional farming system to organic farming, farmers tend to encounter various problems (Milestad and Darnhofer, 2003) ^[25]. Amongst these challenges, which influence the adoption decisions made by farmers are technical, financial and marketing related constraints (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31]. Previous studies have indicated that production barriers, marketing and financial limitations have been key to the hindrance in the adoption of organic farming (Ghanghas *et al.*, 2021) ^[14]. The barrier depends on the farmers knowledge and training deficiencies to adopt organic farming practices (Rashidpour, n.d.). The lack of organic inputs such as compost, biofertilizers and pesticides also affects farmers ability to convert to organic farming (Zollet & Maharjan, 2021) ^[36]. Market related issues like lack of special markets and unpredictability of demand of organic products are further deterring farmers to the idea of declining to organic agriculture (Dev & Raj, 2025) ^[10]. The extension services are also some of the institutional barriers that affect the choice of farmers in adopting these (Canavari *et al.*, 2022) ^[6]. Even though some studies have the barriers to adopting organic farming, they are still dispersed in the contexts and areas (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31]. The synthesis of the current literature should be systematized to determine the key influencing factors of the non-adoption of organic farming (Habanyati *et al.*, 2024) ^[15]. A systematic literature review method aids in a

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synthesis of the evidence generated by a variety of researches and gives a comprehensive view of barriers to adoption (Azam and Shaheen, 2019) ^[4]. This paper seeks to generalize the literature in avenues that affect the non-adoption of organic farming and to classify the literature into a number of key thematic variables.

Research Question

Why are farmers not adopting organic farming?

Research Objectives

1. To identify the major constraints influencing farmers non adoption of organic farming.
2. To classify the constraints into thematic categories.
3. To synthesis the empirical findings of the constraints affecting organic farming adoption.

Methodology

The current research takes the systematic literature review approach in reviewing articles shortlisted, within the period of three months time superseded by the researcher. Though the review was not registered at databases like PROSPERO a structured review protocol was adhered to so as to make the study selection and analysis process transparent and consistent. Only studies published in the past 2010 -2025 were considered in the literature to capture recent

developments. The review and determined the different problems the farmers are struggling with to embrace organic farming and what they hope the policymakers would offer.

Database and Search Strategy

The researcher has identified the articles about the barriers and obstacles mentioned in the Google scholar and the Research Gate and shared articles in the search engine about the search word(s) showed below (Farmer and barriers or challenges or constraints and adoption) in both the Google scholar and the Research gate -130 articles were collected using the search engine: (Farmer and barriers or challenges or constraints and adoption).

Screening process

The duplicate records were eliminated in the second stage out of 130 articles the 25 duplicate records were eliminated and the total amount of articles left 105 articles, 28 non relevant articles were removed, 15 articles concentrating on consumer aspects were not taken into consideration and 12 articles were removed after reviewing the abstract.

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria used for full text review are presented in table 1

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria table

Criteria type	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Language	English	Non-English
Topic	Organic farming adoption barriers	Other agricultural topics
Study type	Empirical studies	Conceptual papers
Focus	Farmer level studies	Consumer focused studies
Methodology	Clear methodology	Weak methodology

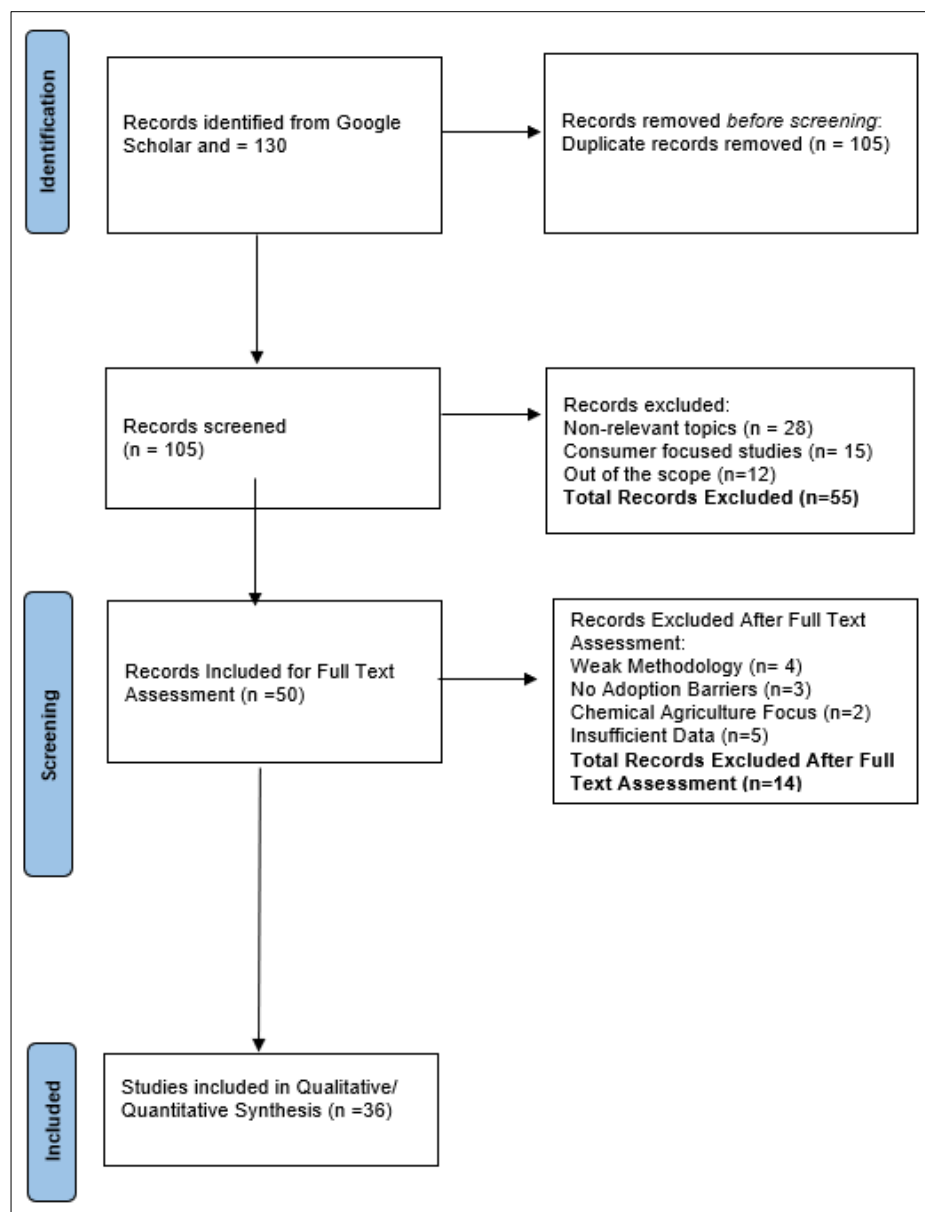
Source: Author's work

Throughout the process of reading the entire text, 2 articles associated with chemical farming were discarded. Also, 4 low-methodology articles and 3 articles that failed to comment on barriers and articles that had no sufficient data were eliminated. Lastly, 36 articles were chosen to conduct the systematic review.

The process of data extraction was to go through the selected articles and extract important variables, themes and findings with respect to non-adoption of organic farming. The relevant information including the objectives of the study, methodology and barriers were properly documented and clustered into thematic variables.

A quality measurement was carried out to ascertain the trustworthiness of the chosen studies. The articles were considered against peers based on characteristics like publication in peer reviewed journals, articulateness of objectives, relevance and methodological rigor of the article to the research topic. Studies that were not clear in terms of their methodology were not included in the final review.

Data extraction and selection of the study was carried out by one researcher. A systematic and transparent method was applied and taken to reduce bias with pre-stated guidelines and additional screening of the chosen articles.

**Fig 1:** The PRISMA Flowchart

From: Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, *et al.* The PRISMA 2020

statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ* 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71

Table 2: Thematic mapping of the variables and Indicators influencing non-adoption of organic farming

Si No.	Themes	Indicators identified from the studies
1	Knowledge and training	Lack of awareness about organic farming Lack of technical knowledge and support Insufficient training Weak extension services Lack of scientific information Lack of agricultural information Low literacy level
2	Availability of Organic Inputs	Non availability of organic fertilizers Shortage of manure/compost Lack of bio fertilizers Difficulty in accessing organic inputs Input supply problems Processing organic fertilizers is way difficult
3	Consumer Demand	Low demand for organic products Lack of consumer trust Lack of consumer awareness Weak domestic market demand Not willingness to pay premium price.
4	Marketing	Lack of purchasing agencies

		Lack of specialized markets Dependence on middlemen Lack of market information Weak distribution channels High transportation cost Lack of storage facilities
5	Profitability and cost	High production cost Certificate cost Labor cost Initial investment required Conversion cost Loss of income Financial risk Low premium price
6	Policy and Institutional support	Lack of subsidies Lack of institutional support Lack of consulting services Lack of credit facilities Lack of infrastructure Lack of certification infrastructure.
7	Yield Risk and Conversion	Initial yield loss Productivity decline during conversion Transition period is uncertain Production risk Time is required to have long term benefits
8	Certification complexity	Complex certification procedures Certification cost Lack of certification agencies Documentation requirements Inspection cost
9	Labor	Labor intensive practices Non availability of labor Small landholding Lack of capital Farm resource limitation

Source: Author's work

Synthesis analyses of the themes

1. Knowledge and Training

The systematic review produced shows that the most important barriers to organic farming adoption are knowledge and training (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31] Research has established that farmers are not aware of the principles, practices and long term benefits of organic farming (Dadheech and Kaur, 2025) ^[8] lack of knowledge about organic farming technologies is another factor The constant capacity building programs to enhance the skills of farmers is necessary and demonstrated through the literature available in various parts of India (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31] The literature highlights that extension support and training of the farmers are crucial to foster the adoption of organic farming (Habanyati *et al.*, 2024) ^[15].

2. Availability of inputs

One of the biggest challenges in transition to use of organic farming is the availability of organic inputs. These farmers often encountered unavailability of organic fertilizers, vermicompost and bio fertilizers in the local markets (Dadheech & Kaur, 2025) ^[8]. Many studies indicate that farmers lack the ability to maintain soil fertility within organic systems due to the absence of compost and manure (Habanyati *et al.*, 2024) ^[15] Deficiency of high quality organic inputs leads farmers to be dependent on external sellers and it correlates with uncertainty in production (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31]. The late supply of disease free planting materials and the availability of organic inputs also discourages farmers to shift to organic farming (Aparna & Thomas, 2017) ^[2]. Studies found that

inefficient distribution ways of inputs and lack of production of organic inputs in the region are the causes of supply side restrictions (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31]. The measures to promote farmers to adopt organic farming practices, as stipulated by the studies, involve availing organic inputs that are more affordable and local (Habanyati *et al.*, 2024) ^[15] into the market.

3. Consumer awareness, demand.

Consumer demand plays a crucial role in determining whether or not farmers adopt organic farming practices (Rashidpour, n.d.) There is also a lack of consumer trust which erodes farmers trust in organic markets regarding their propensity to pay high prices (Dev & Raj, 2025) ^[10]. The farmers think that a lack of the demand of organic products is one of the major impediments to the development of organic farming (Rashidpour, n.d.). The absence of knowledge by consumers about organic products also harms farmers by affecting their price realization and market stability (Dev & Raj, 2025) ^[10] Market demand is also affected as consumers lack knowledge about organic labeling and certification processes (Rashidpour, n.d.).

4. Marketing

The research established that marketing related concerns are increasingly cited as the primary problem toward adopting organic farming. Lack of niche markets to organic produce based on many farmers hinders their ability to fetch the best dollar on their products (Aparna & Thomas, 2017) ^[2]. Research indicates that farmers lack coordinated marketing channels and lack market ties that can entice them to adopt

organic farming (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31] As there are no direct purchasing agents of organic products farmers are often dependent on intermediaries (Dev & Raj, 2025) ^[10]. There is also a lack of profitability of selling organic produce because of expensive transportation and inadequate storage conditions (Aparna and Thomas, 2017) ^[2]. The lack of trustworthy market information and not stable market conditions are also cited as significant issues (Dev & Raj, 2025) ^[10]. Lack of farmer cooperatives and marketing organizations undermines the organic supply chain (Aparna & Thomas, 2017) ^[2]. The lack of access to markets also denies organic products access to larger markets (Habanyati *et al.*, 2024) ^[15] To promote the adoption of organic farming, it is necessary to increase marketing infrastructure, improve the information systems of markets and establish specialised organic marketplaces (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31]

5. Profitability and cost

The profitability and economic viability concerns are widely-known as the key reasons that stand in the way of the successful introduction of organic farming (Dev & Raj, 2025) ^[10] The studies indicate that the high cost of production is the element that prevents farmers with switching to organic farming practices (Ghanghas *et al.*, 2021) ^[14]. High cost of certification and inspection procedures is another cost that is identified to be a financial strain to small and marginal farmers (Dadheech & Kaur, 2025) ^[8]. Farmers often view organic farming as labor intensive and therefore operating expense increases (Sujianto *et al.*, 2022) ^[33]. Low premium prices, unreliable market demand, and financial risk and volatility during the conversion phase present financial risks to farmers (Habanyati *et al.*, 2024) ^[15] access to credit and financial resources is an additional financial barrier influencing adoption decisions (Aparna and Thomas, 2017) ^[2]. The studies celebrate the fact that farmers wishing to convert to organic farming have financial difficulties since the cost of inputs and start-up costs are more expensive (Sujianto *et al.*, 2024) ^[32]. The studies indicate that to make organic farming significantly more profitable, the premiums on prices should be constant, the costs of certification and the financial incentives should be improved (Azam and Shaheen, 2019) ^[4].

6. Policy and Institutional support

Institutional and policy variables were found to be key determinants of organic farming adoption in the literature. There is no government support that makes farmers discouraged to switch to organic farming (Haneef *et al.*, 2019) ^[17] Sometimes, institutional challenges are defined as debilitating financial support and subsidies (Aghabeygi *et al.*, 2024) ^[1]. The limited access to credit facilities and institutional financing also limits the ability of farmers to invest in organic farming (Aparna & Thomas, 2017) ^[2]. There is a lack of technical support or advisory services offered in agricultural institutions (Rashidpour, n.d.). A further problem that inhibits adoption is the poor institutional coordination and poor extension infrastructure (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31]. Absence of certification infrastructure and local certification bodies are also among the limitations as the factors (Haneef *et al.*, 2019) ^[17] In order to stimulate organic farming joint institutional support and policy level measures need to be increased (S. A. Singh

et al., 2025) ^[31] and the regulatory supporting measures, financial assistance programs, and extension services should be reinforced (Dadheech and Kaur, 2025) ^[8].

7. Conversion and yield risk.

The unpredictable yield in the transitional period is a typical problem of the farmers considering shifting to organic farming (Aparna & Thomas, 2017) ^[2]. The first loss farmers experience when they convert to organic systems of farming is loss of yield. The conversion periods make farmers against using organic methods due to common economic uncertainty (Habanyati *et al.*, 2024) ^[15]. Due to the uncertainty about ecological response and productivity some farmers consider organic farming a threatening production methodology (Rashidpour, n.d.). It was found that organic farming requires many years to achieve positive ecological and economic outcomes (Habanyati *et al.*, 2024) ^[15]. Climate variability is a production risk due to the need to adjust to pests and changing levels of soil fertility during transition (Aparna & Thomas, 2017) ^[2]. The perceptions of farmers with regards to risk also matter with regard to adoption decisions.

8. Certification complexity

The literature most often pinpoints the problems of certification as the barriers to the introduction of organic farming (Azam and Shaheen, 2019) ^[4] The farmers are convinced that the procedures of organic certification are complicated and complicated to complete (Aparna and Thomas, 2017) ^[2]. The high-certification and inspection costs are often mentioned as one of the financial obstacles by small and marginal farmers (Canavari *et al.*, 2022) ^[6]. The lack of home-country certifying infrastructure and bodies also poses a limitation to the participation of farmers in organic markets (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31]. Farmers are not well informed with regard to certification and documentation (Rashidpour, n.d.). It is time consuming to comply with certification (Dadheech & Kaur, 2025) ^[8]. Research findings reveal that farmers are not able to achieve premium markets where they face issues with certifications acquisition (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31]. To promote the use of organic farming, it was essential to facilitate the certification procedures, enhance certification facilities (Dadheech & Kaur, 2025) ^[8].

9. Labor

Labor and agricultural resource availability is an impediment to organic farming. Compared to conventional farming systems, organic farming methods use more labor (Tiwari *et al.*, 2024) ^[34]. One of the most common grievances that farmers resort to is the shortage of qualified personnel to manage fields and to process organic inputs (Rashidpour, n.d.). Shortage of labor in critical farming activities (Aparna and Thomas, 2017) ^[2]. Agricultural activities like organic farming are less affordable to farmers because of low levels of capital and limited farm-level finances (Ghanghas *et al.*, 2021) ^[14]. The adoption of organic farming by smallholders is also negated by the fact that they own small pieces of land, and they frighten farm resources (Azam & Shaheen, 2019) ^[4]. Farmers reckon that organic is more time-consuming and harder-working compared to conventional techniques (Janati *et al.*, 2025) ^[12].

Results and Discussion

The findings of this systematic study indicate that a combination of institutional, market-related, economic, and knowledge-related factors combines with poor adoption of organic farming (Aghabeygi *et al.*, 2024) ^[1] The absence of training and information among farmers limits their understanding of organic farming practices and certification requirements, which is also observable in the reviewed literature (Rashidpour, n.d.). Likewise, in most regions the supply of organic inputs such as compost, biofertilizers and pesticides remains a significant level of production constraint (Dadheech and Kaur, 2025) ^[8], since farmers often perceive organic farming as work intensive and costly particularly at the conversion phase, economic viability is also of prime significance (Habanyati *et al.*, 2024) ^[15] These findings suggest that both farm level and

The unwillingness of farmers in initiating organic farming is also fortified by the problems of market. The fact that farmers do not have specialized markets, the marketing infrastructure is weak, and the market relies on middlemen, makes farmers less certain about the sale of organic products as the market structure is worried about price premiums and the adoption decisions related to the growth of market-related awareness and uncertainty about market demand (Rashidpour, n.d.). Institutional and policy limitations also endanger adoption by restricting services to the poor through low extension services, low subsidies and challenges in obtaining certification (Dadheech & Kaur, 2025) ^[8]. The literature review reveals that the problem of the non-acceptance of organic farming is a multifaceted challenge that requires an integrated work in the marketing system, training, input provision and governmental assistance.

Future Research scope

The systematic review of the selected articles demonstrates several significant knowledge gaps in the literature on the adoption of organic farming. Few studies have examined behavioural and psychological aspects influencing the choice of organic farming, most research rather focuses more on the barriers of adopting organic farming which limit adoption; a possible exception is that little research has analysed the effects of alternative learning methods like farmer networks, extension models and participatory training programs on adoption outcomes (Ghanghas *et al.*, 2021) ^[14]. The paper has failed to analyze the connection between consumer demand and the choices of farmers adoption adequately (Dev & Raj, 2025) ^[10]. Absence of longitudinal and region specific research studying the long run economic and productivity results of organic farming adoption (L. Singh & Dhaliwal, 2025) ^[30]. The research about certification infrastructure, institutional coordination and policy implementation is also absent (Łuczka *et al.*, n.d.). There is a lack of effective integration of market development, policy support and farm level resources constraints into one analytical system (Sujianto *et al.*, 2024) ^[32].

Conclusion

This knowledge review of the literature demonstrates how several interacting obstacles in all the production, market and institutional spheres impact the non-implementation of organic farming (Dadheesch & Kaur, 2025). Based on the analyzed study lack of training opportunities, lack of

technical knowledge and effective extension programs continue to hamper farmers confidence in organic farming practices (S. A. Singh *et al.*, 2025) ^[31]. The lack of inputs in terms of bio inputs like fertilizers that are organic and a challenge in gaining access to bio inputs continue to hinder the adoption (Aparna & Thomas, 2017) ^[2]. Marketing constraints like the reliance on middlemen, lack of certain markets and purchasing agencies further discourage farmers to adopt organic farming (Dev & Raj, 2025) ^[10]. Economic factors like certification costs, income variability during conversion, and lack of financial resources also play a key role in determining farmers decisions (Azam & Shaheen, 2019) ^[4]. The study indicates that to promote institutional support in adopting the organics agricultural practices, there was a need to create market infrastructure, ensure the supply of organic inputs and enhance training systems.

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