



Tropentag, September 18-20, 2019, Kassel

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Factors Influencing the Adoption of Organic Production Systems in Vegetable Farming

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Abstract

Conventional production of vegetables is predominantly practised in Benguet Province, the cradle of semi-temperate vegetables in northern Philippines. With the growing interest in healthy food consumption, some farmers embraced organic vegetable farming. This study aimed to determine the influential factors in producing organically grown vegetables considering the nutritional and economic importance of this crop. It also endeavoured to identify prevailing problems and concerns related to organic vegetable production. Vegetable growers from six municipalities who opted to shift to organic farming served as respondents for the study. An interview schedule was used to collect quantitative data while informal group discussions, key informant interviews, and farm reconnaissance yielded qualitative data. Qualitative analysis showed that the goals and motivations of farmers in adopting organic vegetable production systems are economic benefits, ecological integrity, health benefits, and favourable conditions. Regression analysis revealed that the income from organically grown vegetables had the highest influence in the utilisation of organic production systems. Certified organic vegetables can command steady premium price while the value of conventional vegetables is highly fluctuating. Other predictor variables are : diversity of vegetables grown, credit assistance and number of support services espousing organic farming. The support services mostly accessed by the respondents include educational visits, trainings and demonstration farms. The farmers' discernments on the five technology attributes posited by Rogers (1983), namely compatibility, complexity, trialability, observability and relative advantage were also considered. Among these attributes, observability surfaced to have a significant influence in the adoption of organic vegetable production systems and techniques. Meanwhile, one of the main problems in organic farming is the migration of pests to the organically-managed fields when the surrounding conventional farms are sprayed with pesticides. Another concern is the rehabilitation period of the soil which takes 3–5 years and the yields are affected while the field is adjusting. The findings suggest enabling environment policies and support interventions considering the influencing factors and problems in growing vegetables using organic production options.

Keywords: socio economic factors, support services, technology attributes, organic production systems