

# The Attitude of Agricultural Researchers, Extension Agents and Farmers towards Organic Products: Some Evidences from Iran

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**Abstract:** The aim of this research was to investigate the attitude of agricultural researchers, extension agents and farmers towards organic products. The research area was the central District of Boyer-Ahmad County, Southwestern of Iran. Research population included researchers, extension agents and contact farmers of the study area and based on this population numbers, the sample sizes were determined 62, 55 and 60 persons respectively using Krejcie and Morgan sampling table. The main tool for collecting data about the respondents' attitudes towards organic products was a pre-designed questionnaire. Results showed that researchers and extension agents had above average attitude towards organic products. However, farmers had a fairly favorable attitude. In addition, the relationship between respondents' attitude towards organic products and their environmental attitude was positive and significant.

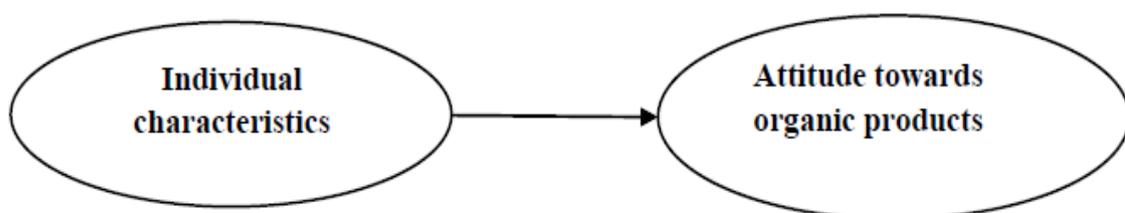
**Key words:** *Organic products, Researchers, Extension agents, Farmers*

**Purpose:** This study sought to investigate the attitude of agricultural researchers, extension agents and farmers towards organic products in the Central District of Boyer-Ahmad County. The following objectives were also considered:

- To explain the attitude of Respondents towards organic products.
- To investigate the relationship between individual characteristics and attitude of respondents.

**Introduction:** The concept of organic agriculture builds on the efficient use of locally available resources, and the use of adapted technologies (e.g. soil fertility management, closing of nutrient cycles, control of pests and diseases by means of natural antagonists) (Kilcher, 2007). The development of organic agriculture especially in developing countries is a special challenge and poses considerable concerns (Mahmoudi *et al.*, 2014). The current evidence indicates the role of organic products in preserving the environment and improving food quality. Generally stated the more people believe in preserving the environment, the more they tend to approach such as organic products. Central District of Boyer-Ahmad County is a fertile region and prone to producing organic products as in this region pesticides and chemical fertilizers are used less than usual in the current situation in Iran (Safaeenia *et al.*, 2010)

Lots of researches have been carried out in the field of the attitude of Respondents towards organic products. Based on the review of the relevant literature, conceptual framework of this research is developed and shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The conceptual framework of the study.

**Research Method (Data collection and analysis; evidence):** The central District of Boyer-Ahmad County has 5 townships named Kakan, Sepidar, Sarrod Shomali, Sarrod Jonobi and Dashetroom. A survey research method was used in this study. Research population were researchers, extension agents and farmers who were 77, 68 and 72 people respectively. Sample sizes were determined 62, 55 and 60 respectively using Krejcie and Morgan sampling table and stratified random sampling with proportional allocation technique. The main tool for collecting data was a research-made questionnaire which its validity confirmed by rural development experts and its reliability also confirmed calculating Cronbach-Alpha coefficient (0.76-0.94) obtained from a pilot study. SPSS20 software was used to analyze data.

**Results:** The results showed that the average score of researchers', extension agents' and farmers' attitude towards organic products was 3.66, 3.63 and 3.78 from 5 respectively which indicated that researchers and extension agents have an "above average" attitude towards organic products, however, farmers have a fairly favorable attitude. The results also showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between farmers' income and their attitude towards organic products at the 0.05 level. The higher income they earn, the more favorable attitude towards organic products they have. However, this relationship is not significant for researchers and extension agents. Furthermore, there was a positive and significant relationship between researchers' and farmers' age and their attitudes towards organic products at the 0.05 level. Nevertheless, there was no significant relationship between extension agents' age and their attitude towards organic products. In addition, no significant relationship was found between researchers', extension agents' and farmers' educational level and their attitude towards organic products.

**Conclusion:** Since the production quantity in an organic production system could be less than that of conventional agriculture, the poor farmers may prefer conventional agriculture to organic one. Thus, increasing the price of organic products could increase the poor farmers' tendency towards organic products. Thus, it is also recommended for extension agents to develop and to present more advertising programs to establish a cultural climate in society, so that the customers will be willing to pay more for organic products. Moreover, based on the Multi- functional Agriculture Approach, and local potentials, it is recommended to provide more opportunities for farmers to increase their income via other income generating jobs; Eco-tourism would a potential study area.

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