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Q8

## **Sikkim is the first 'Organic State' in India. What are the ecological and economical benefits of Organic State? (150 Words, 10 Marks).**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · GS III · 10 marks · Indian Economy

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

### **Core demand of the question**

- State what Sikkim's Organic State status means
- Explain ecological benefits in a Himalayan setting
- **Explain economic benefits:** premium, tourism, and input costs

### **Revision summary**

Sikkim became India's first fully organic State in 2016 after a long chemical phase-out mission.

Ecological gains are soil conservation, cleaner springs, pollinators and less pesticide residue in a fragile Himalaya.

Economic gains are certified premiums, organic tourism and lower purchased-input bills.

PKVY-style clusters elsewhere are local; Sikkim's policy was statewide.

Yield conversion dips and market access remain the cash risk.

### **Introduction**

**Sikkim** declared itself fully **organic** in 2016 after a State mission that phased out synthetic fertilisers and pesticides on notified farm land. It was the first Indian State to take that legal and market step. In a steep Himalayan ecology, organic status is both a **soil and water policy** and a **brand**. The gains are ecological first; the cash comes if markets and tourism pay for that brand.

### **Body**

#### **What Organic State means**

- The **Sikkim Organic Mission** (from 2003, intensified later) withdrew subsidy on chemicals, trained farmers, and moved area to organic practices and certification.
- By 2015-16 the State reported its farm land as organic under a mix of **third-party certification** and **Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)** logic used in Indian organic policy.
- **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana** and Union organic clusters elsewhere followed a similar cluster idea; Sikkim's difference was **statewide** coverage, not a few villages.
- Organic here means no synthetic NPK and pesticides on the notified area, with bio-inputs, compost, crop diversity and soil cover.

## Ecological benefits

- Himalayan slopes erode fast. Organic matter, mulch and mixed cropping **bind soil** and cut runoff into Teesta-range streams.
- Ban on persistent pesticides protects **pollinators, soil microbes and aquatic life**, and reduces residue in cardamom, ginger, mandarin and vegetables.
- Lower chemical load protects **springs and village drinking water** in a State where hydrology is steep and storage is small.
- Agrobiodiversity (traditional millets, maize, vegetables) is easier to keep when the package is not a single high-input cereal.
- Health of farm workers improves when spray exposure falls - a public-health gain in smallholder hills.
- Sikkim's organic story later received international policy recognition (including a **Future Policy Gold Award** associated with FAO/World Future Council), which locked the ecological brand.

## Economic benefits

- **Premium prices** on certified spices, tea and vegetables can raise farm-gate income if the certificate reaches the buyer, not only the file.
- **Rural tourism and homestays** sell clean landscape and organic meals; the State markets this as a package with Khangchendzonga and Buddhist circuits.
- Over time, farmers save on **purchased chemicals**; labour and compost become the cost, which suits family farms if markets exist.
- A State brand (**Sikkim Organic**) is cheaper to advertise than a thousand uncertified plots.
- **Limits: yield dips** in the conversion years, thin local processing, and the risk that cheap conventional produce from the plains undercuts the mandi. Extension, storage and FPO marketing decide whether ecology becomes income.

## Flow diagram

Sikkim Organic Mission -> Soil water pollinators  
Sikkim Organic Mission -> Certification PGS  
Soil water pollinators -> Brand and tourism  
Certification PGS -> Premium spices vegetables  
Brand and tourism -> Farm income  
Premium spices vegetables -> Farm income

## Conclusion

Sikkim's Organic State status is a statewide chemical phase-out with certification. Ecologically it protects Himalayan soil, water and biodiversity. Economically it works through premium crops, tourism and lower chemical bills - if markets and processing keep the brand from remaining only a slogan.

## Facts & figures

**Organic State 2016**

Sikkim declared fully organic after phasing out synthetic fertilisers and pesticides on notified farmland.

**Sikkim Organic Mission**

State programme from the early 2000s that trained farmers, withdrew chemical subsidy, and built certification.

**PGS**

Participatory Guarantee System: community-based organic assurance used alongside third-party certificates in India.

**PKVY**

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana: Union cluster scheme for organic farming; Sikkim's model was whole-State, not only clusters.

**Cardamom and ginger**

High-value Sikkim hill crops that can earn an organic premium if quality and export logistics hold.

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