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Number of Tamil Nadu farmers seeking organic certification has gone up, officials say

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COIMBATORE: The number of farmers from the state who have sought organic certification for their fields went up drastically last year, say officials from Tamil Nadu Organic Certification Department (TNOCD).

While since 2007, when TNOCD was established, till 2017 only 480 farmers had enrolled and got certified as organic farmers, Irene Priyadarshini, assistant director of agriculture, TNOCD, said in 2018-2019 alone 100 farmers have come forward to be certified as organic farmers.

“This is because there is an increase in awareness. From the beginning of this year, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India made it mandatory that only certified organic produce can be sold in the market. So traders emphasise farmers who want to sell their produce as organic to get certified,” she said.

The process of organic certification involves two levels. In the first, the inspectors visit the field of the farmers who have applied for the certification. They would also verify the records maintained by the farmer such as input register and harvest register. Based on these, the farmer would be provided a Scope Certificate. Using this the farmer can sell his produce directly to consumers as organic produce.

If organic farmers seek to market their produce through retailers, they have to subject samples of their produce to residual analysis in labs authorised for that, after which if there are no residues in the produce, they would be issued a ‘Transactional Certificate’. Using this, the farmers can label their produce as organic and market it to retailers.