



Press Release

# Go organic for a greener planet

## Launch of 1<sup>st</sup> ever Shoppers Guideline on “How to buy Organic Food” in Pakistan

Its consecutively 5th year that TheNetwork for Consumer Protection has joined 53 civil society organisations in 29 countries to commemorate Green Action Week being held between 2 – 8 October 2017 and launched first ever Shoppers Guideline on “How to buy Organic Food” in a ceremony held at Hamdard University Campus, Islamabad.

A large number of students and academic staff participated in the global campaign for organic food and farming for all.

As part of the campaign, TheNetwork has drawn the attention of the law, policy makers and consumers to promote the slowly catching concept in Pakistan that organic food is good for your health, environment, local community and your economy. It makes a difference for you, your children, the bees, the farmers, the trees and the rivers. It makes an important difference to our planet. Organic food and farming for all is the Green Action Week theme for 2013-2017.

Highlighting the importance of the organic food, Nadeem Iqbal, Executive Coordinator, TheNetwork for Consumer Protection (TN) said that main objective is to promote the consumption of organic food among consumers, which is free from chemical fertilizers and pesticides and have more nutrition value. This isn't just a fad, but rather a realization that getting closer to nature is in our interest. Increased awareness about impurities in the food we eat on a daily basis means that people are consciously switching to healthier options... or are trying to at least.

Organic food is chemical-free. It isn't grown from genetically-modified seeds (that cannot reproduce), nor is it drenched in chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Consuming organic food protects us from the array of diseases and health conditions that are caused by eating contaminated food... and that accounts for much of what we eat, said Nadeem.

While speaking at the ceremony, Dr. Azhar Hussain, Director General and Deen Pharmacy of Hamdard University said that the concept of Organic Food is getting popular in our country & it means that we're going back to the basics but if we buy it from market, the prices are two times higher than other food. So there is a need to create awareness about two things, what is organic food? And from where people can get it. TN designed & published “Shoppers Guideline” is a good addition to literature available on Organic Food and Hamdard University will look forward to get engaged with TN in future endeavors.

While implementing GAF projects during last three years, TheNetwork realized that there is a need to develop more advocacy material on hazardous pesticide use and promotion of organic farming and widely distribute it to consumers/shoppers visiting markets especially food sections. This shoppers guideline will develop linkages between last year's activity of publishing “Organic Food and Farming for all” guideline that was focusing at producers of food. The shopper guideline will also help to address the misconceptions about the fears of not using pesticides.

Pakistan considers higher agriculture growth as a mean to spur economic growth that ultimately trickles down to reduce poverty. Most of the country's policies are also based on this dictum though not much evidence is available to substantiate this approach's success. During previous projects,

TheNetwork's focus was at policy makers now it aims at shoppers that a shopper's guideline should be there for them to get help from, while shopping.

Pakistan's food security centered policy to grow more food resulting in the excessive use of pesticide at the cost of food safety. The yearly use of pesticide has increased to over 61,229 tons. But the federal and provincial laws ensuring safe food are not well integrated – Plant Protection department registers pesticide import; Environment Protection Agency tells how to use them; Standard Authority determines the standards; and provincial food authorities implement them.

After devolution, many of federal government's powers related to food and environment safety and regulation have been transferred to provincial government. The provincial governments are coming up with food regulatory bodies. While there are some regulations restricting contamination of water by Pesticide residues, there is almost none if pesticides remain on or in food after they are applied to food crops. Pakistan Agriculture Research Council found harmful remains of pesticides in 87.5 per cent of the fruits, while 28 per cent of the samples exceeded the Maximum Acceptable Concentrate (MAC) for any single pesticide.

There have been some academic studies on the issue but there is none from consumer perspective as outlined in the "CI Campaigning Guide: Safer, More Sustainable Food for All". The study will help develop the theme in Pakistani context and will also provide advocacy content for law/policy makers and consumers.

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