

Barriers to the adoption of organic agriculture: An investigation using the Theory of Planned Behaviour

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Summary

Certified organic production by small-scale farmers in developing countries is increasingly promoted as an opportunity to access a growing and dynamic market while at the same time, enhance productivity and improve incomes. Nevertheless, adoption has been slow. The economics literature suggests profitability is the main constraint; however, the sustainable agriculture literature is inconclusive and considers attitudes of significant importance.

As ecological behaviour is susceptible to a wide range of influences beyond an individual's control, environmental attitude alone is often a poor predictor of behaviour (Kaiser *et al.*, 1999). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985) is therefore promoted for studies in the ecological domain as in addition to attitudes, it incorporates the role of social pressures and the perceived difficulty in carrying out the behaviour. Using this framework, the psychological barriers to adoption of organic production are investigated using small-scale avocado producers from Michoacán, Mexico as a case study. The responses of 108 conventional farmers to an in depth household survey are analysed using established statistical procedures, the results of which are explored econometrically using ordered probit models.

Despite positive attitudes towards organic production, intentions to convert are negative. This suggests that attitudes alone are not sufficient to induce adoption and that while organic could be a long-term strategy, in the short term conversion is unlikely. More important to the formation of intentions are the perceived social pressures and perceived ease of conversion, both having positive and significant effects on intentions.

Promotion of organic production will therefore require a focus on information asymmetries within the wider population, the development of technical skills and training of key actors in the avocado chain to organic methods. This should help alleviate negative social pressures toward organic production, but also assist in overcoming the uncertainty and lack of confidence present in producers' abilities to successfully convert to organic production.

References

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