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Bhutan`s plans to go 100% organic make progress

by Dr John Paull



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Bhutan's Minister for Agriculture and Forestry, Dr Pema Gyamtsho, confirmed aspirations for his country to be the world's first country to go 100% organic. Certifying a whole country as organic would set a new challenge for certifiers.

At the 2013 Delhi Sustainable Development Summit held this month in India, Gyamtsho stated: *"Ours is a mountainous terrain. When we use chemicals they don't stay where we use them, they impact the water and plants. We say that we need to consider all the environment. Most of our farm practices are traditional farming, so we are largely organic anyway"*.

The Bhutan Minister added that *"we are Buddhists, too, and we believe in living in harmony with nature. Animals have the right to live, we like to see plants happy and insects happy"*.

Gyamtsho admitted that *"Going organic will take time"* adding that *"We have set no deadline. We can not do it tomorrow. Instead we will achieve it region by region and crop by crop"*. As well as being a member of cabinet, Gyamtsho is a farmer in the Himalayan kingdom, and he has studied farming methods in New Zealand and Switzerland.

At a time when its near neighbours of China and India are struggling with pollution, [The Guardian reports](#) that for Bhutan "more than 95% of the population has clean water and electricity, 80% of the country is forested and ... it is carbon neutral and food secure... it is now basing its economic development on the pursuit of collective happiness".

'The World of Organic Agriculture, Statistics and Emerging Trends 2013' reveals that Bhutan is the country with the world's fastest growing organic sector -growing, from just 59

ha. in 2008, to 20,995 ha. of certified organic agricultural land together with 15,605 ha. of organic wild collection area in 2011. Gyamtsho declared that *"What is at stake is the future. We need governments who can make bold decisions now rather than later"*.

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