

Organic production of taro

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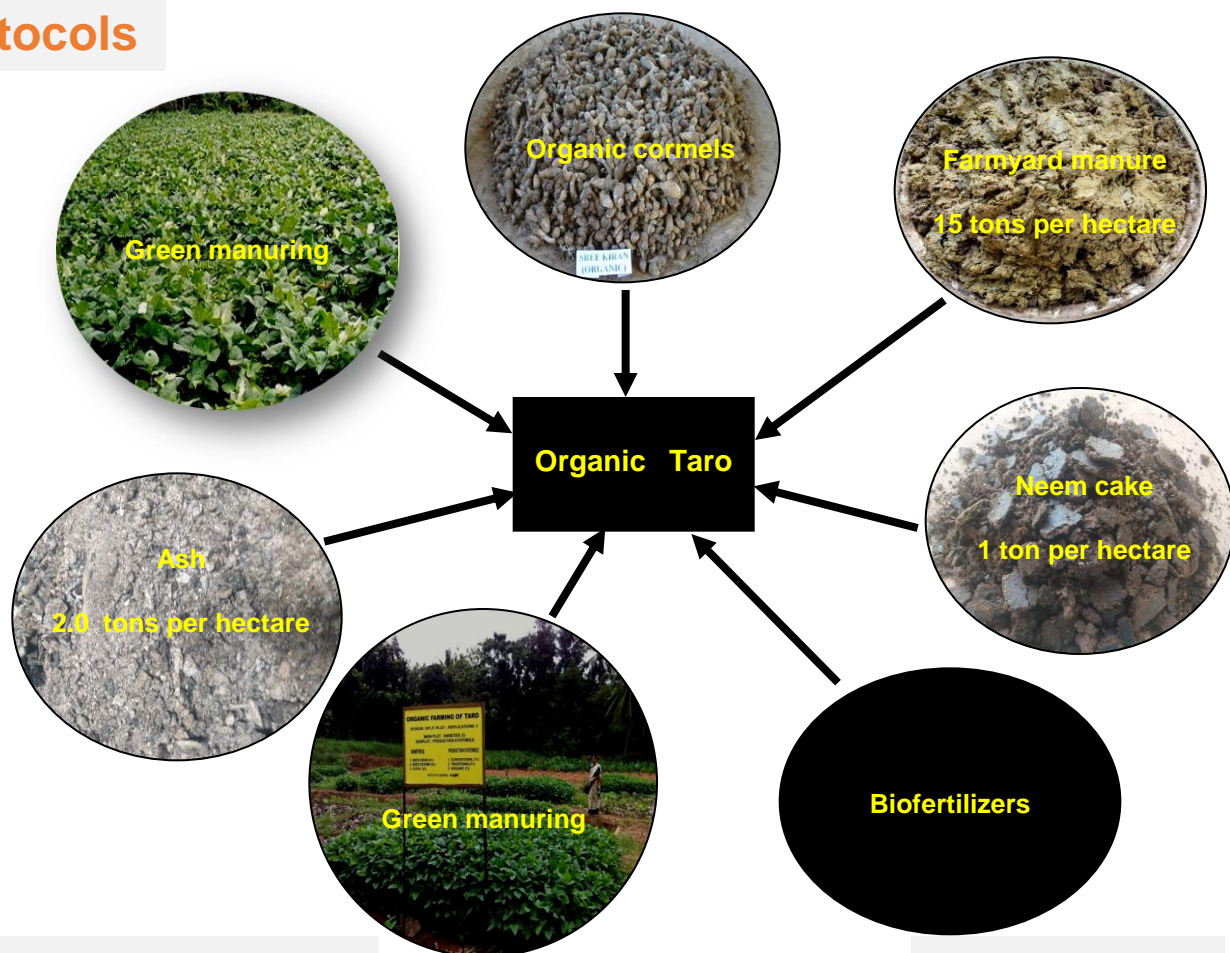
TARO, though an under-utilized and under-exploited crop, is a staple of the poor. It is grown in the tropics for its edible and other traditional uses. It is a food of small and marginal farmers, grown in swamps, lowlands or uplands, irrigated or rainfed, for home consumption or domestic markets. Although taro is grown throughout India, the major areas under taro cultivation are located in the northern, eastern and north-eastern states. An array of food products is prepared from cormels, leaves and petioles of taro. Taro chips prepared from the tubers are used as snacks, starch used in baby foods and there is considerable potential for the use of taro silage as animal feed. Worldwide awareness has led to the search for safe and sustainable food production and consumption systems and there exists much scope for organic taro production. Protocols for organic production of taro are described here.

Plant organically produced cormels. Treat cormels of 20-25 grams size with slurry containing cowdung, neem cake and *Pseudomonas fluorescens* (5 grams per kilogram seed) and dry under shade before planting. Apply farmyard manure (FYM) at the rate of 15 tons per hectare (400 grams per pit) in pits at the time of planting.

Apply neem cake at the rate of 1 ton per hectare (25-30 grams per pit) in pits at the time of planting. Apply biofertilizers, *Azospirillum* at the rate of 3 kilograms per hectare, mycorrhiza 5 kilograms per hectare and phosphobacteria 3 kilograms per hectare at the time of planting. Inter-sow green manure cowpea seeds at the rate of 20 kilograms per hectare between pits and incorporate green matter at 45-60 days. The green matter addition from the green manure will be at the rate of 15-20 tons per hectare. Apply ash at the rate of 2 tons per hectare (60 grams per plant) at the time of incorporation of green manure cowpea.

To manage taro leaf blight (TLB), plant TLB resistant variety Muktakeshi, treat the cormels in cowdung slurry enriched with *Trichoderma asperellum* (5 grams per kilogram of seed) and apply vermicompost at the rate of 100 grams per plant. As a prophylactic measure against TLB, spray vermiwash at the rate of 100 ml per litre of water and repeat at fortnightly intervals, especially during rainy season (or) Akomin at the rate of 3 ml per litre of water from one month after planting at fortnightly intervals up to 4 months.

Protocols



Seeing is believing!



Advantages

- Sustainable yield (10.61 tons per hectare)
- Safe and quality cormels (+7.29% dry matter, +10.78% starch, +31.55% sugars, + P, +K, +Ca & +Mg over conventional)
- Soil health (+1.2 unit pH, +39% organic C, +P, +Ca, +Mg, +Fe, +Mn, +Zn & +Cu over conventional)
- Better net income (Rupees 174,160 per hectare)

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