



NATIONAL CENTRE FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

The National Centre for Organic Agriculture (NCOA) is located at Yusipang which is about 15 km from Thimphu city on the Thimphu-Punakha highway. The Centre falls under Chang geog of Thimphu dzongkhag and is located at an altitude of 2700 m above sea level. The Centre has a very rich and dynamic history that dates back to Bhutan's second Five Year Plan.



BACKGROUND

1969

His Majesty, the Third Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk marked the opening of the Centre on 21st May, 1969 as the Horticulture Research Station. Since then, the Centre has been working on the evaluation of temperate fruits and promotion of improved horticulture production technologies.

1994

Livestock, forestry and agriculture which are the three sectors under Ministry of Agriculture and Forest were functioning independently until 1994. With ministry's new objective of integrating all sectors under one umbrella was yet another historic move to enhance collaboration between different sectors. The three sectors were formally consolidated and were renamed as Renewable Natural Resources Research Centre (RNRRC) with Field Crops, Horticulture, Livestock, and Forestry as the four major research programs. Council of Renewable Natural Resource Research of Bhutan (CoRRB) was created as the administrative apex body to coordinate and regulate various research across all RNRRCs. RNRRC Yusipang was given the national mandate to coordinate forestry research.

2009

The MoAF further felt the need to strengthen the research and extension linkages among the line departments at the regional level by assigning development mandates to all RNRRCs. Accordingly, all four RNRRCs were re-designated as RNR Research and Development Centre (RNR RDC). By its national mandate RNR RDC Yusipang was administratively realigned to the Department of Forest and Park Services (DOFPS).

2016

The first Organizational Development Exercise (ODE) recommended the restructuring of all RNR RDCs under their respective departments (Forestry, Livestock and Agriculture). Accordingly, the mandate of RNR RDC-Yusipang was shifted from Forestry to Agriculture and was subsequently renamed as the Agriculture Research and Development Centre (ARDC)-Yusipang. It was also identified as a potential Centre to coordinate the National Organic Program (NOP).

2017

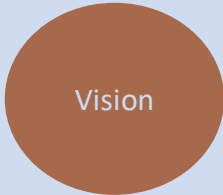
The second ODE recommended the realignment of the National Organic Program (NOP) at Semtokha to be shifted to Yusipang and to function as one unit under ARDC, Yusipang and ARDC Yusipang was assigned the national mandate to coordinate and lead the Organic Agriculture (OA) research and development programs. The same exercise recommended transfer of National Potato Program (NPP) from National Seed Centre (NSC), Paro to ARDC Yusipang and was assigned national mandate to coordinate potato research and development programs.

1989

The Department of Agriculture (DoA) initiated the organization of the research programs by setting up commodity-focused Agriculture Research Centres. Accordingly, the Applied Research Centre Yusipang was renamed as Agriculture Research Centre (ARC) and was recognized as one of the then five research Centres in the country. The Centre was also assigned with the national mandate to lead potato research and promote potato-based farming system.

2020

ARDC-Yusipang was renamed as the National Centre for Organic Agriculture (NCOA) and was identified the apex body to coordinate and facilitate the overall development of organic plans and programs in the country. NCOA is also responsible for regulation and certification of organic farms in accordance with Bhutan Organic Guarantee System (BOGS) and Local Organic Assurance System (LOAS). NCOA is administratively under the Agriculture Research and Extension Division (ARED) of Department of Agriculture (DoA). To strengthen efficient service delivery for low altitude areas, a new sub-Centre under NCOA Yusipang has also been approved at Khaibeytar, Samphelling Gewog under Chhukha Dzongkhag.



A self-reliant, productive, diverse, resilient, and sustainable agriculture food system

Achieve food and nutrition security, agricultural transformation through innovative and sustainable technologies, diversified and competitive economic/production options, inclusive and sustainable policies and programs.



National Mandate

- i. As an apex body for Organic Agriculture, NCOA develop guidelines, implement policy directives and decisions of the National Organic Board (NOB) and National technical Working Group (NWG) on Organic Agriculture.
- ii. Facilitate the Registration, Certification, and Regulation of Organic Sector within the purview of the Bhutan Organic Guarantee System (BOGS) and Bhutan Organic Standards (BOS).
- iii. Register and regulate Certifying Bodies and other stakeholders engaged in the organic value chain in the country.
- iv. Coordinate and lead organic research and development programs including adaptive research on crop improvement and generation of organic production technologies.
- v. Develop and maintain the database in the organic sector.
- vi. Serve as the Secretariat for the National Technical Working Group on Organic Agriculture.
- vii. Facilitate knowledge management, dissemination, and capacity development needs on Organic Agriculture.
- viii. Coordinate the National Potato Research and Development Program
- ix. Coordinate the National Vegetable Research and Development Program
- x. Coordinate National Quinoa Commodity Program
- xi. Coordinate and implement project plans and programs under the supervision of Department of Agriculture

Regional Mandate

- Provide technical support to the Dzongkhag Agriculture Sector of four client Dzongkhags namely Chhukha, Haa, Paro, and Thimphu in planning and implementation of agriculture development programs.
- Collaborate and support other ARDCs and Central Programs under DoA in implementing nationally coordinated activities in the region.

Research and Development Programs

The NCOA, Yusipang is headed by a Program Director who is supported by the administration and finance section which has one accounts officer, administration officer and one store in-charge. It has four major technical programs which are Horticulture, Field Crops, National Potato Program and Technical Support Program which are headed by Program Officers. All the technical programs at NCOA are specifically assigned with the responsibility to coordinate, evaluate, and develop organic technologies to contribute to the development of the organic sector. The research farm at NCOA, Yusipang is already registered as an organic farm and will soon be certified under the BOGS. Besides the focus on organic research and development, technical programs also undertake on-farm evaluation and promotion of conventional technologies and provide technical support to the Agriculture sector of four client Dzongkhags.

The proposed new sub-Centre at Samphelling Gewog under Chhukha Dzongkhag will be headed by an officer in-charge. It will have a Horticulture and Field Crops Program that will function under the supervision of Program Officers at Yusipang.

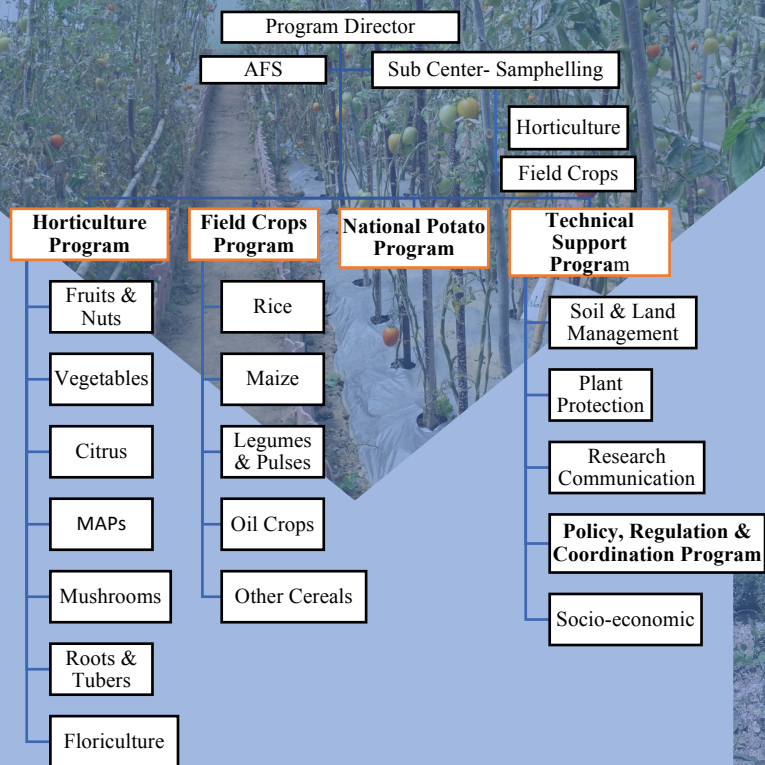


PROGRAMS UNDER NCOA

HORTICULTURE PROGRAM

Initiated way back in the late 1960s, Horticulture is one of the most important programs of the Centre which focuses largely on temperate fruits and vegetables. Currently, it comprises of three sub-programs which are Fruits and Nuts, Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAP), and Vegetables. The Fruits and Nuts program coordinate the research and development activities on different temperate fruits. Under the pome fruits category, this program is working with 33 varieties of apple, 13 varieties of pear, and 11 varieties of persimmon. Under the stone fruits category, nine varieties of peach, three varieties of plum, and 5 varieties of apricot are maintained. In the soft fruit category, there are 13 varieties of cherry and six varieties of berries of which two varieties are strawberry.

The MAP sub-program is responsible for leading research and development activities on high altitude medicinal and aromatic plants. The national vegetable coordinator and MAPS coordinator is based under the Horticulture program and oversees coordination of vegetable and MAPS research and development programs of the DoA. Construction of one hydroponics at Yusipang and successful cultivation few horticulture crops like lettuce, mustard green, parsley, basil and strawberry was yet another move to start precision farming in our country. Promotion of low-cost greenhouses to facilitate year-round vegetable production, organic vegetable and urban vegetable cultivation are also some key roles played by horticulture program.



FIELD CROPS PROGRAM

The Field Crops Program coordinates and leads the high-altitude rice research which is conducted in a leased land at Tsento-Shari under Tsento gewog, Paro Dzongkhag. Evaluation and promotion of cold tolerant and high yielding varieties are some major focus of rice research. A total of eighteen rice varieties (six traditional and 12 improved varieties) suited for high altitude areas are maintained by the program. The national quinoa coordinator is also based under Field Crops program and oversees national quinoa research and development activities. It also implements activities on maize, oil crops, legumes and pulses, and other cereals in collaboration with other ARDCs and commodity coordinators.

National Potato Program

The National Potato Program (NPP) is unique to NCOA only. It is responsible for overall coordination and implementation of potato research across the nation and supports the Department of Agriculture in any technical aspects on potato. NPP is currently evaluating nutrient dense and blight resistant potato varieties at NCOA farm. NPP also focuses on the evaluation of different potato varieties, generation of production technologies and methods to combat emerging issues on potato.

Technical Support Program

The Technical Support Program (TSP) comprises four sub-programs which are Soil and Land Management; Plant Protection; Research Communications and Socio-economic. While the three sub-programs evaluate and develop different packages on organic technologies, the research communication program focuses on the dissemination and advocacy of organic technologies.



The stand-alone program for NCOA which is embedded within TSP is Policy, Regulation and Coordination (PRC) Program. It is an indispensable program which oversees the national mandate of coordinating Organic Agriculture plans and activities. This program is vital for developing policy guidelines, implementing policy directives and cross sector coordination of OA. Its major task includes the facilitation of Registration, Certification and Regulation processes to support all stakeholders engaged in the organic value chain. The program also oversees and manages Bhutan Organic Guarantee System, Bhutan Organic Standards, Bhutan Organic Mark and OA database. The PRC program of NCOA undertake the following functions:

- Coordinate and facilitate organic programs with other cross-sectoral agencies such as the Department of Livestock (DOL), Department of Forest and Park Services (DOFPS), Department of Agricultural Marketing and Cooperatives (DAMC), Bhutan Agricultural and Food Regulator Authority (BAFRA), National Organic Flagship Program (NOFP), National Biodiversity Centre, Civil Society and private organizations and entrepreneurs engaged in the organic value chain.
- Develop and implement the policy guidelines and directives of the National Organic Board (NOB) and National technical Group on OA.
- Registration of all organic producers, processors, and certifying bodies.
- Management of the BOGS, BOS, and Bhutan Organic mark.
- Certification of organic producers and processors through the Local Organic Assurance System (LOAS).
- Develop and maintain the database in the Organic sector.
- Compliance monitoring of BOGS and BOS by the stakeholders registered with NCOA.