



## MY MEETING NOTES

### IFOAM Organic Leadership Course Master Class Goesan County, South Korea 24-29 April 2017



*Dr Mahesh Chander narrates his unique experience from participating in the IFOAM Organic Leadership Course Master Class-2017, which was the follow-up of the Organic Leadership Course he attended in 2012.*

#### THE CONTEXT

The Organic Academy (<http://www.ifoam.bio/en/what-we-do/organic-academy>) of The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), initiated Organic Leadership Course (OLC) in 2012. I was one among the 15 participants selected for the first OLC-South Asia Course of 10 month duration, with online and two residential modules of 10 days (Near Mumbai, Maharashtra, April, 2012) and 7 days (<http://www.ifoam.bio/en/olc-south-asia-2012>) in Bangalore (November, 2012). As a part of this training, each one of us created Development Plans (DPs) to be pursued after completion of the course.



The IFOAM Academy came up with the idea to follow up with the course participants in the form of an Organic Leadership Course Master Class, to review the progress made by the course participants and to further develop their capacities. The Academy invited applications from all those who had completed the OLCs in different continents since 2012 (<http://www.ifoam.bio/en/organic-academy/olc-around-world>).

From the 60 applications they received, 24 participants from 18 countries were selected for a 6 days training at Goesan, South Korea, during 24-29 April, 2017. Well in advance, the IFOAM Academy published a document describing the profile of the course participants, indicating their achievements in context of their DPs (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0TX5SvS4IMRVUx3ZkVLaUpod2s/view>). Also, well before the start of the current course, the programme schedule was mailed to all the participants (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0TX5SvS4IMRbIN1cDF5Vmd6ZXm/view>).

## THE PROGRAMME

### Inaugural Session

The Honorable Deputy Governor of the Goesan province, addressed the participants, who were introduced to him by the course Director. The inauguration activity was crisp and finished as per schedule within 30 minutes.

### The Technical Sessions

Well planned technical sessions were mostly group exercises with presentation by the course participants, wherein, presentation methods like world café, open space, fish bowl, cards, charts, etc., were used. These sessions were interactive and participatory, enabling everyone to contribute to the discussions, thus making the methodology used, a good, participatory experience.





### Field Trips

During the five day programme, two well organized field trips exposed us to the field realities in the organic sector. It was good opportunity for many of us to visit Hansalim (<http://eng.hansalim.or.kr/>), which is a cooperative established by the producers and the consumers in Korea. The producers farm and

produce products believing human and nature as well as the urban and rural areas are connected in the string of life. The consumers buy the products, relating to this thought of the producers. It is a good concept worth replicating in other developing countries, though it has its own set of issues. We also visited an organic farm by name 10 Farmers, which was diverse in its produce and had its own retail store to sell its farm produce.



### PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK

The course participants continue to send their free and frank feedback on the course, which is highly appreciative. The constructive criticism of the course (Box 1), in fact, may be used by the IFOAM Academy to improve this course in the future. Many participants including myself felt the duration of the course could have been a little longer, maybe 10 days. The course director assured that the feedback will be analyzed and a general reflection on this course would be shared in coming days. The participants were also interested to have more interactions with organic farmers there and listen to their practical experiences to contrast the experiences with the farmers back home. Maybe the time constraint did not allow this, nevertheless, many of us felt the need for it.

#### **Box 1: Feedback of the participants**

a. Dr. Jewel K. Bissdorf, Vietnam:

My expectation was, as master class alumni, we should have come up with at least an organic leadership output that can be country/region specific, based on the organic leadership course, our DPs and experiences - for scaling up. For example, it could be an organic leadership training design that would be appropriate for the agriculture policy makers or for organic practitioners and/or for agricultural extension workers. In this way, there will be a training guide developed by a pool of experts on how to train future organic leaders in their respective areas. It will also be a good attachment for proposal on organic training funding. I hope this will be taken into consideration as one idea on future master class.

b. Ailbhe Gerrard, Ireland:

Program/ workshop topics may be reconsidered, clear statement before outset or at start of class on expectations and outcomes from the course - in collaboration with participants, excursions built in earlier in the program. These were really excellent and well chosen (Hansalim, 10 Farmers etc), and they gave great insight into organic agriculture, direct selling and consumer organization. Development Plan tactic - further development plan for each participant perhaps? Longer course could be considered, for various reasons (including jetlag?) as we took time to start interacting as a group, group exercises / icebreakers at the start, to develop trust and ideas between members, we went immediately into output mode. Topic suggestions: Participate in discussions about the future of organic agriculture e.g., Vision development or envision, the future of organic; fuller examination of Organic 3.0 and concepts and how and what to implement; suggestions on how to improve organic agriculture and take-up in each Participant's local context; selecting success stories/ identifying elements that might work in the participants' local context, and replicating and scaling organic agriculture success stories.

c. Paula Aberasturi, Philippines:

While we are slowly receiving everyone's feedback, do we also try and find a way - collectively (but virtually), to envision and create a "where do we go from here" plan? I remember we didn't quite formulate one or didn't reach a consensus. That, or we just let it be? :-) I've been going over my notes and the common theme has been: local, empowerment, communicating to the grassroots/farmers/smallholders, cultural shifts and a more enabling environment versus regulation. Let me know what everyone thinks, and if you all want to move this forward with a commitment to a project/initiative or if we just let it be.

d. Jiří Lehejček, Czech Republic:

I enjoyed OLC a lot; agree with most of your comments. Personally, I think it was a pity we did not have more time to present success stories of our work in more detail. People can always share the best topics they are really into, frontal talks maybe old-fashioned but input can be very good.

e. Khaled Sassi, Tunisia:

I would have liked to discuss and examine more of the Organic 3 as mentioned by Tracy and Ailbhe. This will be on another occasion and probably at Organic World Congress 2017 in India. I agree with Ailbhe, that we should have discussed on how to improve organic agriculture in each participant's local context. As Mahesh said, the value chain and group / cooperative farming approach being done by Hansalim, is an excellent model to follow in our countries. Finally, David's idea for the creation of an OLC Alumni Network is a priority to take advantage of international expertise in the organic field. From my part, I suggest the creation of a platform reserved for distance learning courses with discussion forums. These courses could deal with very specific aspects such as composting, organic intensification, organic innovations, etc.

The Course Director responded to the feed- back and gave his equally frank reflection on the course (Box2).

## LESSONS

While applying to the course, the prospective participants were asked to submit a motivation letter, as to why they want to participate in this course? On completion of the course, in their feedback, they have mentioned whether their expectations from the course were met or not. The course participants took a keen interest in giving their constructive feedback with an intent to see similar programmes being organized in a better way.

The programme focused on technical content, presentations, and learning and sharing from the experiences of diverse set of participants in a participatory mode. It's a good practice worth replicating in training programmes that are organized. The inaugural session was so brief and took only 30 minutes, which helped by providing adequate time for other more relevant sessions.

Professional way of handling the programme, the logistics, catering, accommodation, transport etc., were outstanding. These lessons could be useful to make training programmes organized by us more impactful.

## FINAL REMARKS

We the Agricultural Extension professionals have not only participated in but also organized several training programmes over the past two decades of our professional career. Perhaps, hardly anyone of

**Box2: Response from Konrad Hauptfleisch, Course Director & Manager, IFOAM Academy, Germany**



*There were a lot of positive outcomes, especially the opportunity to connect and reconnect, and to learn from each other. Good foundation was laid for further interaction and future collaboration amongst many of the participants. There was definitely learning and growth, and I was also happy to see how so many of the participants grew and developed since their OLC days. It was good to see how all of you connected, shared, and bonded. This augurs well for our future as a network.*

**Some responses to specific comments:** *Organic 3.0: many of you expressed a need for it to feature more — this is noted! To clarify — it is part of what we focus on in our strategy, and I have done many workshops on the topic, but for me Organic 3.0 was implied in everything we did touch on when we talked about supporting production, focusing on more research and extension, and developing programs to support the development of OA - but I will most definitely take this comment and make improvements. Making the course longer — you have to understand that we were wonderfully supported by Goesan financially, but that every day longer places a lot of pressure on the budget - Most of you received full financial support for the Master Class, this was the best balance we could strike. Methodology and content: I take all the suggestions made by many of you, and I appreciate all of them - I will include this into my future planning!*

*I think it is good to acknowledge where things do not work well, and where one can take personal ownership of not only the good, but also the not-so-good:*

- I think all of us, especially me, came with very high expectations. In many ways, that probably made the shortcomings so much more obvious. No-one is more aware of this than me - I had this dream to bring you together, and I expected miracles to happen. And like Barbara showed in one of her slides on the last day, maybe a bit of detail was missing between the idea and the expected miracle.*
- I was personally not happy with my own performance, and felt that I could most definitely have brought more structure and guidance to the proceedings, and I somehow did have some difficulty in bringing “more than just another OLC” as someone said. I take responsibility for this, and will reflect very carefully on how to address this.*
- I was also hoping for more “miracles” to come out of the “Master Groups” I set up, expecting more of your DP work to be reflected, and hoping for those sessions to bring more content and inspiration to the whole event. Also here I want to take responsibility for maybe not giving enough support, guidance, and clearer objectives for us to achieve.*
- I am particularly disappointed in my performance on the last day, and hope to never repeat that again. I will learn from it, and improve!*

*A lot of positive, and a lot of constructive suggestions, and also a few sobering reflections — all are good, and all will help us to make the next one better. My sincere gratitude to Jennifer and Mr. Jang and everyone else from IFOAM ASIA for the wonderful support and hard work! My sincere thanks to all the officials of Goesan County and Chungbuk province for their generous support.*

*I am happy to receive more personal and frank feedback and suggestions to ensure that this first less-than-perfect Master Class can become the first of many more amazing events for our network!*

*Feedback from you will help to make the next one so much better!*

us could ever consider organizing the follow-up programme like this one to see what happens once training has been imparted. This experience was thus very unique.

If not during the face to face programmes like this, at least post-training surveys should be done to see the impact of training programmes. I know some organizations do surveys but mostly these are not taken seriously by the course participants nor do the training organizers take them seriously. Maybe in the coming years, many organizations would consider organizing such follow-up programmes.

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