

**Statement on Bhutan's organic policy**  
**By Prime Minister of Bhutan, Jigmi Y.Thinley**

*Released 12 March, 2011*

**Making a Commitment to Organic Agriculture**

*A statement by the Honourable Jigmi Y. Thinley on the importance of "Living GNH," and welcoming the partnership with Dr Vandana Shiva.*

**Affirms Bhutan will be 100% Organic**

Ever since His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo famously proclaimed that "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product", this country has been on a unique development path that seeks to integrate and harmonize sustainable and equitable economic development with taking real care of our natural world, strengthening our rich culture, and governing wisely, responsibly, and selflessly in the glorious tradition we have inherited from our great monarchs.

I have always seen His Majesty's wisdom in leading us on this balanced development path as the greatest gift not only to this country but to a bewildered world that is obsessed with material gain, destroying our natural environment, and in desperate need of a sane path forward.

For two decades, His Majesty's proclamation remained a simple and intuitive shared understanding here that material gain was not the most important ingredient in wellbeing. We Bhutanese somehow knew what His Majesty meant! As we rapidly opened up to the world, particularly in the last decade, we were increasingly asked to define, explain, and even measure GNH, and I think we've now done that with some success: We have four GNH pillars, and even a GNH index with 72 indicators in nine measurable domains. Conceptualizing, understanding, measuring, and explaining GNH to ourselves and to the world might be seen as a second phase in the development of GNH.

We have now entered the third and most important phase in the evolution of GNH — putting GNH into practice and action in all we do and in all our policies, and bringing GNH fully and completely into the very fabric of our society. It is time to live GNH fully.

- That's why we've started to bring GNH into all aspects of our educational system.
- It's why we're now using the GNH measures as a policy screening tool to ensure that every new policy advances GNH principles and values.
- It's why we're creating a new GNH Centre in Bumthang as a living model of GNH in practice.

- And it's why we are now bringing GNH fully into our agricultural sector by truly "going organic".

In our 2008 DPT manifesto and in my State of the Nation address last year, we affirmed our goal that Bhutan will be the first sovereign nation in the world to be fully, 100% organic in its food production, with the 'grown in Bhutan' label synonymous with 'organically grown.' That will create significant economic opportunities for our farmers and for the country, establish Bhutan as a global training centre for organic agriculture, and provide a major spur to organic growing worldwide.

Last year we took a big step forward in this area by creating a partnership with world-renowned scientist, ecologist, and pioneer of organic agriculture in India, Dr. Vandana Shiva, whose Navdanya network in India has trained more than 500,000 Indian farmers in sustainable and organic farming methods, and created India's largest fair trade organic marketing network. Dr. Shiva came here in September to lead a full day seminar on the science and economics of organic farming and on training, marketing, and certification. She came again in December with her best farmer trainers to assist Samdrup Jongkhar farmers in going organic as part of the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative. This month she and her team will train 23 Samdrup Jongkhar farmers at her organic training farm in Dehradun.

Going organic is truly a GNH path forward — strengthening all four pillars of GNH. Going organic will enrich and keep our soils healthy and fertile in perpetuity rather than degrading and depleting them through use of synthetic chemicals. Going organic will protect our precious ground water and surface water from pollution and fertilizer run-off. It will protect our biodiversity and save our birds and animals from the deadly effects of chemical pollution.

Going organic will create new economic opportunities for farmers and rural communities both by adding value to what they produce and by reducing the costs of farming, since they'll no longer have to pay for expensive imported pesticides, fertilizers and other chemicals. The Indian demand for organic products is growing so fast that the market will never be satiated.

Going organic will empower farmers by reducing their dependence on foreign farm inputs, chemicals, and imported patented seeds, and by creating local seed sovereignty, and increasing reliance on local wisdom, traditional farming methods, and freely available local materials like manure, biomass, and leaf compost that fertilize and enrich the soil. I don't see us just growing more organic food but developing our own organic fertilizers and pest control agents using natural materials based in the rich medicinal flora for which Bhutan is renowned.

And maybe most importantly, going organic will strengthen our culture and rural communities. By creating good economic opportunities for our educated youth in

rural areas, we can begin to stem the massive rural-urban migration that has created such serious demographic, economic, and social stresses. That in turn will keep our rural communities — with their networks of social supports, vibrant extended families, and mutual dependence — strong and vital.

Going organic is living GNH. Going organic is not only fulfilling an explicit promise this government made in 2008 and affirmed again in my State of the Nation address. It is also key to putting GNH fully into practice and action in this country. I am most grateful to Dr. Vandana Shiva and her farmer trainers, as well as to those first-rate experts from the Organic Farming Association of India who came last month to train our farmers, for their kind and generous assistance, even taking the long and bumpy road to Samdrup Jongkhar to assist local farmers in going organic, and for working with us nationally to take 'organic' from the fringe to the mainstream in the Kingdom of Bhutan.