Definitional (What are we talking about?)

Organic agriculture is often presented as a lifestyle, ignoring its scientific aspects; often presented in negative terms ("don't use this") or in terms of substitution ("use this instead of that"). The issue instead is the long-range physical and environmental stability of our food production system.

Attitudinal (inertia and misunderstanding)

This includes the human inclination to embrace the familiar as well as a negative reaction to the naive, sectarian, and sometimes accusatory manner in which so many alternative ideas have been presented.

The distortions of the chemical-organic controversy have kept farmers from realizing that low-input systems offer potential options which do not exist in the present system. This conclusion is based on the author's interaction with a large farmer's organization when invited to speak on the benefits of alternative agriculture. Perception on the part of the group was that organic farming was a dangerous revolutionary movement which advocated (1) banning all pesticides, and (2) breaking up large farms into small farms and giving them to the poor.

Scientific (resistance to change)

The scientific community may feel that their lives lose value if the system they have developed is scrapped. There is a need to recognize the invaluable resource of experienced scientists, interest them in the potential of a different approach, and encourage their participation in fine-tuning the emerging ecological agricultural systems.

Economic

Those with a vested interest in the status quo (e.g. manufacturers and purveyors of chemicals) are not going to voluntarily abandon this field and lay down their sales force in favor of an ecological agriculture. It may be to their advantage, however, to explore the needs of ecological farmers, such as access to improved data on soil tests, plant tissue analysis, crop rotation programs, etc., and begin to provide these new inputs.

Council for Agricultural Science and Technology. 1980. "Comparison of Conventional and Organic Farming Published," Journal of Soil and Water Conservation, Vol. 35, No. 6, Nov.-Dec.

Differed from USDA on the probable results of a move toward organic farming. Concludes that widespread adoption would cause an increase in soil erosion since more acres of marginal land would need to be cultivated to meet total crop production needs.