

Minutes of Agriculture Review & Planning Meeting

Date: 17th November' 2005, Thursday
Time: 10:45am to 1:30pm
Venue: Main Conference Hall, Collectorate, Nagapattinam
Organised by: NGO Coordination and Resource Centre (NCRC)

Introduction:

Mr. Chandra Mohan of NCRC gave a warm welcome to the NGOs present for the meeting. This meeting was conducted to review the activities carried out by the NGOs in agriculture sector in Nagapattinam district during Oct – Nov'2005 and to plan further.

Annexure A: *Participants List*

Annexure B: *Consolidated Updation report*

Agenda:

A brief about the agenda was put up on the white board for the participants' reference and each of the points were discussed in detail. The following is the agenda of the meeting:

- Long term activities that are to be carried out:
 - Bio-mass seedling and plantations
 - Vermi- composting / composting
- Common Works:
 - Common ponds
 - Irrigation/ drainage channels
- Review Activities:
 - Immediate activities
 - Short term activities
- Discussion on other issues and problems faced by the NGOs

Reviewing of the activities carried out by the NGOs:

WORLD VISION:

- It is carrying out desalination work in nearly 69 acres of land in North Poiganallur. Five common ponds have been cleared compared to none last month.

- Vermi composting or composting should be implemented at the earliest as the manure will be ready for use only in the next season.
- It was suggested that it is time to divert some concentration on dry land cropping at the earliest for implementation.

KUDUMBAM:

- In Porayar, the organisation has carried out orientation on vermi composting and tank models to all the farmers in the village. Capacity building among the farmers on the activities and training planned by the organisation for the forthcoming season is also under process.
- The farmers in the agricultural land covered by Kudumbam in Porayar (nearly 395 acres) are regularly attending the early morning practical sessions and implementing the same on their land.
- The various Farmers' Field Schools set up in different villages intend to make the farmers self efficient to be trainers themselves in future.
- Weekly meetings are also conducted to discuss and analyse the developments or changes occurring in the field during the period.
- The NGO member told that the participatory methodology has been well applied for the farmers. Their master trainer is effective in imparting training on crop management and the various packages.
- In Nagapattinam, by last month itself removal of sand casting was finished and pond clearing work has also been completed. Various inputs have also been distributed to the farmers.
- 600 kg of vermi compost per acre is been distributed to Nagapattinam farmers alone. Simultaneously, implementation of vermi compost/ compost programmes is also taking place.
- The organisation has started a nursery which has plants like casuarinas, cashew nuts, mango, neem, *Chinna agathi*, *pungun*, grass, etc. Fodder crops, fencing varieties, horticulture are also being grown.
- It was stated that 15 hectares of the land covered and being reclaimed by the organisation was damaged due to the recent floods.

It was stated that only two activities in the reclamation package relate to desalination. The difference the floods made to the efforts is only limited but the farmers in the region is familiar to such climatic changes in this season.

CREATE:

- Create said that reclamation work on 42 acres in Tharangambadi is under progress, the remaining activities are being carried out and they have also distributed seeds.
- The organization is now carrying out plantation of mangroves in the area which shall act as an environmental coastal belt for future disasters.

SEVALAYA:

- The organization had done trenching before the rainy season and immediately after the first rain showers deep ploughing work began.
- They have already enforced sowing for paddy farming in nearly 40 acres of land. This is a sign of keeping up with the seasonal farming in the region.
- Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, conducted training sessions for the farmers on how to do seasonal farming.
- The organization is well prepared to do groundnut farming in the near future – seeds are made available and manure is also ready. Planning for horticulture with fruit trees is in process and vegetables farming will be quick implemented too.
- The kind of planning, training and guidance to the farmers will continue until next year. Once land fertility is attained to the fullest, productivity and fruitful results will be gained.

EKTA PARISHAD:

- They are in the process of making the farmers ready for paddy farming. Vermi composting is being taught to the farmers and all the necessary inputs are made ready. Also, demand for the manure required for effective farming has been placed to the government.

TOFM:

- It is simultaneously carrying out the various reclamation activities in their area. In South and North Palpanicherry, trenching work got stopped due to water stagnation in the farming lands from the recent rain.
- Training for Vermi composting is being carried out without much difficulty. Farmers in all the villages and hamlets are very enthusiastic in coming for the training sessions and learning about how to develop earth worms, how to use vermin compost for quality farming in the region.

KUDUMBAM:

- In Vettaikaraniruppu, deep ploughing with the help of tractors as well manual ploughing equipments is being done. The depth of ploughing needed in every cultivable land has been specified and followed clearly.
- The organization has set up a nursery in this region also and distribution of seasonal seeds to the farmers is taking place.
- The farmers have been segregated into small groups based on the areas where they own lands so that special concentration can be provided during the various training sessions.
- Plantation of casuarinas (*soukumaram*) is being promoted to help absorb the remaining salinity in the soil and make it fertile for farming. The trees will also act as a coastal belt for future disasters.

EFFICOR:

- They have done significant work in Porayar on 15 acres of land and in *chaatankuppam* on 100 acres of land. Clearing of canals have been carried out effectively, trenching in nearly 253 acres of land was completed before monsoons started and deep ploughing has been done after the recent rain showers. Ploughing has been carried out 4 to 5 times on the same land so that the soil is perfectly set for a good sow.
- During the rains, distribution of variety seeds and required quantity of manure was distributed among the farmers. As the government is providing the basic quantity of seeds in all regions, EFFICOR provided additional inputs also required for productive farming.
- The organization is also providing fertilizers like Urea, potassium, neem cake, etc. and said that it will surely support the farmers till the harvest season.

CCD:

- **CCD** is distributed 55 tonnes of vermi compost in 12 villages. Previously 136 tonnes was distributed in 22 other villages. Order has been placed for the seeds to distribute them to the farmers on time when land is ready for sowing.
- Two vermi compost units have been set up in two of the villages covered by the organization. 300 kgs of vermi compost is the minimum requirement but supply of only 100kg will act as supplementary or emergency stock. Measures have to be taken

by the organization to meet the minimum requirement for resuming effective farming in the region.

BEST:

- It has implemented green manure for in-situ farming apart from others. *Udiyen pothukal* and *puvarasu – 500nos. and Pugankandru 300 nos.* has also been distributed.

In view of this, it was stated that all the NGOs should focus and clearly plan their field activities. Also, attempts have to be made to make the soil as fertile as possible for cyclic farming throughout the year. These short term implementations shall act as foundation for long lasting benefits.

Discussions about the utility of fertilizers and seeds:

Few misconceptions about the tools and fertilizers being used for agricultural development were cleared:

- Bio fertilizer is not a replacement or substitute for vermin compost nor is it manure for the plants. It functions as a promoter that makes the soil fertile for quality farming and productivity.
- Neem cake is normally used more as a pesticide than as fertilizer in the farming land. It was clarified that though it has fertilizer properties, neem cake is not a replacement for Farm Yard Manure (FYM) or Compost.
- Sustainability of bio fertilizer in different kinds of soil depends upon the organic matter availability in the soil.
- There are four types of bio fertilizers available for the farmers to use. The methods of applying these fertilizers in the farming land have to be absolutely correct as method and time affects its availability.
- Bio fertilizers are developed after lot of processing and culturing through which the innumerable bacteria are developed. Hence, it has to be utilized economically and implemented in such a way that the quantity developed is sufficient for the large acres of farming land.
- Availability of paddy was found to be inadequate. Hence the Joint Director, Agriculture shall be approached to know the source point so that the NGOs can avail and distribute the same.
- Plans have to be made to make seeds ready for dry land farming in near future. The present short term measures itself can be carry forwarded for dry land farming.

- Most of the NGOs are working in both wet and dry lands. Therefore, all the packages that are implemented presently will be applicable for dry land farming too.

Imparting of training for crop management in new identified areas:

There has been left out areas identified in the district where agriculture was affected due to tsunami. Here the land owners and farmers themselves carried out desalination and reclamation work to some extent, started cultivation and even finished sowing the new crops. Due to late intervention in such areas, crop management training and other possible support alone shall be provided to the agriculturists. Few NGOs are involved in spraying urea in all the farming lands to overcome the destruction due to recent floods.

Farmers' Concerns in the region:

Many NGOs disclosed that the farmers in their area feel that despite monetary as well as technical support, farming will not reach a profitable level at the end.

- It was suggested that all the NGOs work out a relevant plan keeping in mind that the farmers have experience and hence they need to be taught the new techniques that will help over the destruction caused to their farms due to Tsunami.
- The NGOs have to make the farmers understand that the need of the hour is to overcome the damage caused to their farms and not ploughing back profits.

Implementation of Long term activities:

When talking about bio mass seedlings, the NGOs have to keep in mind the need for quick mobilization of the seeds to the farmers for effective and continuous farming. Three main point involved in this would be:

- distribution of biomass seedlings for dry land
- Composting / Vermi Composting
- Fodder grass on bunds

Taking up of vermi composting can be done even in January 2006 as the compost will be useful for the next season only for which there is sufficient time. NGOs should concentrate totally on planting biomass seedlings until December end.

- Though it will take a minimum of 3 years to see significant changes, all kinds of macro level plans and activities for agriculture shall be implemented effectively. For this, a strong action plan is to be worked out so that all the micro level activities are also implemented well.

- It was cited that in a disaster situation like this, reclamation of cent percent of the affected area is sometimes not possible. The NGOs should concentrate on qualitative work in limited area than just doing insignificant contribution on a large area.
- A set of farmers who have been imparted training and taught various techniques of reclamation will surely share it with their fellowmen and the hence the purpose will be served. NGOs, along with experts, are here to refresh and supplement the farmers with more useful techniques for farming.
- The first anniversary of Tsunami is approaching very soon. All NGOs have been requested to speed up with their planning for implementation of activities.
- It was emphasized that it is time to make the farmers carry out farming on their own and reduce their dependence on NGOs as most of them would be leaving the district after a stipulated time.
- Most of the NGOs felt that the farmers have to strictly implement chronological farming and plantations. They should select the right order of species to be sown so that the soil fertility is improved.

It was stated that measures to wide spread the techniques and implementations among maximum farmers have to be planned. NCRC is all prepared to help coordinating skill development and capacity building programmes for all the farmers.

The presence of so many NGOs across the district seems to be helpful in improving the economical standards of the communities as well as their lifestyle.

- The first priority is to restore normalcy in the lives of the tsunami affected and hence rendering help or development of non tsunami affected areas shall remain secondary. There have been cases where many people have conned the NGOs and availed lot of provisions. Therefore, the NGOs need to verify with the village officers or BDOs before extending help.
- NGOs have been requested to carry out regular surveys in order to identify areas where tsunami has affected agriculture but help has not yet reached. Reserves and surplus shall be maintained by all NGOs for clearing of ponds, desalination and reclamation of farms, providing seedlings, etc., in newly identified areas.
- On an average, agricultural reclamation work is satisfactory in the district and the progress is very constant. Also, implementation of timely and effective drainage system in many areas helped in avoiding further destruction in the farms due to heavy rains.

- World Vision is carrying out bund construction in North Poiganallur wherein one of the two neighbouring hamlets is requesting to block the flow of backwater into their area. But that would mean increasing risk of floods during rainy season in the neighbouring hamlet. It was suggested that a meeting shall be arranged between both the communities, analyse the circumstances and thereby take a decision.
- All the NGOs were instructed to perform within their capacity and not to promise anything to the communities that can not be accomplished.

Taluk level meetings and workshops:

- The NGOs were suggested to develop good relations be with the village level authorities to carry out the rehabilitation work with full support and no difficulty. Whenever NGOs conduct any kind of meeting or workshop always invite local SHGs, panchayat level leaders and members of the line departments related to agriculture so that mutual understanding and help is availed.
- Schedule for Taluk level meetings shall be announced soon and the district level meeting cum workshop will be tentatively held in second week of December. It would be necessary to include all the above mentioned people in these workshops for making implementations easier and effective in all villages.
- It was also released that a strong interface with the local authorities will help overcome the gaps and hence efforts shall be take to conduct taluk level meetings before end of November.
- In this context, it was decided that five taluk level and one district level meetings will be conducted at the earliest possible.

General Issues:

- It was observed that distribution of livestock like cows, goats, etc is being done to fishermen community too. This community has already got enough compensation like boats, engines, nets, etc., from the government as well as the NGOs. Giving livestock in their hands is not productive as the fishermen are stocking these animals as additional assets.
- Overlapping and duplication in implementation of the various activities should be avoided. NGOs working in the same village need to cooperate with each other and clearly plan their activities. Such problems occur due to presence of few NGOs who are carrying out reclamation work and other activities without the knowledge of

NCRC or even the local governing bodies. Hence an appeal was made to the NGOs to inform NCRC about any new NGO in their area, if they know.

- It was observed that the public's attitude towards NGOs in some places is pessimistic. Some criticism is coming from the community as they intent to get the maximum possible out of the NGOs. It was suggested to ignore this sensitive issue and keep doing reclamation work with full sincerity.

The meeting came to a close at 1:30 pm after a reminder was given to NGOs about the urgent need to conduct taluk level meetings.