

Agriculture Review and Planning Meeting

Date : 24th February' 2006 (Friday)
Time : 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Venue : 313, NCRC Office, Collectorate, Nagapattinam

The purpose of the meeting was to report and review the activities of the previous two months and plan for the second year. A total of 13 NGOs had participated in the meeting. All, except three suggested to continue the reclamation work for one more year. The following was the agenda of the meeting:

- Review of works by NGOs
- Planning for the second year:
 - Integrated crop planning
 - Capacity building
 - Participation

Following a brief self introduction by the participants, the NGO representatives who had not been familiar with the group shared about the work they have been doing in Nagapattinam.

Review:

- **SEVALAYA** spoke about their plan of committing two years in agriculture related works in Pushpavanam and Periyakuthagai. They also spoke about growing bio-mass trees and cultivating ground nuts. As part of strategy, cultivation of mangoes, sappotta, guava and pomegranates were suggested for the alternative crops for the farmers in 4 to 5 years.
- **BHARATHI** spoke about its desalination works around the villages of Velankanni.
- **KUDUMBAM** shared on the distribution of paddy and ground nut seeds as part of the Farmers' Field School (FFS), which have come up well this season, some which were even ready for harvest. They also spoke about trainings on vermi compost and drip irrigation

with KVK for the farmers of North Poiganallur that would be given in the coming days.

- **CREATE** shared about the distribution of 500 kg of paddy seeds per acre with vermi pits which has now come up well, in spite of the salinity problem. Whereas, the other crops have failed and they look reddish in colour.
- **RIM** spoke about the 75 % success with the the 150 acres of land they ploughed as part of reclamation. Both capacity and institutions building among the farmers were stated as the major concentration in the coming year.
- **REAL** spoke about the formation of 9 farmer groups consisting 20 members where it carried out group strengthening activities in both technical and group building. They also spoke about supply of 172 vermi tanks made of tin sheets to the farmers they were working with. Also informed that planning of micro water sheds for water harvesting were also in place.
- **DHAN** Shared about the results from 120 observation plots where mortality death was studied. The study revealed that salt was not the cause of bad cultivation, instead flood. However, the intensity of the plants adjuscent to the sea have been considerably reduced. They also spoke about the significance of traditional farming methodology of covering the land with palm leaves to a depth of 15-20 centimetres which considerably reduced salinity in the ground and made dividends. There were also inputs on making sub surface drainage and surface drainage for Karaikal and Tamil Nadu respectively. Cultivating casuarina on individual plots and Azolla as fodder were also given a thought.
- **VESA** spoke about the identification of 20 farmers in 21 villages and developing the idea of crop garden in the coming three years.

Towards the end of sharing by the NGOs, Mr. Chandra Mohan of NCRC consolidated the outcome of the sharing. Excerpts:

- x Popular opinion state that the loss in agriculture on an average ranges from 40 % to 75 %. The respective loss due to flood and salinity is not clear. Farmers do say that more than 50% of loss is due to salinity. However, the percentage may differ from place to place.
- x Salinity is not a new phenomenon to Nagapattinam district.

When asked if the NGOs working now would continue the reclamation process for the next year, all except three said that they would. Four of them had already got sponsorship for the second year. Then Mr. Uma Shankar of CWS, shared inputs on how to attract fund for the second year. He stressed the NGOs to choose projects that support the alternative practices in agriculture. However, he also added that the support of funds for the projects would also be given taking the performance of the first year in to account. And 60 % of the budget of the initial year could be pooled in the second year.

Followed by Mr. Uma Shankar, Mr. Chandra Mohan spoke on the plans for the coming year. Essence of his talk was to take the reclamation process initiated in the first year to development. His talk included the following:

Integrated Crop Planning

In the context of continuation of work by NGOs in the second year, the first year package has some relevance in the second year.

Both the short term and the long term activities can still be taken up in the second year to address soil salinity and fertility. Thrust should be given to long term activities. Diversification of crop system with inter crops, border crops, second crops and alternative crops could be initiated.

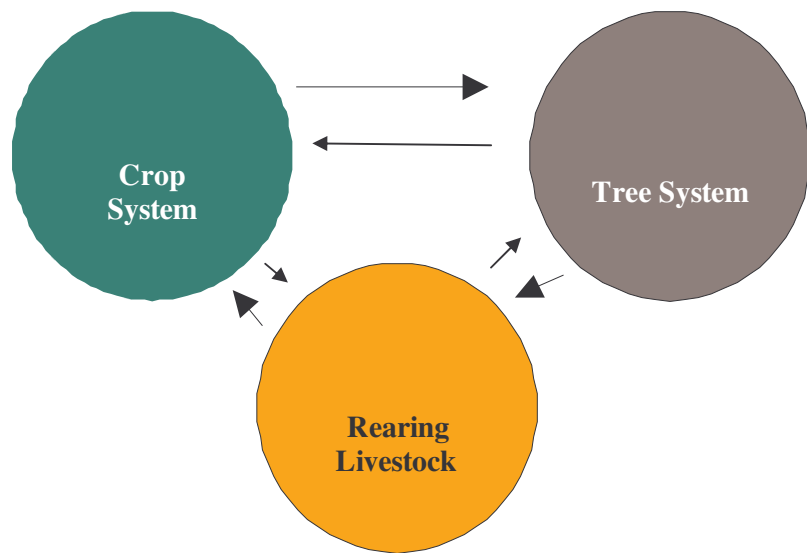
Raising bio-mass producing trees on the bunds and cultivable waste lands catering to the needs of manure, fodder and fuel is critical. Addition of horticulture/forestry species wherever feasible should be done as an income generation activity.

The fodder prevention from crop/tree systems should naturally support the livestock system already existing in the farm.

The integration of the above mentioned systems in few years time can sustain soil fertility, crop productivity and farm income in the long run. Here, the output of one system becomes input of the other. However, soil salinity as a persistent problem of this area can only be addressed inside the farm through improvement in soil fertility.

This reduces the over-dependancy of farmers on one system (crop system), leading to better risk bearing ability of farmers, especially the dryland farmers.

Integrated Farming System



* *Vermi compost/composting can replace rearing livestock in the farms where there is no livestock existing*

Soil Fertility: In order to address the issue of soil salinity, fertility of the soil has to be improved. However, for long term sustainability and soil fertility, Integrated Farming System is the key.

Capacity Building Measures

The importance of capacity building in terms of training and exposure programmes for farmers has been discussed. Imparting knowledge and skills in relation to farmers' attitudinal change for the continuation of interventions in the years to come also has been emphasised. Though the NGOs were not fully prepared with their plans, they presented the following as their tentative plans for the second year:

TOFAM

- Farmer level training in March
- Training Schools for vermi compost, traditional seeds and soil fertility

KUDUMBAM

- ToT (Training of Trainers)
- Livelihood training
- Developing organic input shops
- Exposure visits

BHARATHI

- Trainings in alternative crops, crop management system, Azolla as fodder, Vermi compost and exposure visits

RIM

- Training and exposure

CREATE

- Training in Azolla as fodder and Pancha Kavya

SEVALAYA

- Training with TNAU and KVK in water management (rain & irrigation), crop management and cropping patterns

DHAN

- Trainings in surface drainage, integrated farming and marketing of inputs and outputs

Participation

A discussion on farmers' participation has been facilitated. The participants discussed about initiating the participation of farmers in any agricultural activity undertaken by the NGOs. It was unanimously agreed to take all the necessary effort to involve farmers in any work or initiative taken, as the matter of fact is that in a year or two all the NGOs would be leaving the place and the farmers will have to be trained to carry out the process just began. Therefore,

partnership mode instead of delivery mode was emphasised in order to ensure sustainability in the long term. To achieve this end the following steps would be taken:

- NGOs should ensure farmers participation in planning, implementation and monitoring all interventions made by them
- In order to achieve this target, taluk and village level meetings should be organised at regular intervals
- By the end of March 2006, NGOs should be sure of what is going to be done in farmer's fields with the partnership of the farming community
- Farmers also should contribute either by cash or kind (labour) in all activities/interventions undertaken
- Farmers achieving independency in the third year, by crossing the dependent state of the current year through contributing/replicating the interventions also was explained

NGOs were asked to get prepared with a definite plan of action for the second year which would be discussed in the next meeting in mid-March.

Annexure: List of participants

List of Organisation who participated in the meeting on “AGRICULTURE” on 24.02.06 at Main Conference Hall, Collectorate, Nagapattinam.

S.NO	ORGANISATION	NAME OF THE PERSON	PHONE/ MOBILE	E-MAIL
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