

MINUTES ON TASK FORCE MEETING ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Place: NCRC office, 313, District Collectorate, Nagapattinam

Date: 22.12.05 (Forenoon)

Participants:

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| 1. | Mr. G. Giridharan | - | Nagai District Farmers' Welfare Association |
| 2. | Ms. N. Bhuvaneswari | - | Covenant Centre for Development (CCD) |
| 3. | Dr. K. Rajukkannu | - | KUDUMBAM |
| 4. | Dr. P. Stalin | - | Tamil Nadu Rice Research Institute (TRRI) |
| 5. | Dr. S. Pugalendhi | - | Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) |
| 6. | Mr. G.M. Chandra Mohan | - | NGO Co-ordination and Resource Centre (NCRC) |
| 7. | Mr. M. Perumal | - | NGO Co-ordination and Resource Centre (NCRC) |

Mr. Chandra Mohan of NCRC welcomed the small group of above persons for this meeting and arrived at the agenda points as decided in the last Technical Consultative Meeting.

AGENDA POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Review of the last meeting
2. Participative adaptive trails
3. Soil / Survey test
4. Sharing various approaches of NGOs
5. Designing questionnaire for getting feedback from farming community

1. Review of the last meeting:

The discussions and the decisions taken in the meeting last held for the purpose has been discussed to get the context of discussion for this meeting clear.

As such, the major decision made on consensus has been to take up formal research process on the persistent problem of salinity. This process has been decided to be taken up in the following ways.

- Validation of on-going reclamation practices taken up by different NGOs.
- Formal research process on 'reclamation of saline soils'

Validation of on-going practices:

The indicators for desalination process as developed in the last meeting were discussed. The strongest indicator which emerged again has been the soil testing process.

Formal research process on 'reclamation of saline soils':

This research process has been categorized into two types.

- Evolving saline tolerant crop varieties
- Taking up adaptive trials

Evolving saline tolerant crop varieties:

It was discussed in general that the traditional crop varieties of paddy in this area (eg., Kundali, Kundani, Kulivedichan) which were taken up by few farmers parallelly along with the evolved varieties also did not perform well. In many places, such plants had shown burning symptoms. This, in relation to what has been discussed in the last meeting that the evolved varieties for saline tolerance do not suit this area, gave way for the following decisions.

- 1) Improved saline tolerant varieties need to be evolved mixing characteristics of already evolved varieties for the purpose and the traditional varieties of this area.
- 2) It was discussed that this could be done only as basic research in controlled conditions and hence TRRI, Aduthurai was asked to start planning for this activity in paddy. KVK-Sikkal also opined that they would like to collaborate with TRRI on this aspect. When queried, it was said that this could be taken up at any time of the year, and we need not wait until the Kharif.
- 3) The need for taking up this varietal improvement in other crops was discussed. After much discussion, it was decided that we can consider the second major crop alone in the district, say groundnut. TRRI has been given the responsibility to find with Agricultural Research Station (ARS), Virudhachalam about the need for taking up such a research in groundnut. NCRC would also find the same with the farming community in the meantime through farmers' meetings.

2. Taking up participatory adaptive trials:

Lot of discussion took place regarding the subject on which adaptive trials should be taken up. It was understood that 'soil salinity' should be addressed in any of the trial. Soil salinity in relation to soil fertility was discussed as persistent problem in this area. It was felt that addressing soil fertility (soil organic carbon / soil organic matter) would bring about changes in soil salinity to considerable extent in the long-run. Hence it was decided to take up adaptive trials on the following.

- Green Manuring in-situ (with different species like Dhaincha, sunhemp etc.)
- Enriched Farm Yard Manure / Compost – with different doses
- Composting – paddy straw - with different doses
- Vermi-composting – with different doses
- Bio-fertilizers
- Sheep penning – with different doses

The adaptive trials should be PARTICIPATORY in nature with the involvement of all stakeholders and they should take place on the FARMERS' FIELDS.

Discussion took place on having saline tolerant varieties as part of the adaptive trials. The participants felt it is good as it also can convince the farmers leading to adoption.

The farmer representative was very particular about demonstrating technologies which could throw results in a short time to convince farmers apart from the long-term practices. He further questioned whether any proved technology would be suiting the local conditions of Nagapattinam district.

3. Soil / Survey test:

It was undoubtedly decided that two soil tests only would be required for testing soil salinity in a season. This would be taken as pre-crop and post-harvest tests. The tests can convey results regarding EC, pH, organic carbon and the major nutrients importantly.

It was also informed to the forum that the department of agriculture has taken around 18,000 samples pre-season, the results of which are awaited in a short time. Few NGOs have also taken samples of their own and analyzed. But for the post-harvest test, as we are not sure that the Department of Agriculture (DoA) will again take it up, it was felt that NGOs are the better people to do it in their own working areas. But for the enormity of the samples to be taken, it was questioned whether we have the testing facilities available to do it in time. The mobile testing laboratory available for nagai district has been discussed. Though personnel for testing are available with the DoA, it was learnt that because of some systemic problem, the vehicle available cannot become mobile. It was suggested that NCRC could represent this case with the District Collector after talking to the Joint Director of Agriculture to mobilize facility to help the tsunami need. Farmer Giridharan was asked to represent the same to the District Collector on behalf of the Nagai District Farmers' Welfare Association.

4. Sharing different approaches of NGOs:

It was told that the NGOs have implemented most of the practices listed in the 'package'. Few NGOs were also working in crop management aspects apart from taking up capacity building training programmes. Broadly, the approaches of NGOs in reclamation programme can be categorized into the following.

- Problem based approaches
- Ideology based approaches

It was felt that the validation of these approaches is vital in relation to saline soil reclamation. It was said that NCRC should be able to give information on the various approaches followed, and the gaps could be filled up in one of the NGOs' meeting.

5. Designing questionnaire for getting feedback from farming community:

It was discussed that this questionnaire should be done in Tamil focusing on the following aspects.

- ❖ Problems existing
- ❖ solutions
- ❖ satisfaction
- ❖ participation of farmers
- ❖ expectations
- ❖ research need

This semi-structured model questionnaire need to be brought by all the participant organizations of this day's meeting to take in inputs and finalize a comprehensive questionnaire which could be pre-tested before actual field use.

The next task force meeting has been fixed tentatively between 6th and 12th of January. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks.