

Agriculture Review Meeting

Date : 27th February' 2006 (Monday)
Time : 5:00 pm to 6:30 p.m.
Venue : Main Conference Hall, Collectorate, Nagapattinam

The scope of the meeting was to report and review the activities of the two months that just passed by and plan for the second year. A total of 13 NGOs had participated in the meeting. There was a brief self introductory session by the participants. The personals/NGOs who had not been familiar among the group shared about the works they have been doing in Nagapattinam.

- **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 net seeds as part of the Farmers' Field School (FFS), which have come up well this season, some of 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 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 observation result of 120 plots where plant death was reported. The study revealed that salt was not the cause of loss, but flood. However, the intensity of the plants adjacent 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 casirino on individual plots and Azolla as fodder were also discussed.
- **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 consolidated the outcome of the sharing. Excerpts:

x Popular opinion and available findings state that nearly 75 % of loss in agriculture is due to flood, the rest of loss owing to salinity.

x However, the percentage may differ from place to place

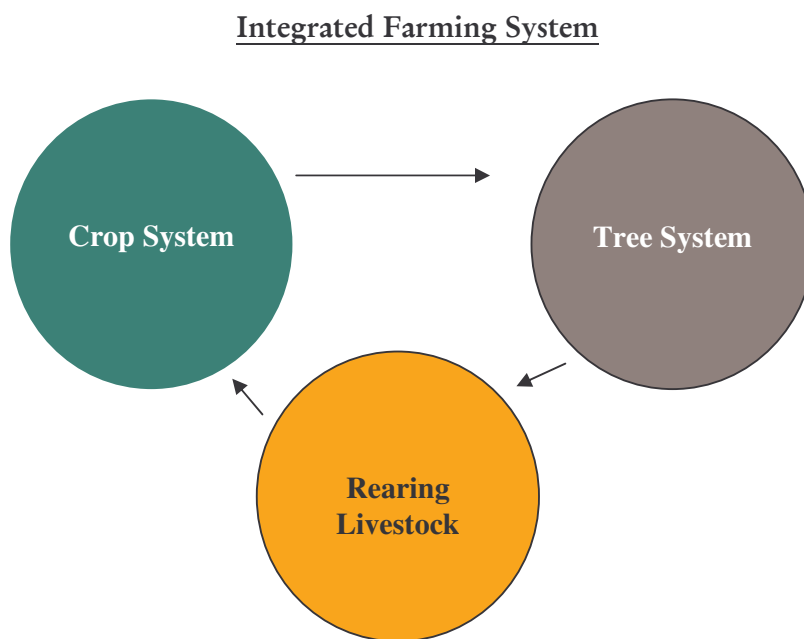
x Salinity is not a new phenomenon to Nagapattinam district.

When asked if the NGOs working now would continue the reclamation process in the coming 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, a funding agency, shared inputs on how to attract fund for the second year. He stressed the NGOs to choose projects that support 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 got 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 packages don't make relevance in the second year. Therefore, diversification of crop system like alternative crop, introduction of new crops and inter-crop systems could be tried.

Integration of bio-mass trees and or horticulture and or forestry would be more remunerative. Rearing of livestock with this crop system would be the ideal for farming as over dependency on one system lets down the farmers. Here, the output of one system becomes the input of the other, which in turn produces profit and internally supported farming system. Integrated farming could be explained through the following diagram:



** Vermi compost can replace rearing livestock in the initial stages*

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 following NGOs have got the plan of building capacity in the coming year:

Tofam:

- Farmer level training in March

- Training Schools for vermi compost, traditional seeds and seed 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 in Pancha Karya

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

Following this, 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:

- ★ Representatives from farmers would be called for any programme related to farming

★ Planning, implementation and monitoring would be done both by farmers and NGOs

★ To enhance this, taluk and Panchayat level meetings would be organised at regular intervals

★ Eliciting demand from people for participation

★ By end of March 2006, farmers should be sure of what is going to be done in their fields with the partnership of the NGOs

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on the third week of March, the date of which would be communicated to all the NGOs in a later time.

Annexure: *List of participants*

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

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