

∞ Spreading to new areas

AME plans to work in Kolar district and in areas surrounding Bangalore to improve farming systems and promote pesticide free cultivation. Discussions are on towards this end.

The process of consolidating the work and data in the APRLP programme of Andhra Pradesh is in progress. Meanwhile, discussions and activities are initiated for exploring possibilities of setting up a field unit in Mahabubnagar district in Telangana region of AP.

Dr. Daniel Gustafson, Chief of FAO and Dr. P.S. Rao, Senior Programme Officer from Royal Netherlands Embassy, met AME staff to discuss about work priorities for future.

There have been some staff changes. Mr. Rudragouda, APO-NRM/IFS, earlier working with Bellary unit has moved to Bijapur unit. Mr. S.C. Rajashekar from Madanapalli unit has taken over as the acting Area Unit Coordinator of Bijapur unit. Mr. Chandra Mohan takes over as the acting Area Unit Coordinator at Madanapalli unit. Mr. Y.D. Naidu and Mr. Sharanbhupal have left the organisation.

∞ Our field activities

AME Bellary mobilized five new groundnut varieties viz., R 8808, R 9251, R 2001-1, K 134 & KRG 1 for rabi summer trial in KAWAD watersheds in Chitradurga & Bellary. This was done in collaboration with RARS-Raichur, Agricultural Research Station-Kawadimatti, Central Soil & Water Conservation Research & Training Institute (CSWRTI)-Bellary and farmers of Anantapur, AP.

Groundnut field days were conducted at Sakalapuradahatti, Suravvanahalli, Malur and Tippehalli villages of Upparahalla watershed of Bellary district. PTD experiences shared include differentiating between the root grub incidence and the collar rot, neem cake as an effective control for root grub incidence etc. Farmers could also notice the differences in number, quality and yield of pods between PTD plots and the control plots.

Field workshops were held in Rayapura & Devarahatti villages of Bellary district to discuss strategies for better cropping under drought situation.

Field day in groundnut was held by Madanapalli unit at Amudhalakona, near Tirupati. Farmers shared their experiences of growing new varieties like TCGS 29, TCGS 156, Co-3 etc., and improved package of practices followed, such as, seed treatment with Chlorpyrifos, use of Rhizobium, application of gypsum etc.

AME Bijapur initiated PTD process by conducting PRA with tomato growers in Inchigeri village and pomegranate growers in Jeerankalagi village. Information on crop calendar and crop cultivation practices was gathered.

Collective marketing of groundnut was initiated with 22 farmers of Pudukottai district, Tamil Nadu, along with NGO partner MANUSHI. A total of 8498 kg of VRI 2 (certified), TMV 2 (certified), TMV 2 (not certified) was mobilized and sold with an increased returns of Rs.1.50 to 7.00 per kg.

Farmers from AME villages participated in the Cotton field day at Eklaspur in Raichur, organised by RARS-Raichur and others, to get to know about improved varieties of cotton.

∞ Building our own capacities

This period was marked by a series of discussions and internal workshops on the concepts, processes and activities of AMEF. An "Orientation Workshop" was held during 6th-8th November, 2003, which served as an induction course for the new staff and as a refresher course for the existing staff of AMEF. Another workshop on "Translating Ideas into Action" was organised on 2nd December 2003, to sharpen the activity focus and streamline the working strategies for field implementation, consistent with AME objectives.

∞ Building capacities of our partners

AME Raichur trained the members of Grama Gnana Kendra and village seed banks in selection of quality seeds and following proper storage/preservation methods. The training was organised by PSMU-PRAWARDA at Basavakalyan.

Training on crop harvest measurement was conducted by AME Madanapalli, to NGO staff and Master Farmers to strengthen their capacities in estimating yields during crop cutting experiments.

Two-day residential training programme on "Mainstreaming Gender in Sustainable Agriculture" was conducted by AME Madanapalli, for sensitising farmers, both men and women and NGO staff on gender aspects at Madanapalli unit office.

ILEIA-AMEF conducted a 5-day workshop on sourcing information from the field, as part of documentation and communication programme. This was the first workshop of the first workshop cycle planned for improving the documentation and communication programmes of LEISA India consortium partners such as GEAG, MYRADA, LEISA network of Tamil Nadu, and AMEF. The second workshop in the series is scheduled for the last week of February 2004.

* AME Info is a quarterly newsletter (Jan, April, July and Oct) brought out by AME Foundation for sharing some highlights of the organisational activities. This issue refers to the period - October to December 2003.

∞ Learning from others

The team from the central unit visited Agricultural Research Station, Bavikere in Shimoga district, to see and understand the integration of various components of sustainable agriculture, developed as a model by Mr.M.Rudraadhya, Associate Professor, on one acre plot on the farm.

AME Tiruchi facilitated an exposure visit to 39 KAWAD watershed partner NGO staff, to understand the farming system activities, to Kunnam village in Perambalur district.

Madanapalli unit facilitated an exposure trip for Master Farmers and NGO staff to RARS and Veterinary College at Tirupati. Besides interactions, observations included IPM trials in groundnut cropping systems, unreleased new groundnut varieties and livestock breeds such as Murrah buffalo, Nellore brown sheep etc.

∞ Working with other institutions

AME Tiruchi has initiated collaboration with NABARD to work directly with farmer clubs of NABARD in 6 villages.

To enhance women participation in the process of programme implementation, *AME Raichur*, has initiated dialogue with the regional unit of Mahila Samakhya.

∞ Sharing our learnings

Bellary unit presented a note on “Sustainability of agricultural interventions in KAWADS watersheds” at the Workshop on ‘Withdrawal strategies and post project management’, MANAGE, Hyderabad on 16th December 2003.

Staff from *Bellary* and *Bijapur* units participated in a Symposium on “Recent Developments in the Diagnosis and Management of Plant Diseases for Meeting Global Challenges” held on 18th to 20th December 2003. The workshop was organised by the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad. *Bellary* unit made a presentation on the use of bio agents in groundnut disease management.

AME Madanapalli organised a stall in the Kisan Mela – 2003, popularising the concept of PTD in sustainable agriculture. Live specimens of groundnut varieties & biological inputs were displayed. The mela was organised by Regional Agricultural Research Station, Tirupati.

The central unit participated in a workshop on “ Andhra Pradesh Farmer Managed Groundwater Systems Project (APFAMGS) Program Materials Development”, organised by World Education Team, 13-17 November 2003, at (BIRDS) Training Farm, Mythalapadu, Andhra Pradesh. The purpose of the workshop was to train participants in developing training modules.

AME Madanapalli, participated in the “International workshop on conservation and management of bees for sustainable development” organised at Bangalore University campus.

Publications brought out during this period include (i) LEISA India issue on water harvesting; (ii) Perspectives on “Promoting Sustainable Agriculture in Rainfed Farming” and (iii) Paddy - guidelines for ecofriendly cultivation

∞ AME in the media

Local newspaper in *Bellary* published a report on the field workshops held in Rayapura & Devarahatti villages of *Bellary* district. The report included strategies for better cropping under drought situation.

ETV, a kannada television channel, telecasted PTD process conducted at *Bijapur* highlighting benefits of inter cropping of Bengalgram in Sorghum (2:1 ratio) and Safflower in Sorghum (3:1). The programme was telecasted on 25th & 26th of December 2003, under Annadata – a popular agricultural programme. Similarly, the PTD process at *Bellary* was also video documented and telecasted by ETV.

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From: AME FOUNDATION, Central Unit, PO Box 7836, No.1583, 17th Main, 2nd Phase, J.P.Nagar, Bangalore 560078 Ph: 6596780/ 6582835 Fax:6583471 Email: amebang@qiasbg01.vsnl.net.in; amebang@amefound.org

AREA UNITS

MADANAPALLI: II-253-D-7, Colony Ring Road, Madanapalli 517325, Chittoor, AP, Ph: 08571-222943 & 227137 / Fax 08571 227137 amefmpl@yahoo.co.in / amefmpl@amefound.org

TIRUCHI: No.37, E.V.R.Road, K.K. Nagar, Tiruchirapalli – 620 021, TN, Ph & Fax: 0431 2458726 & 2455408 try_amestry@sancharnet.in/ ameftry@amefound.org

RAICHUR: 1-3-309, RR Colony, Asapur Road, Raichur 584101, Karnataka Ph: 08532-226917 & 228895 / Fax :08352 226917 amefrai@yahoo.co.in / amefrai@amefound.org

BELLARY: Old Market Road, Cantonment, Opp. Indian Institute of Nursing, Azeez Compound, Bellary 583104 Ph: 08392 241558, 241227 Fax: 8392 244116 amefbellary@yahoo.co.in / amefbellary@amefound.org

BIJAPUR: 159/2A, # 7C, Ward # 74, Near BDO Quarters, Behind Darbar High School, Asar Moholla Lane, Bijapur – 586101 Ph: 08352 221130 amef_bijapur@sify.com

To,

IF UNDELIVERED, RETURN TO:

AME FOUNDATION, Central Unit, PO Box 7836, No.1583, 17th Main, 2nd Phase, J.P.Nagar, Bangalore 560078