

Ms B. Vijayalakshmi (Tiruchi) facilitated a session on *Farm oriented micro enterprises for SHGs* in the Workshop for SHG federations of Women Development Cooperation, Tamil Nadu on 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2005 at Perambalur.

Mr M. Lawrence (Tiruchi) shared AMEF's experiences on SRI in the *Workshop on SRI Paddy*, organised by KVK, Sirugamani, Tiruchi on 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2005.

Mr M. Lawrence (Tiruchi) presented a paper on *Green manures- An option for greening the dry lands* at DHANs Madurai Symposium on 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2005.

Mr. Chandrasekhar (Bangalore), participated in a week-long training programme on "Livelihoods" offered by the Indian School of Livelihood Promotion.

### Documentation

Guidelines – 6 on *Operationalising Sustainable Agriculture* was produced.

### LEISA India

LEISA India issue on *Farm Energy* was produced during this period. *Inspiring Voices*, a PR product based on readers survey was also produced and distributed.

ILEIA and AME Foundation together organised an *International Editors Meeting* near Bangalore during 20th-24th Sep. Focus of the workshop was to have a more common and clear understanding of the forthcoming themes and about the editing process. Editors from all the regional editions of LEISA participated in the workshop. Field visits to an organic farmer field and a conventional farmers field added the much required field exposure to the participants.



### List of Visitors

- ◆ A group of 17 farmers and 3 staff from CERD, an NGO in Pondicherry visited Tiruchi Area Unit on a study tour, to understand the available technological options for promoting Sustainable Agriculture.
- ◆ Mr. Dharmaraju from OXFAM visited the Bangalore Unit during July 2005.
- ◆ Wilma Roem, Information Specialist, ILEIA, The Netherlands visited Bellary unit. She stayed with the team for a week to understand the field based activities in the region.

### AMEF in the media

News on Tomato Field Days and International Kitchen Garden Day organised in Bijapur were covered in local Kannada newspapers - Prajavani, Kannada Prabha, Vijaya Karnataka, Samyuktha Karnataka and UshaKirana.

Five local newspapers and a local TV channel in Tiruchi covered the training programmes of the Area Unit and its ENPs.

All India Radio, Tiruchi recorded and broadcasted the experiences of Tiruchi Area Unit, as five episodes in its Farm broadcast programme.

Field day at KM Halli in Bellary was audio documented by AIR Hospet.

A Radio talk on the Bellary Area Unit's activities was broadcasted by AIR on 19th August 2005.

Groundnut and onion production technologies, street play on SA practices and interaction with lead farmers of Bellary, were telecasted on Chandana TV.



**AME Foundation** promotes ecological agriculture among small and marginal farmers in the semi arid areas of the Deccan Plateau by generating farming alternatives, enriching farmers knowledge, linking development agencies and sharing experience.

Favourable monsoon has raised the enthusiasm of farmers to take up many alternative farming practices on their lands. Planting of biomass seedlings has caught up in a big way during this period. Marked efforts are also observed in converting this biomass to useful organic matter.

The focus of this period was also on building awareness among farmers and Eco Network Partners on sustainable agricultural practices, mainly through study tours. Eco Network Partners (ENP) are those with whom AMEF is working in partnership in promoting sustainable agricultural practices. The newly formed AMEF Area Unit at Dharmapuri has also initiated most of its field level activities with farmers and NGO partners.

A partnership programme with BIRD-K on "Greening the Drylands" has been launched.

### Field activities

In **Tiruchi**, though the rains from the South West monsoon seemed normal in terms of quantity (with a slight deviation of about 14% in Perambalur and 9% in Tiruchi), the onset was delayed and distribution skewed. Due to the delayed onset of rains, there occurred a significant shift in their crop choice from groundnut to maize and sorghum.

Onion farmers in **Bellary** were trained to grow a healthy crop through FFS. Farmers have reduced chemical sprays for controlling major pests like *spodoptera* and *thrips*. Wherever farmers sprayed chilli+garlic extract, the pest incidence was found to be low. Intercrops like coriander, redgram and chilli were promoted and farmers are convinced about their importance in pest management. Lesser seed rate was used which got reflected in bigger and uniform sized bulbs with good weight. For wider dissemination of these learnings, **Onion field days** were conducted in Pujarahalli, SK Hatti and KM Halli villages in which farmers and experts shared information on crop management aspects.

In **Madanapalli**, due to continuous rains during the first half of September, there was an increase in the vegetative growth and lesser pod formation in groundnut crop in trial plots.



Bajara as a border crop in onion in Bellary

Occurrence of Red Hairy Caterpillar was noticed in Pulmivandlapalli and farmers were oriented on its control measures. Field days in groundnut based farming system were organised at Pathakeelapatla –Palamneru and Yelamanda Piler. Farmers from Gangavaram (Palamner), Kurubulakota, Nallacheruvu (Kadiri area) and V.Kota, scientists from agriculture research stations and officials from agriculture department participated in the field days. Participants visited the fields and farmers shared their experiences of various farming practices adopted during Kharif 2005.

Tomato farmers in **Bijapur** have used local resources and bio-agents for treating the seeds and seedlings. Use of inputs like neem leaf extract, lantana leaf extract, neem cake as crop management practices helped in reducing the number of chemical sprays and thereby, the cost of cultivation. For wider spread of the practices adopted, a **field day** was conducted. Participants included all the village Panchayat members, farmers from in and around the village and officials from Agricultural College-Bijapur; Raitha Samparka Kendra and Karnataka Biofertilisers Ltd., Bijapur.

In **Mahabubnagar**, heavy and continuous rain has resulted in heavy incidence of grey mould (*Botrytis ricini*) in Castor crop. Farmers are trying out options like spraying with *Trichoderma viridae*, *Pseudomonas fluorescence*, Lantana leaf extract and Carbendazim spray, to control grey mould.

In **Raichur**, among the different groundnut varieties tried out by farmers in SRDS and SWARD NGO working areas, VRI 2 variety seems to be doing well followed by R 8808 and GPBD 4. VRI 2 yielded better with big sized pods and also recorded highest bio mass production. The experience and outcome of these trials were shared with other farmers during the **field day**.

Large scale planting of tree saplings was taken up by farmers of Kanyadoddi, Puchaladinni and Midgaladinni under the Dry Land Horticulture programme. Farmers were trained on different methods of planting and spacing to be maintained between plants. One year old seedlings of good

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### Planting for biomass generation

Planting for biomass generation, on and around the farms, is catching up in a big way among farmers. Along with farmers being convinced about the importance of plants on lands, the monsoon also has been favourable for them to take this programme in a big way.

More than 14000 seedlings of *Cassia seameia* and *Glyricidia* spp. were planted at Keelapatla, Kothapalli, V.Kota, Amadalakona, Mungilipattu, Uparavandalapalli, Valasaguttapalli, Thotavaripalli and Tharigod villages in Madanapalli area. In Bijapur, more than 15000 seedlings of biomass species viz. *Glyricidia*, *Jatropha*, *Pongamia*, *Cassia siamia* and *Simarouba* were planted by all the farmer group members. In Raichur, large scale planting was taken up by direct farmers of Kanyadoddi, Puchaladinni and Midgaladinni villages. One group of farmers in Pujarahalli in Bellary, planted more than 10000 biomass seedlings.

Cultural festivals like the **Green Festivals** are being recognised and celebrated, to promote greenery in villages. For the first time in Raichur district the Green festival was celebrated in Sagamkunta and Marrata villages. In both the villages, nearly 10,000 seedlings were planted by farmers in their fields. The inspiration of Green festival motivated farmers of Puchaladinni and Gadhar villages, to plant around 6000 seedlings on field bunds.

quality were purchased by the farmers and planted. In ENP village of SMGAS cluster, a total of 580 seedlings were planted and have established well due to good rainfall.



Training farmers on planting techniques in Puchaladinni in Raichur

In **Dharmapuri**, farmers for the first time, cultivated ragi by transplantation method.

### Working with farmers

In Madanapalli, three farmer groups of cluster villages and six farmer groups of ENP villages were trained on pest and disease management. The ENPs in turn have trained 12 farmer groups.

Madanapalli Unit organised training on composting and vermicomposting for six new farmer groups of NGO partners Myrada, Chaithanya and Spandana.

Farm families in Raichur were trained on different components of kitchen garden and management. Similarly women were trained on seed treatment, nursery raising and compost making.

In Mahabubnagar, farmers of ENPs like WDS and SDDPA were trained on the use of *Microplitis* spp. and its parasitizing process on Castor semi-looper (*Achoea janata*). These training events helped farmers to realise the importance and use of biological agents in controlling the castor semi-looper.

In Dharmapuri, farmers were trained on ragi cultivation practices including IPM and INM. Farmers gained deep insight on FYM enrichment. They expressed that this practice was very useful for maintaining better soil health.

Farmers from Vadugapatti and Veppanatham villages in Dharmapuri were trained on nursery management and seed treatment with bio-inputs.

Tiruchi Unit organised a three-day documentation workshop for its ENP staff. Essentials of documentation and the importance of linkages with various media for wider dissemination were discussed. Resource persons from the print media and the AIR, Tiruchi participated.

### Study tours

Madanapalli team organised a study tour for farmers of the cluster villages (Mittamalapalli) and ENP villages (B.Kothakota, Piler, V.Kota) to Valasaguttapalli and Kothapalli villages. The tour was intended to motivate farmers to take up activities like formation of dead furrows, biomass plantation on bunds, composting, vermicomposting, horticulture with drum kit, bee keeping, azolla cultivation and SRI.

Bijapur farmers including 15 women, participated in the study tour organised by the Area Unit. The tour included visits to

(a) District Agricultural Training Institute(DATI), Hallikeri, Bhadravati Taluk, Shimoga District, where in the participants understood the activities of DATI and visited the IPM-FFS cotton plots.

(b) Agricultural Research Station (ARS), Bavikere, where the integration of various components of sustainable agriculture on one acre of land was observed.

(c) BAIF Institute for Rural Development, Karnataka (BIRD-K), Lakkiahalli, Tiptur Taluk; Vasundara Farm, B.G.Keri and AME Foundation Bellary Unit to observe improved crop production practices.

Tiruchi Unit organised a study tour to 'Farmers Mela', at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore, to get the farmers familiarised with the latest developments in the field of agriculture, allied enterprises and improved methods in dry land agriculture. Farmers from Perambalur and ENP staff participated.

Raichur farmers were taken on a study tour to BIRD K Surshetty Koppa, to understand the tree based farming methods. The impact was so enormous that all the women, immediately after returning to their village, planted 3000 seedlings on their land.

Bellary Unit organised a study tour for the groundnut growing farmers to various places like progressive farmer's field at Hagaribommanahalli to observe zero cultivation practices; Surashettikoppa to see tree farming on the bunds; KVK Hulikoti and UAS Dharwad, where farmers saw trials on alternative land use systems.

### Working with NGOs

In Raichur, the ENP staff participated in the three-day training programme facilitated by AMEF and BIRD-K. Micro planning, nursery raising, farm pond construction, soil and water conservation were some of the topics covered during the training.

All the ENP staff in Mahabubnagar were trained in the method of SRI cultivation of paddy. They in turn have trained interested farmers of their respective villages for rapid spread of the water and cost reducing technology.



### Soil Testing Lab at Tiruchi Unit

A Soil Testing Lab and biopesticide/biofertiliser production unit is set up in the Tiruchi Area Unit's office premises, to enable farmers to test their soils locally and access bioagents at a low cost. It was formally inaugurated by two farmers on 20th July 2005 amidst officials from State Soil Testing Lab, Biofertilizer Production Unit and CIPMC.

The cost of production of *Trichoderma viride* at this lab works out to be Rs 20/kg, which is far less as compared to the cost at which it is presently sold (Rs 100/kg) outside.



### International Kitchen Garden Day

*International Kitchen Garden Day* was celebrated to reinforce the positive role of organic kitchen gardening in promoting health and nutrition and to build community spirit and motivate them to take up kitchen gardening. Bijapur Unit in collaboration with Karnataka Biofertilisers Ltd., Bijapur and farmer affinity groups organised an International Kitchen Garden Day on 28<sup>th</sup> August, at Jeerankalgi village. Nearly 75 farmers from all the seven villages of Doddahalla watershed area participated.

The day was inaugurated by sowing/planting 15 kinds of vegetables/fruits in a model kitchen garden. Leafy vegetables like amaranthus, coriander, palak, fenugreek; other vegetables like radish, ridge gourd, bitter gourd, beans, brinjal, tomato, in addition to curryleaf and lime plants were planted. A Kitchen Garden Kit containing 2 kg enriched manure, seeds of tomato, ridgegourd and okra, was distributed among ten farmers by Karnataka Biofertilisers Ltd., Bijapur.

In Raichur, the ENP, Prerana, is scaling up activities like seed treatment with cow urine, cow dung and other bio agents in 11 villages of Lingusugur and Manvi taluks.

In Dharmapuri, AMEF is supporting Community Managed Resource Centers (CMRCs), the SHG Federation promoted by MYRADA. More than two hundred women farmers are involved in this programme.

### Internal Capacity Building

*Workshop on Systems and Procedures* was organised by the Central Unit during 9-10 August 2005 at Cooperative Training College, Bangalore. All the Programme staff and Secretaries participated and discussed aspects related to finance and reporting.

Staff who completed the season-long ToT on FFS, organised by FAO at Muthyalapadu, shared their learnings with the other programme staff.

An Orientation was organised for the support staff of all the units, to clarify individual's roles and responsibilities within the organisation, on 25th August 2005.

All the Area Unit Coordinators along with the Central Unit staff working on LEISA India participated in the *Documentation Workshop* held during 14-16 September 2005. Mr. Jorge Chevez Tafur, from ILEIA, The Netherlands, explained a specific tool designed for systematic documentation of a project or an experience.

Ms. B. Vijayalakshmi (Tiruchi) participated in the workshop on *Paddy supply chain – developing alternatives* organised by HIVOS, at Hyderabad, during 6-7 July, 2005.