

LEISA India

The issue on *Documentation for change* was brought out.

In the Media

A *Quiet Revolution*, an article on AMEF's interventions in promoting sustainable agriculture was covered in Deccan Herald on 17 October 2006.



All India Radio, Raichur in coordination with the Raichur Area Unit organised a radio programme to spread the awareness on sustainable agriculture. Staff from the Area Unit and the Agriculture University interacted with farmers and ENP staff.

AMEF - AREA UNITS

MADANAPALLI: II-253-D-7, Colony Ring Road, Madanapalli - 517325, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh. Ph: 08571-222943 & 227137 Fax (pp): 08571 227070
amef_mpl@yahoo.co.in / amefmpl@amefound.org

TIRUCHI: No. 37, E.V.R.Road, K.K. Nagar, Tiruchirapalli - 620 021, Tamil Nadu. Ph: 0431 2458726 & 2455408 Fax (pp): 0431 2450725
try_ametry@sancharnet.in / ameftry@amefound.org

RAICHUR: 1-3-309, RR Colony, Asapur Road, Raichur - 584101, Karnataka. Ph: 08532-2266917 & 228895 Fax (pp):08532 233968
amefrai@yahoo.co.in / amefrai@amefound.org

BELLARY: "Brindavana" No.161, Near Sanjay Gandhi Rural Polytechnic college, Sanjay Gandhi Nagar, Bellary - 583103, Karnataka. Ph: 08392 268558/268337 Fax : (pp) 08392 244116
amef_bellary@yahoo.co.in / amefbly@sancharnet.in

BIJAPUR: 159/2A, No. 7C, Ward No. 74, Near BDO Quarters, Behind Darbar High School, Asar Moholla Lane, Bijapur - 586101, Karnataka. Ph: 085055 258055 amefbjp@sancharnet.in

MAHABUBNAGAR: Plot No. 68&69, Next to H. No. 4-88, Near Water Tank, Bhagirath colony, Christianpally Gram Panchayat, Adjacent to Bhutpur Road, Mahabubnagar - 509 001, Andhra Pradesh. amefmb@rediffmail.com

DHARMAPURI: No. 3/11, Erikarai Road, Pidamaneri, Dharmapuri - 636701. Ph: 04342 280135 amefdpi@sancharnet.in



AMEF-AIR Farm school programme concludes

The 13-week long Farm School on AIR programme on Dryland Management titled "Mahilchi tharum maanavaari" concluded. As a part of this AMEF- AIR-Tiruchi collaborated programme a contact programme was organised on 30 September. The objective was to provide an opportunity for the farmers to have interaction with the experts who deliberated during the 13 sessions. Farmers who were interested to know more about the aired content registered themselves by paying a nominal registration fee. Around 1100 farmers from 22 districts registered for the programme which included 101 school children. These registered farmers participated in a one day contact programme and received the course material and a certificate.

During the event, a booklet titled "Mahilchi tharum maanavaari" with the content programme was released. The contents were also brought out on a CD in MP3 format. An activity calendar on SA practices was released on the occasion.



Release of activity calendar by Dean ACRI, Tiruchirapalli

To,

From:



No. 204, 100 ft. Ring road,
3rd Phase, Banashankari 2nd Block, 3rd Stage,
Bangalore - 560 085 Ph: 080-26699512, 26699522
Fax: 91-80-26699410
amebang@giasbg01.vsnl.net.in;
amefbang@amefound.org Website: amefound.org

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.



Farmers across regions applying their learnings on sustainable agriculture on their farms has been the highlight of this period. This was evident in their farm practices like incorporating green manure into the soil, generating additional plant biomass for preparing organic manure and adopting sustainable cropping practices like inter cropping and strip cropping. Farmers are increasingly becoming able to deal with eventualities, including drought, with better farm management practices.

Season-long and crop specific FFS with emphasis on natural resource management has been the focus of capacity building programmes for farmers during this period. Similarly, Modified Training of Facilitators (MToF) were initiated in two areas to train more NGOs and community based development professionals in FFS methodology.

Field activities

Having received early good rains during the Kharif, **Bijapur** farmers went in for cultivating greengram and bajra. But due to long dry spell and moisture stress, there was a loss in the grain yield. Without getting disheartened, farmers still reaped benefit from such a situation, by incorporating the crop residues in the soil.

More than 1.8 lakh seedlings were raised in the nurseries across villages in **Mahabubnagar** area for generating additional plant biomass. The nurseries included nine different species of plants and about 395 farmers have planted these seedlings on the field bunds.

In Mahabubnagar, paddy farmers have raised Daincha, on 61 acres, as in-situ green manuring option to reduce soil salinity.

Better crop performance and income realisation from VRI-2 groundnut variety over the traditional variety (TMV-7), prompted **Tiruchi** farmers to adopt VRI-2. The spread has also reached other farmers of the respective village and other neighbouring villages on a limited scale.

A Field day on groundnut FFS was organised on 30 September 2006 at Yarragunta village in **Raichur**. About 95 farmers from Korvihal, Sagamkunta, Yerragunta participated in the programme. FFS members shared their experiences with other farmers. Many farmers expressed their willingness to grow and multiply the seeds of R-8808, adopt the practice of dead furrows and follow intercropping with pigeon pea.

Raichur farmers are trying to cope with drought situations with alternative strategies. For instance, Puchaladinni farmers with groundnut and bajra strip cropping were able to harvest 1.5 q of bajra along with one cartload of fodder, despite loss in groundnut yield. Similarly, in Kamalapur, owing to long dry spells, farmers used green gram crop as green manure.



Azolla in Paddy - an FFS experience

The plots with azolla had healthier plants compared to the check plot which had stunted growth with nitrogen deficiency. There was less weed growth and better moisture retention in plots where Azolla was used as green manure. Azolla with its luxurious growth developing as a thick mat on the water surface, did not allow cracks to form during water scarcity.

These were some of the observations of more than 70 farmers who are getting trained through Farmers Field Schools in paddy across four cluster villages in Mahabubnagar. Along with azolla, trials on SRI, *in situ* green manuring, green leaf manuring, fertiliser doses were also carried out.



Azolla reduces weed growth in paddy

There are interesting outcomes from this FFS process. Having understood the rice ecosystem, farmers have refrained from applying chemicals to the crop. Green manuring, which was never practiced before, is catching up in all the villages. Besides, FFS has been creating lot of interest and enthusiasm not only in the FFS participating farmers but also among others.

PTD in Tapioca



Moisture stress, declining soil productivity and lack of improved management practices were identified as the main factors influencing tapioca yield in Dharmapuri district. To improve the productivity by addressing these issues, a collaborative project was conceived by Dharmapuri Area Unit and Tapioca and Castor Research Station (TCRS) of TNAU. The Participatory Technology Development (PTD) process was initiated in two villages in Harur block of Dharmapuri district with the participation of 40 farmers.

As a part of the programme, 6 farmers tried CO-2, a drought tolerant variety along with a combination of farm management practices. The trials proved successful in terms of the variety's tolerance to drought, pests like aphids and mosaic disease. Higher yields with better starch content is also expected from this variety. There was also an increase in plant biomass production making it attractive to Tapioca cultivators in 14 nearby villages.

In a mid season conference, farmers visiting from nearby villages expressed their interest to cultivate tapioca and scale up the new variety. The Area Unit has plans of scaling up the programme to five new villages and 100 farmers in the coming season, as part of the collaborative effort.

In **Bellary**, season-long Onion Farmers Field School concluded. Farmers organised a field day to showcase their learnings. Around 150 farmers from surrounding villages participated. An exhibition of live models on SA was also organised during the event.

Bellary Unit organised 'Animal health camps' in its cluster villages - S.D.Kote and Y.G.Halli. This was done in collaboration with the Veterinary Dept, Molakalmuru. Around 240 animals in S.D.Kote and 120 animals in Y.G.Halli were vaccinated. *The Dept staff expressed that this was the first time that such a large number of animals from the same village were vaccinated.*

Some farmers in **Bellary** have taken up ericulture, a new enterprise in the region. These farmers were trained on eri silk production by KASARDS, an NGO promoting ericulture in the area. Few farmers are testing *Kranti, Harita, GCH-4* varieties of castor to explore the best suitable variety for ericulture. Linkages for procuring silkworm eggs and for marketing cocoons are also developed.

Working with farmers

In Rajanagaram in Mahabubnagar, seven women members who have undergone 4 day-training at BIRD-K, Tiptur are maintaining 3 nurseries at the village level.

Around 40 farmers, visited Pathakeelapatla village along with the staff of Foundation for Ecological Security to observe the transplantation of SRI paddy. Additionally, the staff of AMEF and Spandana, a partner NGO, oriented them in SRI method of cultivation. Motivated by the study tour learnings, 27 farmers of FES have planned to take up SRI on 12 acres.

Raichur farmers visited Satyavati camp- Biogas unit in Sindhanur to know how vegetable waste could be recycled for operating a biogas unit. Farmers understood about establishment of biogas unit, material required, process of operation and the economics of the unit.

Working with partners

Bijapur Unit organised a two-day training on the concept of Sustainable Agriculture for the staff of MYRADA-Gulbarga. There were 20 participants including 6 women in the training held during 20-21 July.

Raichur Unit, in collaboration with Department of Agriculture, organised a *Refresher course on Farmers Field School (FFS)- IPM* for the Agriculture Extension staff and farmers. These participants were hitherto trained on season-long FFS on IPM during 2005.

ISEER ENP in Bijapur has taken initiative to spread Sustainable Agriculture practices in two neighbouring villages, Katharal and Dhumakana. Similarly, POWER is also spreading the concept to its NABARD watershed area by selecting that as practice FFS village as part of the MTOF.

AMEF as a learning ground for farm students

Students from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University as a part of their *Implant Training* programme visited Dharmapuri and Tiruchi Area Units. The main objective of the training programme was orienting young graduating students to NGO sector by learning about an NGO as an example. During the period they visited two Area Units of AMEF to know about its vision, objectives, ways of working and methodologies adopted. They also visited AMEF's cluster villages to learn more about the approaches followed in working with people. They were a part of the practice FFS sessions of Modified Training of Facilitators (MTOF) in Dharmapuri to get a feel of AMEF's training methodology.

Dharmapuri MTOF concludes

The season-long MTOF on *livelihood improvements in the drylands* concluded on 30 September 2006. The event is historical in many ways. For the first time, members of CBOs were trained in a ToF; the focus of FFS was extended to dry farming to widen the scope of FFS beyond IPM; participants learnt the skills of facilitation and tried, hands-on, to apply the facilitation skills by running practice FFS, in pairs, every week. About 900 women were reached in a single ToF, by way of involving SHGs in practice FFS.

The four months of intensive training programme has brought out many useful lessons to AMEF too. It gave us lot of insights into training the participants drawn from CBOs on FFS methodology in Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts of Tamil Nadu. As many as 32 volunteers (Community Resource Persons, CRPs) are trained on groundnut FFS with focus on critical issues in dryland agriculture, like on-farm rainwater management, soil fertility improvement, dealing with crops and cropping systems, the need for increased generation of biomass and to supplement their income with allied income generation activities.

On the valedictory day, the Chief Guest Dr. C. Ramasamy, Vice Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, appreciated the programme, distributed the certificates to the participants and released the draft report, prepared in quick time. A fortnightly newsletter was produced which evoked good response including requests from organisations like Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy of MSSRF, for field support in conducting FFS. Copies of the newsletter are available on AMEF's website (www.amefound.org)



Dr. C Ramasamy, VC, TNAU releasing the draft report of MTOF

Modified Training of Facilitators (MTOF) at Bijapur – Building on the experience

A season long training programme is organised for training facilitators on FFS methodology at Bijapur, the second such programme in 2006. The programme focuses on improving livelihoods in dryland regions. The training is centered around sorghum cropping system with special emphasis on natural resource management.

The programme is being implemented by AME Foundation Bijapur in partnership with FAO. The programme is being facilitated by six FAO trained facilitators including two women (two from AMEF and four from Dept. of Agriculture).

Around 29 participants, including four women, are getting trained in this programme. The training venue, IJFAADC, located at Burnapur, is well equipped along with 4.85 acre land for learning on the field.

In turn, these participants in pairs are conducting practice FFS in 26 villages covering 508 farmers. The FFS are being held in 26 villages of four taluks namely Indi, Bijapur, Basavana Bagewadi and Muddebihal in Bijapur district.

Around 30 Agricultural Engineering students of UAS, Raichur were oriented on Sustainable Agriculture by the Raichur Unit. The students were exposed to AMEF's way of working and Sustainable Agriculture operations adopted by farmers.

Participation in workshops

Dr. Arun Balamatti attended a workshop on "*Extending Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) towards Sustainable Development*" on 02 August organised by CCD, Madurai, along with B. Vijayalaxmi, AUC, Tiruchy.

Dr. Arun Balamatti and Dr. Rajendra Hegde attended the *Awareness Building Workshop* on NAIP organised jointly by the ICAR and the IIHR at IIHR, Bangalore on 08 August.

Dr. Dwarakinath and Dr. Arun Balamatti attended a meeting with the Principal Secretary (A & H), on 10 August, to discuss the future course of action to formulate New Agriculture Policy for Karnataka State.

Mr. KVS Prasad and Ms. TM Radha participated in the *International Editors Meeting* of LEISA magazines at Peru.

Mr. Aneel Kumar participated in *Sampling Techniques and Monitoring of NR and Environment Problems*, at IISc, Bangalore during 30 Aug-1 September.

Mr. BC Kolhar presented a paper in the *National Seminar on Organic Farming Trends and Challenges*, held on 27 - 28 September, organised by the Department of Rural Development Science, Madurai (TN).

Staff of AMEF (Master Trainers) facilitated a training session on FFS to ICAR scientists at Hebbal, Bangalore, on 24 August 2006. The training was organised by the UAS, Bangalore.

Documentation

FFS for women – An experience of IPM-FFS in Tomato – *Case Study Series 1.*

Guidelines for IPM of Major Crops on the Deccan Plateau – A Basket of Options, *Compiled by J. Diraviam.*

Selected Reading - 6 on *Case Study - Basics*, based on Robert K Yin's works.

Visitors

Dr. Veeraraju, JDA and Additional Project Director, Sujala Watershed Project, visited AMEF on 26 July 2006, for discussing about AMEF running a few FFS in the World Bank supported Sujala Watershed Project in Karnataka.

Dr. Rajanna, ADA and Dr. Veeraraju, Watershed Development Department, GoK, visited AMEF on 18 August 2006 and had a discussion with the Chairman and staff about possible role of AMEF in government programmes.

Dr. Daniel Gustafson, Resident Representative, FAO, India and Bhutan, visited AMEF on 20 September and the MTOF programme in Hosur on 21 September.