

Mahilchi tharum maanavaari - AMEF's programme on the AIR

Tamil programme titled *Mahilchi tharum maanavaari*, meaning *Drylands give joy*, is being aired during the prime time (07.25 AM) on Farm School Programme of AIR Tiruchi. It is a 13-week collaborative programme of AMEF and AIR, Tiruchi which began on March 20th. Preparatory activities included a live phone-in programme to get the views of farmers about this programme and a workshop with representatives from the University, Research institutions, credit agencies etc. Based on the farmers views and workshop inputs, a curriculum was developed which include various aspects of dryland NRM and NRU, income generation activities and associated government and banking schemes.

Farmers registered for the programme would be eligible to participate in a one day contact programme and receive the course material and a certificate. As of March 2006, about 1040 farmers from 22 districts of Tamil Nadu have registered for the programme. What is more interesting is that this includes 101 school children.

AMEF's programme is unique for two main reasons. Firstly, the delivery of lessons is on an interactive mode and secondly, experience sharing by farmers is a part of every lesson, which is a rare feature in such programmes.



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.



Sharing of experiences about the alternative farming practices and awareness creation on SA practices by farmers was the highlight of this quarter. With the crops reaching harvesting stage, the activities in this period were focused more towards experience sharing.

SA practices adopted in the previous year were reviewed and plans for this year were prepared, both by AMEF and ENPs. Scaling up strategies have been the focus of discussions. The period was marked with a number of capacity building activities like meetings, workshops and training events for the staff of AMEF and partner NGOs.

Bellary Unit has started producing a monthly kannada news letter, *Susthira Krishi Chetana*, to share experiences of farmers, staff and others in promoting SA practices.

LEISA India

The Issue on *Contribution of small animals* was produced during this period.

KVS Prasad and T.M. Radha of LEISA India team were invited to the International Editors Meeting, at ILEIA in the Netherlands during 6th-10th February 2006. The editorial team from the global edition as well as 5 regional editions – India, Indonesia, Latin America, Senegal and Brazil participated in the 5-day

meeting. Discussions revolved around issues related to funding, quality of the magazine, themes for the year 2007, development of knowledge on LEISA and improving communication between partners.

AMEF in the media

The training on Rythu Mithra Groups (RMG) conducted by Mahabubnagar Unit under the RSVY programme was covered in *Eenadu*, a Telugu daily.

Bijapur Unit's Area conference was covered in *Kannada Prabha Prajavani* and *Vijaya Karnataka* and *Sandarshana*, a local daily. The event was telecasted in *E-TV Kannada Naadi* on 17th and 18th March.

A radio talk on *Sustainable Agriculture Practices and AMEF's efforts in promoting SA*, was given by a farmer from Devaranimbaragi village in Bijapur area, on 30th March 2006.

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_ameetry@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: Old Market Road, Cantonment, Opp. Indian Institute of Nursing, Aziz Compound, Bellary - 583104 Karnataka. Ph: 08392 241558, 241227 Fax (pp): 08392 244116
amef_bellary@yahoo.co.in / amefbellary@amefound.org

BIJAPUR: 159/2A, # 7C, Ward # 74, Near BDO Quarters, Behind Darbar High School, Asar Moholla Lane, Bijapur - 586101, Karnataka. Ph: 08352 258055 amefbjp@sancharnet.in

MAHABUBNAGAR: Plot # 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. amefmhb@rediffmail.com

DHARMAPURI: # 3/11, Erikarai Road, Pidamaneri, Dharmapuri - 636701. Ph: 04342 280135 amefdpi@sancharnet.in

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

Field activities

In **Tiruchi** area, farmers have observed that inclusion of intercrops and sequential crops in Maize has resulted in an additional income of about 20% in maize. Similarly, in groundnut, inter and sequential crops provided the required insurance, as the main crop was affected due to rain.

Season-long Farmer Field School (FFS) in Brinjal has started at Nochium village of Perambalur district with 10 farmers and 10 ENP staff. FFS curriculum was developed based on the discussions in the Curriculum Development Workshop (CDW) organised at Tiruchi, in which specialists from College of Agriculture and Horticulture, CIPMC, DoA, trained FFS trainers and brinjal farmers participated.

Early rains in the middle of March has helped **Raichur** farmers to go in for fall ploughing, both in cluster villages as well as in ENP villages. The importance of fall ploughing was shared in the group meetings.

Raichur Unit organised *Sorghum Field Day* in Watagal, in which 99 farmers participated. In sub groups, farmers visited trial plots to observe various growth parameters of different varieties like *Maldandi*, *CSV-126*, *DSV-5* and local variety. Farmers plan to use *Maldandi* as seed material for the coming season, owing to its drought tolerance, optimum yield and better fodder quality.

In **Bijapur**, varietal trials were carried out in sorghum with M35-1, DSV-4, Muguthi and a local variety. The data indicated that M35-1 performed well with an yield of 920 kg/ac. DSV-4 required more moisture and protective irrigation, had loose ear heads with thick stem and matured late, while Muguthi was affected with Smut. Farmers were convinced with the overall performance of M35-1 mainly because of its higher grain and fodder yields even under normal rainfall conditions.

Two field days were organised by Bijapur Unit at Jeerankalagi and Jigajeevani villages. More than 300 farmers participated, where the results were shared by farmers. Other participants included ISEER chief functionary, representatives from gram panchayat, Agricultural College and Rythu Samparka Kendra.

In **Bellary**, 60 farmers each in NGOs - GUARD and MYRADA working villages, have completed summer ploughing. Few farmers have repaired the bunds around their farms.

Similarly, farmers in **Mahabubnagar** have taken up bunding and bund repair works, mostly in paddy and groundnut fields. More than 25 farmers who had cultivated Rabi groundnut have gone in for compartment bunding.

Field day on Groundnut was organised in a farmers field in Nagannapalli in Mahabubnagar. More than 60 farmers participated. Participants in two groups recorded observations, separately in farmers practice and improved practice plots. Participants discussed about the differences observed between the two plots and were convinced about the performance of the demo plot.



Sorghum varietal trials in Bijapur

In **Madanapalli**, village level nurseries are being raised for generating plant biomass. More than 50000 seedlings of *Cassia seamia* and *glyricidia* are being raised in 3 village clusters.

Yield losses were observed in redgram grown as an intercrop in kharif groundnut, in Madanapalli. Rains during the flowering stage leading to flower drop resulted in low yields. But the second flowering of LRG-41 variety redgram has given some relief to farmers with its moderate yield.

In **Dharmapuri**, Tomato FFS is initiated in Kottur village of Palacode CMRC, with 28 participants. The basic objectives identified are reducing the cost of production, increasing net returns and producing pesticide free Tomato.

Graduation Ceremony Fellowship Programme 2005



Graduation Ceremony of the first batch of Fellowship Programme 2005 on 'Operationalising Sustainable Agriculture' was organised on 30th January 2006. Dr. Daniel Gustafson, FAO Representative in India and Bhutan, FAO, New Delhi was the chief guest. Dr. P. Somashekar Rao, National Programme Officer, FAO, New Delhi, was the special guest for the programme.

After distributing the course completion certificates to Fellowship candidates, Dr. Daniel Gustafson addressed the students and emphasised on giving attention to practice what has been learnt. Dr. P.S.Rao, expressed that there was a need to develop more professionals in this sector. Dr. R. Dwarakinath, Chairman, AME Foundation, presided over the function and said that the fellowship programme took shape after giving a lot of thought. Every student need to be given individual attention in the process of training them in SA.

A book on *Symposium on Sustainable Agriculture* was released by Dr. Daniel Gustafson, on the occasion.

Special invitees in the ceremony included Dr.R.Dwarakinath, Dr. A.M.Krishnappa, Course Coordinator, Dr. Arun Balamatti, Dr. G.N.S. Reddy, Dr. J.Venkateshwaralu, Dr.T.M.Thyagarajan, Dr. M.A.Singlacher. Dr. Mallareddy, Dr. Muthu Velayatham, Dr. K.Pandurangaiah and Mr. S.L.Srinivas.

Working with farmers

Two training events on composting were organised by Raichur Unit, one in the cluster village and another in ENP village, Navalkal. The importance of soil fertility and preparation of vermicompost were discussed in the training.

Bellary Unit trained 30 women farmers of WYTEP group on sustainable production technologies in groundnut and onion at Kondlahalli. This training was organised by the Department of Agriculture, Molakalmuru.

Bellary Unit organised the first modular training for 22 farmers from 9 SA groups at CS&WCR&TC Bellary from 15-17 March. The focus of training was on enhancing the capacities of farmers towards adoption and promotion of *in-situ* soil and water conservation, soil fertility up gradation and biomass generation and their roles and responsibilities as lead farmers.

About 100 farmers including 34 women were trained on SA practices by Madanapalli Unit.

Study tours

Around 50 farmers from Uppaladinni and Savanahalli in Bijapur went on a study tour to Krishi Vigyana Kendra, BAIF's Gramachethana, UAS and Vathsalyadhama farm.

A three-day study tour was organised by Madanapalli Unit for farmers from Chinnappareddygaripalli and Eguva Chennamarrii cluster villages, based on the request by the women farmers from the groups. Totally 47 farmers including 24 women visited Mr Ramesh's farm of Devanahalli and BAIF – Tiptur to know more about alternative farming practices.

Around 22 women farmers from Sagamkunta village in Raichur along with two ENP staff went on a study tour to BIRD K at Surshetty Koppa. They saw integration of trees and livestock in agriculture and were convinced about the models developed by BIRD-K. They are enthusiastic to take up similar activities in their respective farms.

Bellary Unit organised a study tour for Yrapotjyogihalli farmers to Surashettikoppa to enable farmers to understand and adopt tree-based farming system. 34 farmers from cluster villages participated in the study tour. Some of them have expressed enthusiasm in generating such models on their land.

Working with Eco Network Partners (ENP)

State-wise post-season workshops were organised for Eco Network Partners (ENP) of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu during the month of March. The purpose of this workshop was to review the progress made by ENPs in 2005 against their plans and to discuss about their plans to promote sustainable agriculture practices in 2006. Plans and strategies of scaling up of SA knowledge, practices and systems were extensively discussed for influencing large number of farmers

in the district. The Chief Functionaries and supervisors from all ENPs participated. The ENPs made a brief presentation on the highlights of their achievements in 2005 and came out with their plans for scaling up of SA knowledge and practices.

An Area Conference was organised for ENPs of Bijapur Unit on 17th March. Farmers from B.Bagevadi and Indi taluks of Bijapur, ENP staff, representatives from District NGOs like VJVK, BIRDS, OUTREACH, World Vision India and government departments participated. CEO-ZP Bijapur, President-Krishik Samaj and Deputy Director Animal Husbandry were some of the distinguished guests.

Fostering LEISA initiatives

In an effort to foster LEISA, four Eco-clubs (three in Tiruchi and one in Perambalur cluster villages) were started in Tiruchi. The school children took the initiative of planting horticulture seedlings in their school premises. One of the eco clubs in Perambalur planted the seedlings in an area of one acre of school land. A workshop for teachers of four selected schools was also organised, to plan for 2006.

RAWE students from Agricultural University visited the cluster villages in Raichur Area Unit. They observed the crop improvement activities under sorghum, different varietal performances, rain water management, bio mass generation on bunds and Dry Land Horticulture.

Building linkages

Madanapalli Unit will be participating in the *Rythu Mela* to be organised during the silver jubilee celebrations of RARS, Palem. This is an outcome of the visits made by RARS, Palem scientists to the Unit followed by discussions with AU and CU team.

A joint concerted action for forming a Sustainable Agriculture group especially in Telangana region is being worked out with AFPRO. Mahabubnagar Unit has been requested to provide training support to farmers under *Vulnerability and Adoptability programme*, which is being implemented in the district.

Ms B. Vijayalakshmi, AUC Tiruchi visited the Myrada KVK Soil Testing Lab (STL) at Gobichettipalayam and shared Tiruchi Area Unit's experiences of managing STL. KVK staff made a follow-up visit to the lab at the AU.

Internal capacity building

A two-day workshop on *Gender issues in Land and Water Management Projects* was jointly organised by FAO and Acharya NG Ranga Agriculture University. Selected staff members from APFAGMS, ANGRAU and AME Foundation participated. This was held in Bapatla in Andhra Pradesh during 1-2 February 2006.



RAWE students interacting with farmers in Raichur

A follow-up course for the participants of Training of Facilitators (TOF) was organised at College of Sericulture, Chintamani, from 2-4 February 2006. The purpose was to reinforce the process of FFS establishment and to know the progress made by participants in initiating FFS in the respective areas. Participants included all the 21 participants who graduated as FFS Facilitators in the ToF held in 2005 and six AMEF Expert Facilitators.

Dr. Sarvajna B Salimath, AUC Raichur, participated in the *Workshop on Livestock in Sustainable livelihoods*, organised by LEAD Advocacy Network, at Mysore.

A two-day Internal Workshop on *Road map for promoting Sustainable Agriculture* was organised by the Central Unit during 20-21 March at Bangalore. Each Area Unit team worked out and presented the road map for their respective areas.

A perspective building workshop on Gender was organised during 6-10 February, facilitated by HID Forum, Bangalore. Selected Programme Officers from all Area Units participated.

Documentation

Booklets on *Rythu Mithra Groups (RMG)-Guiding Principles* (in Telugu) and *Management practices in Sustainable Agriculture* (in Telugu), were brought out by Mahabubnagar Unit as part of RSVY training programme.

Conference on Leveraging Knowledge for the Water Sector

Conference on Leveraging Knowledge for the Water Sector, was organised by Arghyam Trust during 23-24 February 2006. The Conference was mainly meant for harnessing ideas for the Water Portal being prepared by Arghyam Trust founded by Ms. Rohini Nilekani. Dr. Dwarakinath and Dr. Arun Balamatti were invited to the Conference to share their views on the role of water resources in dryland agriculture.