

Documentation

R. Dwarakinath and Arun Balamatti, *Agriculture Development Strategy-Some Missing Links*, Policy Advocacy Series - 1.

R. Dwarakinath, *Some Insights into Agriculture Development Today*, Policy and Advocacy Series - 2.

T.M Radha, Rajendra Hegde, M.Ramprasad, *Improving resource use efficiency through SRI-A case of Madanapalli*, paper submitted to the Second National Symposium on SRI at Agartala – 3-5 October 2007.

Erhard Hennig's, *Secrets of Fertile Soils*, Selected Readings-7.

Gandhimathi and J.Krishnan, *A Conversation on soil and water conservation, cropping system, soil fertility and kitchen gardening* - An audio CD on SA practices in Tamil.

Satish Pattepur, *Intercrops for high income*, Annadata, September 2007.

LEISA India

LEISA India Issue on *Nurturing Ecological Processes*, was brought out during this period.

KVS Prasad and T M Radha, *Documentation in Practice* – A process document on LEISA India documentation and communication programme was published.



Visitors

Mr. Devinder Sharma, distinguished policy analyst, visited AMEF, Bangalore on 9 August 2007 and shared his views on agriculture policies.

Mr. Sam Joseph, Consultant on Participatory Methodologies, visited Bangalore office on 22 August 2007.

Dr. Yianna Lambrou and Dr. Francesca Mancini visited AMEF, Bangalore, for discussions on Gender and Climate Change on 25 September 2007. They interacted with farmers of Madanapalli and Dharmapuri during their field visits.

Mr. K. C. Nataraj, Senior Research Fellow, Directorate of Oilseeds Research (DOR), Hyderabad, visited Kamalapur village in Raichur where DOR has conducted on-farm field trials on sunflower crop.

Mr. Samarth Solanki, Head Staff, C.E.E, Gujarat, visited Raichur Unit and its village along with CEE staff and farmers.

Sri V Balaji Rao, Coordinator, DAATTC, Mahabubnagar and Sri Ramakrishna Rao, Deputy Director of Agriculture, Mahabubnagar visited the Area Unit at Mahabubnagar. They discussed on possible collaboration of AMEF with ATMA project to build capacities of poor farmers in the district.

Rural Development Commissioner, 60 district mandal officials, 60 technical assistants from EGS scheme, including district Project Director, DWMA, visited Kothapalli in Mahabubnagar for knowing how to implement soil conservation activities through EGS scheme.

Mr. Naveen Jha, Deshpande Foundation, Hubli, visited Raichur Unit and its working area to know more about AMEF's work.

Ms. B. Vijayalakshmi from C-DAC visited AMEF, Bangalore on 20 September 2007, to explore the possibilities of working together on ICT.

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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 are increasingly applying their learnings on sustainable agriculture on their farms. This was evident in their farm practices like incorporating green manure and crop residues into the soil for enhancing its fertility, treating seeds with biologicals, intercropping, intercultivation etc. Farmers benefiting from alternative farm management practices being adopted in right combination, are also spreading them to fellow farmers.

The success in operationalising sustainable agriculture (SA) on the field is attracting not only farmers but also representatives from the formal institutions like the Agriculture Department and the University, to learn from AMEF's work areas. This period was marked by a number of visitors, some leading to the possibility of collaborative programmes, helping in further spread of SA.

Field activities

In Raichur, FFS farmers selected R-8808 variety of groundnut during a participatory varietal selection process. R-8808 performed better than the local check, TMV-2, both in terms of quality and quantity. It had lower incidence of pest and diseases and could withstand moisture stress. Its fodder was excellent with good keeping quality. Owing to its qualities, R-8808 variety is now being multiplied by farmers on 20 acres.

Bijapur Unit has motivated farmers to raise green gram as a catch crop. Also, improved practices like quality seeds, seed treatment with bio-agents, timely inter cultivation etc., have been promoted to get better yields. Farmers are being encouraged to recycle green gram for enhancing soil fertility.

In Madanapalli, TFB-11, a non-spreading, short duration, photo insensitive, improved field bean variety, sown as an intercrop in groundnut, has shown good results. TFB-11 displayed early flowering and fruit setting resulting in 2-3 early pickings compared to normal variety.

Eco farmers in Mahabubnagar are finding it beneficial to raise azolla in paddy fields. Due to azolla's prolific growth, farmers have been able to save upto Rs. 550 - 600 per acre on weeding.

In Kolar, L-5 Ragi variety, which performed better than INDAF-5 and GPU-28 in the previous season, has become more popular. It has spread to nearly 100 acres in Kolar, Mulbagal, Bangarpet and Chintamani taluks.

Farmers from Perambalur cluster in Tiruchi produced 150 kgs of VAM and shared among the members at the rate of Rs.10 per kg. Similarly, PSSS, our network partner, has produced 100kgs of VAM as a group initiative. Seeing the potential of the groups in producing VAM, the State Agriculture Department has requested the group in Perali village to supply 500 kgs of VAM.

Dharmapuri Unit organized midseason Field Days to sensitize farmers on SA practices for productivity improvement in tapioca. Over 330 farmers from adjoining villages observed the FFS plots with new varieties of tapioca and SA practices. Stakeholders from DoA, TNAU, KVK and TCRS participated.



Green manuring on drylands

More than 30 farmers of Pujarahalli in Bellary are cultivating green manure crops like sunhemp and dhaincha for the second year in succession. For instance, Mr. Anjanappa had sown 16 kg of sunhemp seeds during May 2007 on one acre of land. After 38 days of sowing he incorporated sunhemp into the soil. The average fresh weight of sunhemp was 1.343 kg/sq.mt, adding roughly 5.3 tons of fresh green manure per acre. In the same plot he cultivated groundnut. Similarly, Mr. Naganna incorporated dhaincha into the soil. At the time of incorporation, the average fresh weight of dhaincha was 1.966kg/sq.mt, adding 7.864 ton's of fresh green manure for one acre of land. Now he has taken up paddy in the same field.



Naganna on his farm with dhaincha

Working with partners

Bijapur Unit trained 16 Lead Farmers during 19 to 21 July 2007, to build them as local change agents.

Mahabubnagar Unit, in collaboration with District Water Management Agency, till now, has trained 34 watershed farmers on Sustainable Agriculture.

Dharmapuri Unit organized a one-day workshop on 28 August 2007 for Community Managed Resource Centre (CMRC) managers and Community Resource Persons (CRPs) of MYRADA on possibilities of adding value to farm commodities. Dr. Francesca Mancini, Dr. Meeta Punjabi of the FAO and AMEF team facilitated the workshop.

A discussion meeting on gender and climate change was organized on 19 September 2007 with CRPs and CMRC managers of MYRADA. The farmers clearly brought out the impacts of climate change. Dr. Yianna Lambrou and Dr. Francesca of the FAO, along with the AMEF team, facilitated the discussions.

Bellary Unit has assisted GUARD ENP in setting up a Sustainable Agriculture Resource Center (SARC) in Kanahosahalli. It was inaugurated by Tahasildar of Kudligi taluk on 22 August 2007.

Madanapalli Unit trained around 17 participants, including ENP staff and students of SA fellowship programme, in documentation and communication aspects on 23 August 2007.

To prepare the ENP staff in conducting FFS in Rabi, Raichur Unit organized a refresher training for 16 facilitators during 7-9 August 2007.



Preparing NGO partners as facilitators in SA promotion

Around 30 field staff of BEST (Bharath Environment Seva Team), an NGO in Pudukottai, are being trained by Tiruchi team in promoting systematics of SA using FFS methodology. The two-week SToF (Short-term Training of Facilitators) focussed on natural resources management and their utilisation, particularly in paddy cultivation. Emphasis was laid on System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method as an option for better management of resources in paddy production. The trained participants in turn will be promoting SRI through FFS for groups of farmers who are the members of SHGs organized by BEST. The programme is envisaged to reach 45 villages, training 900 farmers on sustainable paddy farming practices and SRI method of paddy production.

Mahabubnagar Unit trained 34 volunteers in SA promotion through two-week SToF programme. Each trainee, in turn, organized a season long FFS with one farmers group in their respective villages. In all, 24 FFS on Cotton and 6 FFS on Maize were organized, reaching around 750 farmers.



Ecofarming base turning as training grounds

Ecofarming base is a part of the farmer's land where ecofriendly and affordable alternative farming operations are practised in combination.

More than 50 people from Timbaktu Collective in Anantapur district visited the ecofarming base at Mittamalapalli and Valasaguttapalli villages in Madanapalli. They interacted with farmers and visited the SA plots and appreciated SA promotion activities. Similarly, around 40 farmers from Chintamani in Kolar visited Mittamalapalli and interacted with farmers. They appreciated SA practices like dead furrows, bund plantation, biomass nursery and azolla.

Around 40 farmers from Nagayalanka in Andhra Pradesh visited the cluster villages in Mahabubnagar. They interacted with eco farmers and were impressed with the SA adoption by them particularly the activities like green manuring in paddy, azolla in paddy and use of botanicals.

Around 15 farmers and five staff from Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad, Gujarat visited Raichur Unit and its cluster villages during 10-14 September 2007 and learnt about various SA practices.



Farmers from Timbaktu Collective observing SA plots at Valasaguttapalli

Fostering LEISA Initiatives

DMI, a partner NGO of Tiruchi Unit, organized modular training on SA to 9 farmer groups in 9 villages.

A training on 'Organic farming' was organized by VISHALA with the support of ZP on 30 July 2007 at Somadevarahatti. Around 65 farmers were trained with the technical support of Bijapur Unit.

Chaitanya, an ENP of Madanapalli Unit, organized two trainings to 46 NABARD watershed farmers on SA promotion.

The Second Tapioca Working Group meeting was organized at Harur in Dharmapuri on 23 August 2007. The discussions helped in spreading the message of SA to five new NGOs and five ATMA groups. Action plans were derived to initiate collective marketing in Tapioca. Strategies for scaling up the programme to other villages through NGOs were explored.

Participation in Workshops

AMEF staff from all Area Units participated in the *Workshop on Sustainable Livelihood Analysis*, facilitated by Dr. Francesca Mancini, FAO on 10-11 July 2007 at MYRADA Training Center, Kamasamudram.

Mr. Ravindranath Reddy presented a guest lecture on AMEF experiences on FFS during the 78th ICAR Foundation Day organized by CSWCR&TI, Bellary on 16 July 2007.

Mr. Ravindranath Reddy and Mr. B.K. Suresh participated in a *Workshop on IPM Curriculum Development* at NPPTI, Hyderabad on 16 August, 2007. Representatives from Agriculture Universities and selected NGOs participated.

Dr. Arun Balamatti and Dr. J. Diraviam participated in the *Second Annual Forum of Food and Nutrition Security Community of Solution Exchange Network of FAO* at Hyderabad from 17 to 19 August, 2007.

Mr. Shyam Kulkarni, participated in the *Workshop on Legumes Improvement Project* on 6-8 September 2007 at ICRISAT.



Silver Jubilee Celebrations at the District level

To mark the occasion of AME's silver jubilee celebrations, district level events were organized during the month of September and October across various Area Units. The objective of the events was to bring in the major players in agriculture development in the district, draw their attention to dryland farming, appraise them about the experiences of AMEF in promoting sustainable agriculture in dryland areas and explore possibilities of working together in the development of the district.

The events were graced by dignitaries like the District Collector and representatives from Agricultural Universities, KVKs, Department of Agriculture, Veterinary Universities, NABARD, Credit agencies, Zilla Panchayat etc. Farmers and NGOs from the district participated with great enthusiasm. Majority of the invitees called for the need for working together and invited AMEF to be a part of the governmental programmes in the district.

On this occasion, the best eco farmer groups were felicitated, SA models were exhibited and competitions were organized. The events got a good media coverage through local newspapers and television.

Some highlights

In Dharmapuri (11 September), the District Collector, Mr. Pankaj Kumar Bansal, IAS, was the Chief Guest. He invited AMEF to join with Government and cover larger area in the district in promoting SA. More than 100 people participated in the event.

In Tiruchi (19 September), Dr.S.Jebaraj, Dean (Agri), ADAC&RI, Tiruchi, was the Chief Guest. Mr. K. P. Srinivasan, Station Director, All India Radio, Tiruchi, who was a special invitee, requested AMEF's support in their future agricultural programmes.

AMEF staff participated in the *Workshop on Gender and Climate Change*, facilitated by Dr. Yianna Lambrou and Dr. Francesca Mancini on 21 September 2007 at Bangalore.

Dr. Diraviam and Mr. Krishnan participated in *Madurai Symposium 2007 – Seminar on Enhancing Rainfed Farming Livelihoods: Need for Policy Changes*, organized by DHAN Foundation on 26 September 2007 in Madurai. They presented AMEF's experiences in dry land agriculture and suggested the policy changes needed.

Dr. Arun Balamatti participated in the *National Workshop on New Paradigm for Rainfed Farming - Redesigning Support Systems and Incentives*, at NAAS Campus, New Delhi, from 27-29 September 2007.

Mr.J.Krishnan presented a paper on *FFS in promoting livelihoods of dry land farmers* in the DHAN Symposium on 26 September 2007.

Mr. C.S. Kallimani was invited as a resource person in the *Organic Village Concept Programme* organized by LORDS, NGO with Agriculture Department, Bellary, on 19 August 2007.

In Madanapalli (24 September), Mr. S.S. Rawat, IAS, the District Collector, was the Chief Guest. He requested AME Foundation to collaborate with Department of Agriculture and implement FFS on a large scale. More than 150 people participated.

In Mahabubnagar (26 September), the District Collector Smt. Usha Rani, IAS, was the Chief Guest. The District Collector requested AMEF to train two farmers from each of the 400 watershed villages in the district. Around 180 people participated.

In Bellary (18 October), Smt. Pushparekha, President, Zilla Panchayat, Bellary, was the Chief Guest. She extended her support to AMEF by committing to involve AMEF in possible programmes through ZP. She also promised support for setting up SA resource and training centre. About 250 people participated.



District Collector Smt. Usha Rani, IAS, Mahabubnagar, inaugurating the event