

Organic Farmers and Farms in Andhra Pradesh

CHALASANI DUTT

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Chalasanani Dutt's farm extends over 120 acres. He has been using organic farming methods since 1995. His plantations are located at Nuzvid and Vattigudipada.

He adopts a multi-crop pattern with diverse crops to attain sustainability. Vermiculture and apiculture are extensively introduced to aid productivity.

On his 100-acre Nuzvid plantation, 2000 guava, 2500 coconut, 600 chickoo, 2000 mango trees of various species are intercropped. He has planted 5000 teak saplings all over the farm and also introduced drumsticks of high yielding variety. Dutt also cultivates commercial crops like rice, cashew, groundnut, ginger, turmeric, watermelon, papaya, banana, chilly and host of vegetables. A 2.5 acre lake on the farm has been used to develop pisciculture.

On his 20 acres Vattigudipadu plantation, Dutt has intercropped 1050 coconut palms of a wide variety with 7500 cocoa plants in the 'twin row' system. Compatible plants like areca nut and custard apple have been introduced in the available vacant spaces. He has also introduced commercial crops like ginger, black pepper, garlic and yam. 1000 teak saplings are planted around the perimeter.

Cattle, goats and poultry are reared on the farm. They naturally adapt to the surroundings and roam free around the farm, thereby automatically manuring the trees. Cow urine is sprayed on the trees as a pest control measure. Poultry birds are effective insect destroyers, while also providing good manure. Coir-pith, which is a waste product in many coconut industries, is spread under the soil in the basins of the trees to provide valuable natural potash. Coir-pith also possesses the additional quality of having good moisture retention properties.

Bio dynamic preparations, BD 500, CPP and 501 are produced in large quantities, surplus is supplied to sugarcane farmers totaling to usage on 4000 acres. Comparative experimentation has shown an additional yield of 8 to 10 metric tones per acre.

Vermicompost is produced on a large scale and Dutt is able to supply this manure to other farmers as well. Liberal dosages of farm yard manure (FYM) are mulched in the tree basins together with all the organic matter (weeds, coconut leaves, coconut husk, coconut shells and cocoa leaves) available on the farm. Neem cake is used as additional input. Vermiwash mixed with neem oil and garlic extract is periodically sprayed to control pests. Marigold plants which abound in the farm aid in nematode control. Honeybees (apiculture) also inhabit the farm and help in cross-pollination, thus boosting yield. The pollen of these bees is another excellent inducer of useful bacteria. The fish pond abounds in plankton, which is a very nutritious food for the fish. A common practice among those practicing pisciculture is to introduce FYM into the fishpond. The FYM produces anaerobic reaction, thereby reducing the oxygen availability. In contrast, vermicompost, which has a neutral pH, enhances oxygen availability.

Dutt has introduced cost effective bio pesticides made from resources available on the farm. Leaves of neem, tulasi, aswhagandha, seetaphal, anrognathis, panicveta, Dhatura/thorn apple, nuxmomica, madhar (calotris) are first soaked in boiling water, then filtered and mixed with 150 litres of water, 10 litres of cow urine, 25 litres of vermiwash and 15 litres of biopesticide. This is used as a foliar spray. It gives good results. In 2003, he sprayed 500 litres of cow milk on mangoes with excellent results.

Dutt firmly believes that 'organic' is the best way to live, for our health, for our children, for our planet and for the future. (Source: Communication with OIP.)

STRAINATA

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(Contact: Asha Kachhru, B.Susheela, B. Pandu)

Strainata is a Sanskrit word meaning multiplication of female culture and female energy. Strainata is a small NGO, coordinated by an urban woman and a rural family together. Our aim is to show that if privileged urbanites devote some of their time and energy to rural communities, then even without big funds from western donor agencies, the rural poor can attain some qualitative change in their lives.

We promote organic agriculture both as an alternative lifestyle for urban-ites as well as a sustainable alternative for the rural folk. For everyone, this means healthy food.

We now have 15 years of experience in organic agriculture and rural women's development, working with women from 3 villages, Ranjole, Bidaikanna and Kohir, all in Medak district, Andhra Pradesh.

We have 7 acres of black soil land, 2 oxen, and a bullock-cart for our agricultural work and a simple old rural house. This old house is also our office and meeting place for the rural women. We have tried out no tilling as per Fukuoka, then tilling with tractor and bullock-cart and now we are mostly tilling with the oxen and only rarely with the tractor. We have gathered experience with both rain-fed as well as irrigated land in Medak district. We produce both

sustenance as well as cash crops.

We have grown cereals, pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane, ginger, turmeric, potatoes, maize, bananas and guavas, besides vegetables for our daily use. We have sold organic jaggery, pulses, sorghum (janwari), wheat, safflower oil and turmeric powder to Green shops and progressive groups in Delhi (Navdanya), Bombay (Kavita Mukhi and Vijaya Venkat), Bangalore (Econet and Vanaja Ramprasad), Madurai (Asha hospital and Ritamma David) etc. Our major earnings come from the sale of organic jaggery and safflower oil. Due to drought related and ecological problems as well as problems with some pests like aphids and caterpillars, we are not able to sell these items lately.

We use only organic manure and have mostly avoided pesticides and chemical fertilizers. However despite the use of neem oil, detergent powder, chili powder and some fungi cultures obtained from ICRISAT we have not got more than approx. 3 bags (each a quintal) per acre. In fact neither the expertise of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (in our vicinity) nor that of ICRISAT has been of much use to us. It is the expertise of the local indigenous peoples and small farmers that has helped us proceed further. But even these farmers need training in modern techniques, which is not easily available.

Due to high costs of organic manure and increasing labour costs, we cannot say that we have a positive cost-benefit ratio. But it is a great joy to be able to eat self-produced, healthy food. Besides we are contributing to empowerment of rural poor, particularly the women and children.

One of our strengths has been the emphasis on the social dimensions of organic agriculture. We now have around 150 women organised in self-help groups and they are able to handle on their own, loans from various sources like the IRDP/DRDA and cooperative societies of the Indian government. We have also arranged for animals and land for some of these women to make them self-reliant.

We see the non-existence of agricultural extension services and non-availability of subsidies as the major obstacles to organic farming. Also, the low prices for the better and healthier organic produce are de-motivating factors for many potential organic farmers in our area.

After 15 years of our own experience with organic agriculture, we are now in a better position to represent rural women and men's issues in various fora at regional, national and international level. We are part of various networks of organic movements including OFAI, IFOAM and World Social Forum (WSF).

Since we believe that 'personal is political' we have not hesitated to document our personal joys and travails, besides many social and political issues concerning rural women/men and children. We periodically send out newsletters to friends and well-wishers all over the world. This has enabled us to get support and raise funds from friends, and the need for big donor agency funds, which require detailed reporting and accounting, has been avoided.

We feel a lot more needs to be done to promote the organic movement in India.

(Source: Communication with OIP)

VIJAYA RAMA RAJU

c/o Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, 2-2-1118/3/6, Lingalagadda, New Nallakunta, Hyderabad - 500 044, Andhra Pradesh.

Vijaya Rama Raju is one of the state's vice presidents of the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh. He belongs to Tetali village near Tanuku of West Godavari District. He comes from a farmer's family and has been actively involved in cultivation for the last 25 years. He shifted to natural farming six years ago.

Five years ago, one acre of land was brought under natural farming. The soil was tilled with six cartloads of dung and leaves of green gram (*pilli pesara* in Telugu). Later on, the land was prepared for transplantation. Rice seed MTU 7029 has been used for the last three years and has given a good yield of 32 bags. He also used MTU 1001 which resulted in an equally good yield of 32 bags. He does not use fertilisers or pesticides. He thus saved Rs 1500 per acre.

In bidding good bye to pesticides and the hole-in-the-pocket fertilisers, the ground was automatically ready to welcome the farmers' friends like earthworms, frogs and myriad birds. The earth retained its minerals and the land's power of resistance increased. Raju is pleased to now have healthy rice for consumption and healthy grass for his animals. He has saved expenditure on pesticides, fertilizers and no longer needs to ask for loans.

(Source: K. Vidhyasagar Rao, Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, 1995)

TIMBAKTU COLLECTIVE

Chennekothapalli Village - 515 101, Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh.

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It all began in 1990 when a group of like minded people who had been working in the development sector for over ten years got together and bought 32 acres of degraded wasteland in the remote villages of chronically drought hit Anantapur district, in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. The intention was to work towards restoring the land, experiment with alternative lifestyles, explore soil and water conservation techniques as well as alternatives in energy, horticulture and agriculture. Today 'Timbaktu' as it has been named ('the last horizon - where the earth meets

the sky') is an agro forest habitat. Here along with its own land the community has been involved in protecting and helping regenerate 700 acres of dry deciduous forest on the surrounding hills by reducing overgrazing, stopping tree felling, fires etc.

From Timbaktu was born a voluntary organization, Timbaktu Collective, with the objective of working for the sustainable development of villages in the region. Eighteen years later the Collective works in 140 villages of Chennethapalli, Roddam and Ramagiri mandals serving about 10,000 families.

'Kalpavalli' (the benevolent mother) project evolved as an organic extension of the Timbaktu experiment in eco-restoration through natural regeneration. It has twin aims of helping the villagers protect and develop the natural resources of the village and of enabling the poor to improve their precarious livelihoods.

This experiment started in 1993 on 150 acres in the village of Mustikovila. Since then 8 other villages have joined the project to protect and regenerate 12,500 acres of revenue waste land into a forested wilderness. Kalpavalli as this wilderness is called, now houses over 300 indigenous tree, bush and grass species, a perennial stream, hundreds of bird species and herds of black buck. Over 25,000 sheep and 6,000 cattle graze here through the year other than the 5,000 cart loads of grass that is taken away by the local villagers. Investment in this project has been less than Rs. 500 per acre.

The protection work is taken up by Vana Samrakshana (Forest Protection) Committees (VSCs) and their federation with support from the Collective. The VSCs plan, implement and monitor activities in Kalpavalli. 180 members including 60 women representing the General Body of the Kalpavalli Adavi Samakhya federation of the VSCs have, as of the 30th March 2008, been registered as 'The Kalpavalli Mutually Aided Tree Growers Cooperative' under the MACS Act.

Natural Resource Management has been one of the core areas of work of the Collective since 1992. The Collective has completed a total of thirteen watersheds under the GoAP's APRLP programme. 156 traditional water bodies have been renovated, as well as soil and water conservation and soil fertility works undertaken in over 10,000 acres of agricultural land. This has resulted in the recharge of a number of bore and open wells. Awareness building on the importance of maintenance of these water bodies is an integral part of the work.

In July, 2001 a Seeds of Hope project was initiated with the goal of conserving agro-biodiversity and strengthening sustainable agriculture, while simultaneously combating drought. Working in cooperation with farmers the project has focused on the production and promotion of minor millets, the SRI method of paddy cultivation, the use of non chemical pest control and fertilisers, understanding crop economics of ground nut and millets, while planning long term strategies and diversification of cropping patterns.

Encouraged by the results of the Seeds of Hope project and supported by the alternative banking for women programme, a project known as 'Timbaktu Organic' was initiated in 2005. The objective of this venture is to enhance the income and food security of dry land smallholder farmers. In the long term it hopes to improve their livelihood security through sustainable agriculture methods and added marketing support. Farming, production and marketing are distinct components of the project.

The Timbaktu Organic team works through organic farming sanghas with a total strength of 349 farmers. The Sanghas anchor the organic farming work including activities such as farmer and field selection, training, organic inputs, mobilisation, documentation of organic practices adopted and mid and end season review. The farmers are presently producing groundnut, redgram and a variety of millets. The collective is a member of the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) Organic India National Council and follows the PGS method of organic certification. Of the 349 farming families, 317 were granted certification for 1149 acres and this year 540 have applied.

The 'Dharani Sendriya Vyvsaya Sanghalu Samakhya' (Dharani organic farmers' federation), formed in May 2006 to monitor the work is now registered under the MACS Act as the Dharani FaM CoOp Ltd. The Directors of Dharani FaM CoOp Ltd manage the procurement, processing and marketing activity.

The Dharani processing unit was inaugurated on 7th July 2007. Dharani deals with 15 agro-commodities processed by a groundnut decorticator, a flour mill, two oil rotaries and a filter press. It also has a seed collection centre, where a wide variety of indigenous seeds of grasses, bushes, trees and crops have been collected and stored.

Timbaktu Organic's work is supported through farmer-member's contributions, investment by Adisakthi MACS, loans from friends and grants.

To promote and popularize consumption of millets locally, millet food demonstrations and workshops are organized. A restaurant that sells organic prepared food has been set up and is doing well. For the urban markets stalls were set up at the India Organic fair and the Civil Society Summit held in various cities of India. Timbaktu Organic products now sell in villages of Anantapur District and urban centres like Anantapur, Putaparthi, Auroville, Pondicherry, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad and New Delhi.

The Collective, in partnership with all the CBOs it has promoted over the years, has been celebrating the International Environment Day on June 5th and 6th since 1998. Indigenous varieties of seeds, poultry and cattle collected from all over the area are exhibited. Traditional implements used for agriculture, fishing and hunting are displayed. Performances and competitions in various traditional art forms and weight lifting takes place. Local food items and various handicrafts are sold. Presentations made by local villagers as well as invitees highlight issues such

as cultural and agricultural biodiversity, organic farming, seed protection, forest protection, etc.
(Source: Timbaktu Collective's communication with OIP)

DECCAN DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

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Deccan Development Society (DDS) is a two-decade old grassroots organization working in about 75 villages around Zaheerabad in Medak District and networking with various organizations in the State of Andhra Pradesh. Achieving community sovereignty is the primary mission of DDS. Since we work with the very vulnerable sections of rural communities viz., women and dalits, we believe that the greater the community sovereignty that they achieve higher their chances of survival.

Over a period of 25 years, the DDS programmes have evolved from meeting the simple sustenance needs of the sangham members to empowering them in order to address the larger issues of food security, natural resource enhancement, education and health needs of the region. The integration of various activities is intended to retrieve women's natural leadership positions in their communities, and to fight the lack of access and control over their own resources. These activities, alongside ensuring earth care, are also resulting in human care by giving the women a new-found dignity and profile in their village communities.

Autonomous Communities

At the heart of all these activities is the fundamental principle of access and control, which leads to the issue of autonomy of local communities. The autonomy becomes far more important in a globalising world, shrinking national boundaries, and disappearing national sovereignties. In this context, it becomes crucial for local communities to take over certain spheres of autonomies to protect themselves from being walked over by the unseen globalising forces. It is in this scenario that the women of the DDS sanghams have worked towards the following autonomies:

- Autonomy over food production
- Autonomy over seeds
- Autonomy over natural resources and their management
- Autonomous market
- Autonomous media

Responding to the emerging global challenges, the DDS communities, which had worked towards ensuring their food security over the last 25 years, are now moved into a regime of food sovereignty.

The DDS also runs Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Medak District which promotes organic farming and environment friendly techniques based on local knowledge systems. Its other activities include: an Alternative Public Distribution System, Pachasaale - The Green School.

The DDS is the State Secretariat for the Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI).

SOCIETY FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

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(Contact: Bhanu Sanghani)

Society for Organic Agriculture (SOA) is a not-for-profit NGO dedicated to the promotion of organic agriculture. It was established by a few concerned individuals, some of whom are retired agricultural experts, business managers and administrators from the government. Its multiphase programmes include the following:

- Establishing an information package of traditional agricultural practices in various parts of India based on folklore and interviews with farmers.
- Scrutinising these traditional agricultural practices in a scientific manner by selective field trials in various parts of the country in association with like minded organizations.
- Building awareness and popularising the concepts of organic agriculture.
- Assisting farmers to channelise their organic produce by opting for certification either on their own or through a marketing agency, for domestic as well as foreign markets.

K. NIMMAIAH

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K. Nimmaiah owns a five acre farm which is located in Marrigudour village, Nalagonda. He has been farming for the past 15 years. He grows paddy, pulses and mangoes. He uses old seeds in order to get a high yield. Nimmaiah says

that organic farming is not difficult, however one requires patience and perseverance.

When he changed from chemical farming to organic farming, for the first two years there was a reduction in the output. He overcame this hurdle with the application of farm yard manure, vermicompost and green manure. Bio-pesticides like neem seed kernel, neem oil were used to control pests. He continues to use these natural manures and bio-pesticides to maintain good yields.

He believes that people are yet to realise the importance of organically produced food and acknowledge it for its better taste, flavour and nutrient value. Organic farming puts one in a win-win situation as the product is good for health and at the same time the fertility of the soil is retained. Consumers should be prepared to pay a little more for quality food products that are produced using organic farming methods, says Nimmaiah. (Source: Communication with OIP)

SANGAPPA MARUGODDI

Hulgera Village, Raikode, Medak District, Andhra Pradesh.

Sangappa Marugoddi and his family have been practicing organic farming for the last 60 years on their four acre farm. They cultivate about 26 varieties of crops including sorghum, little millet, foxtail millet, bajra, dry paddy, horse gram, red gram, cow pea, field beans etc.

Farm yard manure and vermicompost are used to enhance soil quality. This makes the soil soft and also yields good fodder for animals. Old seeds are used for sowing. Sangappa believes that it is not difficult to practice organic as surplus produce is sold to Deccan Development Society in Pastapur. He is happy that six of his neighbours also practise organic farming on contiguous pieces of land adjacent to his.

(Source: Communication with OIP)

UMA SHANKARI

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The farm is located approx. 50 kms from Tirupati town, Andhra Pradesh. It is a joint property of 30 acres, comprising two plots of land on both sides of the village, and is presently owned by three brothers. G. Narendranath and Uma Shankari were the caretakers till Narendranath expired a few months ago (2009).

On the approx. 20 acres single plot there are 400 mango trees that are about 100 years old and 250 coconut trees. The second plot is four contiguous bits of land used as follows:

- i. Two acres of coconut cum mango garden
- ii. Two acres of mango garden
- iii. Two and half acres of wet land
- iv. One acre of dry land.

Both Narendranath and Uma Shankari came from farming families, but like most educated Indians they found themselves working and living in the city. They have been inspired by Marx, Mao and Gandhi and influenced in their thinking by critiques of modern science and technology, the environment movement, and of course Fukuoka.

In 1987 they decided to relocate to their ancestral village, hoping to live an environment-friendly life and to do grass roots 'public' work.

When they started this new life, both of them were new to farming.

Commenting on her experience with organic farming, Smt. Uma Shankari says: 'We are not hard-working farmers, but are 'hardly working' farmers. Our own role in farming is largely supervisory. The biggest drawback for us is that we are involved in work other than farming, like research in agriculture and water issues, building grassroot movements of farmers and dalits, taking up human rights issues etc. hence our inability to give enough attention to the farm. We feel organic farming is the right thing to do and wish to put more effort into integrating our lives with it.

'In our opinion it is incorrect to compare yields from chemical farming with those of organic farming, because these yields have been obtained through perpetuating gross violence on nature. The yield from chemical farming which is several times more than what natural farming can offer is nothing but human greed at the cost of having lost significant biodiversity and gene pools for ever. But farmers cannot be blamed for this state of affairs; low prices for farm produce and poverty drive them to look for shortcuts. The globalization process led by governments in collaboration with the MNCs has worsened the plight of farmers all over the world and small farmers suffer the most. There is a need to organize and fight this double violence on nature and fellow human beings. For us the green and the red movements are the same.'

(Source: Communication with OIP)

At Raikode, (mdl), Medak District - 502 257, Andhra Pradesh.

Shashidhar Patel's farm is four hectares. Jowar, capsicum, pesicular mango, different grains, korra and some varieties of grass grow on his farm. He keeps bullocks on the farm. Pests are controlled using neem oil. In his experience practising organic farming has reduced the expenditure incurred on the farm apart from which it is pollution free. He sells his produce in the local market but is not satisfied with the price. He feels that since the yield from chemical farming is more than that obtained from organic farming, the produce of organic farming should fetch higher prices.

(Source: Communication with OIP)

M. TUKARAM

Basanthapur, Mandal-Nayalakal, District Medak - 502 249, Andhra Pradesh.

M. Tukaram belongs to a farming family and has been practising organic farming for over 45 years. He has a five acre farm, located in Basanthapur. Cereals, pulses, millets, vegetables, ginger, sugarcane etc. are cultivated on the farm. He rears cows, sheep, goats, buffaloes on the farm and uses the dung and urine for producing organic manure.

His farm is protected from pests by spraying jaggery solution, tobacco solution and neem seeds solution. These act as insecticides and germicides. He also periodically lights a fire in an extreme corner of his field, away from the currently growing crops. Since light attracts insects, this exercise facilitates moving the insects away from crops.

He claims that everybody in his village practises organic farming, even though it requires great will and discipline. He says that the food his ancestors cultivated and consumed was good for health as it was grown using organic methods.

(Source: Communication with OIP)

DAMMARI NARASAICH

S/o D. Sangaich, Jeerlapally P.O., Jharasanagam Md. - 502 236, Zaheerabad T9, Medak District, Andhra Pradesh.

For over 20 years Dammari Narasaich has been practising organic farming in Jeerlapally, along with his family. He has two separate farms, of around one and half acres each. He claims that everybody in his village practises organic farming.

He grows green gram, yellow jowar, tur dal, korralu, minumulu, pebbarlu, pundlu, pigeon pea, green chilies, coriander, bottle gourd, tomatoes, brinjal, culviber, green leafy vegetables, anisl etc. on both his farms. The produce is partly consumed and excess is sold in the local market. Cows and goats are reared for meeting the manure requirements of organic farming.

He says that organic farming is good as there are minimum pests, waste generated is less, the strength of the crops is more and so is the return from the produce. Fields if left uncultivated for a season do not lose their fertility and nutrient value. More importantly he does not have to spend on purchase of chemicals and pesticides. (Source: Communication with OIP)

R.MURALI

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Shri Murali's one and a half acre farm is located close to his residence in Gopanapalli, Andhra Pradesh. He belongs to a farming family and is involved in agricultural activity for the past 15 years. Since he started farming, he has been growing cotton on one acre of land and cultivating turmeric, maize and groundnut in rotation on the other half acre.

He admits to not always being a pure organic farmer but, for the past eight years he has been relying on non-chemical methods (NPM) to deal with pests. Prior to this he was spending Rs. 4000/- per acre on plant protection chemicals. This amounted to 50 percent of his cultivation costs.

Initially when he started practising organic farming he used to spray chemicals along with NPM methods. But at present he is not using any chemicals. Immediately on changing to pure organic, his yield dropped by 20-30 percent but now there is no difference in yield as compared to chemically grown cotton.

During summer the farm is deep ploughed and the field is kept clean and without weeds. Prior to sowing, 20 cartloads of farmyard manure (FYM) per acre is blended into the soil as part of the land preparation process.

Pests are controlled by following all available NPM methods such as spraying NSKE, tobacco leaf extract, NPV, cow dung, cow urine etc. He has also set up bird perches, sown trap crops like castor and marigold and installed light and pheromone traps.

Two quintals of cotton are sold in Warangal market and it fetches the same price as chemically grown cotton. He thinks that to encourage organic farming, separate market channels should be established for organic cotton with some incentive in price.

Only a few farmers in his village are practising organic farming, some are slowly adopting NPM practices while others are still using chemicals. As a result there is a drift effect of chemicals. Insufficient livestock, small holdings,

no price advantages to the organic farmers and lack of interest in farming are some of the difficulties faced.

The advantages of organic farming according to him are getting high returns with low expenditure and less risk. Also, the environment, soil and humans are free from poisoning. However organic methods need patience, technical know-how and are labour intensive. Practicing organic farming can come from a deep love and respect for mother earth. There is an urgent need to explain to all the farmers the long term effects of using poisonous chemicals in agriculture, and the relevance of organic farming to human life.

(Source: Communication with OIP)

CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

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CSA Call Centre for Organic Practices and Foods: 040-6526 8303

Contact: Dr. G. V. Ramanjaneyulu

‘Human race will reach the organic age or cease to exist’ -H. P. Rusch

Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) is a technology and policy research organisation working with farmers to conserve their resources and their rights. CSA promotes the integration of the knowledge of natural regenerative processes and community skills into food production. CSA is engaged in establishing models of sustainable agriculture working in partnership with NGOs and Community Based Organizations by scaling up the successes and challenging the establishment for a policy change. It has technology and expertise in the area of NPM (Non Pesticidal Management) approach to pest management, Sustainable Soil Fertility Management, Non Chemical Disease Management and Seed Production & Management. The necessary technology is made available through interaction with farmer communities, farmer networks and farming experiments at village level. Today there are more than 50 pesticide free and 10 organic villages in the regions of high chemical use.

CSA also works in establishing farmers institutions which help them in planning, producing and directly market to the consumers. Currently, the organization works with 18 farmers cooperatives and a consumer cooperative which also run four organic store outlets (Hyderabad, Jangaon, Bongir and Achampet). In main crops efforts are made to establish seed to final processed produce in the villages in crops like redgram, chillies and cotton. The cooperatives work as a federation and market the produce in the name of Sahaja Aharam. For details <http://www.sahajaaharam.in>

CSA provided handholding support to the Government of AP for establishing Non Pesticidal Management and institutionalizing in more than 1850 villages covering more than 7 lakh acres across the state benefiting more than 3.5 lakh farmers in 1850 villages during 2004-5 to 2007-08. Today the program is independently run by the Women Self Groups in AP and supported under Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana. The remarkable success of this program has attracted wide attention from across the country and the world. The Prime Minister considered this model as a basis for the soon to be launched National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture.

At the policy level CSA’s focus is on National and State level policy on Organic Farming, Seeds Regulation Bill and National Seed Policy. Also under its critical scanner are GM crops in India. The campaign against Genetically Modified foods and crops is strongly crusaded by CSA supported by a website, www.indiagminfo.org dedicated exclusively to it.

CSA also maintains a repository of news, data, reports etc on the agrarian crisis across the country which can be accessed at <http://www.agrariancrisis.wordpress.com>

CSA’s own website is a repository of all information one would possibly need to practice sustainable agriculture. Now a new learning portal is being setup at <http://www.sustainableagriculture.in>

It endeavours to take India towards an ‘Organic Age’ through the practice of Sustainable Agriculture.

(Source: Communication with OIP)

CHETNA ORGANIC

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Organic Cotton Cultivation

Chetana Organic is an organic cotton growers association working through a consortium of seven NGO’s in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. It supports farmers to convert from conventional agriculture to organic and assists them to set up their own Organic Cotton Growers Association (OCGRA).

Organic farmers from villages in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra meet every week at Farmer Field Schools in groups of 20. Alumni farmers (Farmer Trainers) train new farmers. Filed days are organised to share experience with neighbouring villages.

Products: Cotton. red gram. green and black gram. bengal gram. soya. maize. rice and chilies.

(Source: Brochure)

GUDIVADA NAGARATHNAM NAIDU

House No. 8-66, Gautham Nagar colony, Dilsukh Nagar, Hyderabad – 500 060, Andhra Pradesh. Phone No. 040-24063963, Cell: 09440424463.

Gudivada.Nagarathnam Naidu has an 11 acre organic farm on which he cultivates paddy, coconut, floricultural plants, fruits, medicinal plants, etc. He has refined the SRI technique of paddy cultivation and achieved record yields of 16tonnes /hectare in 2005. The yield in 2008 touched 14.9 tonnes/hectare. He holds the second highest record in the world for SRI paddy. The paddy grows to a height of 6'3'' (187 cms).

Shri. Nagarathnam started farming in 1990 and converted to fully organic in 1995. He is the first farmer in Andhra Pradesh to adapt the SRI technique. He has been growing paddy using the SRI method on 3 acres of his farm since 2002. Recently he has also adopted the drum seeding method for planting. His record harvests using SRI have attracted many visitors, farmers, national and international dignitaries. He is regularly called for demonstrating his techniques by NGO's and farmer organizations. He claims to have so far trained over 10,000 farmers to adopt SRI in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Orissa.

He practices mixed cropping system and has a range of fruit bearing trees like coconut, papaya, banana, sapota, padam (a fruit like cashew), pulses (red, green and bengal gram), groundnut and caster. He grows vegetables and spices for home consumption. Medicinal plants and floriculture are grown for commercial purposes. Floriculture consist of zerbera, carnations, ornamental red ginger, lady heliconia, hanging heliconia, pad heliconia, golden stock, bird of paradise, golden rods, valuzada (green hanging braid like ornamentals). The farm uses manure made from dung and urine of 10 on farm cattle heads. On an average 10 to 12 people work on the farm everyday including his wife, mother and himself. He is proud to acknowledge the contribution of his mother who at the age of 85 puts in work equivalent to two farm hands. He credits it all to organic healthful food.

His contribution has been acknowledged by the Agro International Award -2006 at Bangladesh, Directorate of Rice Research with Best Rice Farmer Award -2008, Andhra Pradesh Best Farmer Award-2005 and 2008 and ICAR Best Farmer Award-2009.

He spends few days every month travelling to one district in his state to promote organic farming and SRI techniques.

He works on the principle, 'Nothing from outside need be brought into the farm, only produce must go out.'
(Source: Teleinterview with OIP)

GORIPARTHI NARASIMHA RAJU YADAV

Guduru village, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh

Awards and records are not new to Goriparthi Narasimha Raju Yadav. The 60 year old farmer from Guduru village, Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh was honoured with a Padmashri in 2009, the country's highest civilian award. This is a high boost to the organic farming movement in the country that not only a farmer but an organic one at that has been bestowed this honour.

If one were to list his other awards a few of the well known ones would be Krishaka Ratna, Krishi Ratna, Krishi Samrat, Aani Mutyalu etc. The ICAR awarded him the Jagjivan Ram Kisan Puruskar in 1999 which also carried a cash reward of Rs. 1 lakh.

As for records, they have been set in the production of rice, groundnut and blackgram. The 100-year-old mango tree on his farm made it to the Limca Book of Records in 1996 for yielding 23,456 mangoes.

In the last season, he harvested 42.6 kg of paddy from 25-sq.m. land. When extrapolated, this amounts to a record yield of 6,900 kg per acre or 16,250 kg per hectare.

On the 60 acres of irrigated land, he cultivates a variety of crops that include rice, blackgram, groundnut , coconuts, mangoes, tomatoes and roses apart from which, endeavours in cattle breeding and aquaculture are also visible.

Shri. Yadav had his initial training in farming from his father, whom he used to accompany regularly to the farm as a young boy, follow with keen interest all the on- farm practices, watch and listen carefully to discussions with experts.

He later as a farmer himself perfected organic farming techniques. Management practices such as using the suitable variety of seed, timely sowing, ensuring optimum plant population, balanced nutrition, proper water supply, early control of weeds, pests and diseases were meticulously followed. He has achieved record yields and also demonstrated to farmers that record yields are possible with the use of techniques of organic manure use and multiple cropping.

He is a Member of Committee of Experts, Indian Rice Development Council and has been a Board Member of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

(Reference: World Wide Web)

CENTRE FOR RESOURCE EDUCATION

201 Maheshwari Complex, Ma-Saab Tank Crossroads, Hyderabad - 500 028, Andhra Pradesh. Fax: 3312891, 6613367, 6621571, Email: bvsr.cre@access.net.in, creind@hd2.dot.net.in

The centre is working on watershed development projects, rural development, rural youth counseling, agricultural improvement and rural technology services through a network of small NGOs, and has been collaborating with the government at various levels in training programmes and project implementation.

It has a documentation centre that includes a slide and photo bank available for public access and has assisted in designing environment curriculum for open school systems and conventional schools and universities.

(Source: World Wide Web)

RURAL INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (RIDS)

Post Garladinna, Dist.Anantapur, Andhra pradesh-515731 Phone: 08551-286473, Email: appsatp@yahoo.co.in

Contact: V. Kristappa, President.

RIDS is involved in intervention and outreach programmes in the rural areas of Ananthpur district. Four years ago, RIDS adopted Chinna Jalapuram, which today is set on the path of being an organic village. The village leader, Narsimha was the first to make the move towards adapting organic practices, being convinced of its efficacy. At the time, he was grappling with a debt of Rs. 50,000. Slowly the productivity and the balance sheet began to improve. His income has grown five times since.

Today, most of the other farms in the village are in various stages of reclamation with sustainable practices using locally available bio-mass like neem, ingua, thangra and farm generated inputs using cow dung, cow urine, jaggery, domestic degradable waste etc.

Chinna Jalapuram has an environment committee, a seed bank and a microfinance system to invest in farming practices.

More than 10 lakh acres of the land in Andhra Pradesh has been declared 'pesticide free zone'. Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) has been instrumental in connecting organizations like RIDS with the farmers towards grass root level interventions like these.

(Source: Kabir Arora, communication with OIP)

RISHI VALLEY ORGANIC INITIATIVE

Rishi Valley Education Centre – RVEC

Rishi Valley P.O., Madanapalle, Chittoor District,

Andhra Pradesh-517352. India

Tel: (08571) 280622, 280582, 280044

Fax: (08571) 280261

(Contact: Santosh Kumar. santosh@rishivalley.org or Radha Gopalan. radhag@rishivalley.org)

The RVEC, a campus of about 350 acres comprises the Rishi Valley School (RVS) and the Rural Education Centre (REC) of the Krishnamurti Foundation. The Rishi Valley Land Care Project involves the staff, students, and interested visitors in afforestation, water conservation and soil regeneration programmes, besides protection and documentation of the plant, bird, and animal life of the valley.

Organic Farming at Rishi Valley School

Rishi Valley School has been engaged in organic farming on its estate and vegetable garden for several years. The vegetables, fruits and crops are grown organically for consumption by the students and other residents of the school campus.

A total of about 150 acres of land is under cultivation. A brief description of its agricultural activity follows:

Horticulture

We have about 25 acres of mango orchard with no irrigational support. The varieties found in the orchard are Neelam, Benishan(Banganapalle), Malgooba, Rumani, Degar, Peethar, Thothapuri(bengalooru)...etc. There are a few Amla trees (gooseberry) in the orchard which have not been yielding any fruit so far.

The coconut orchard has around 1000 trees located in different areas of the campus. Most of them are either East coast tall or West coast tall varieties. Recently we have planted saplings of Ganga bondam, Malaysian yellow and green dwarf, Lakshadweep yellow and green dwarf varieties.

The campus also has tamarind trees numbering around 500 or more. The sapota orchard has about 900 plants of the Paala variety. Quite many sitaphal plants are found in these orchards and on the bunds of fields. The coconut and sapota orchards are under limited drip irrigation.

Dryland agriculture

We cultivate around 50 acres of land under dryland farming system (rainfed farming).

We grow ragi, red gram, field bean, cow pea, groundnuts, sorghum, horse gram, black gram and dryland paddy.

We grow lemon grass – Cymbopogon citratus in 3 acres of land. This is being purchased by a buyer from Bangalore.

Sugarcane is being cultivated in 2 acres of land using an approach that involves minimal and optimal use of water. The madagascar or SRI method of cultivating paddy is applied here to grow sugarcane. This has been developed by Subash Palekar. Unlike the conventional approach where one uses 3 to 4 tonnes of seed material, here we use only 300 kg of sugarcane as seed material, and, instead of planting sugarcane in sets we cut the sugarcane into pieces that contain one node each. We have grown small onions, chilly, cow pea, radish, ladies finger, cluster bean and tomato as intercrops and have got good harvests too. One has to irrigate all the furrows in the field for the first 3 months. After 3 months stop giving water to the rows containing the sugarcane crop. After 6 months watering is done only in the central furrow between 2 rows of sugarcane. One should not burn the trash (dry leaves) in the field after harvesting sugarcane, it should be used as mulch for the subsequent ratoons.

There is a vegetable garden, 12 acres in area, where vegetables are grown for consumption in school.

Livestock

The school has a dairy with 80 Holstein-Fresian cows. The dairy uses 15 acres of land to grow fodder for the cows. RV has about 20 indigenous cattle (cows & bulls). The urine and dung from these animals is used in the preparation of various bio-pesticidal preparations and also in the preparation of Panchagavya and Jeevamritha. Rishi Valley is involved in conservation of Ongole, Punganur & Hallikaar breeds of indigenous cattle.

Rishi Valley is now a certified organic farm.

Organic Farming Initiative in the Rishi Valley Special Development Area

Agriculture and animal husbandry are the main sources of livelihood of people in this drought prone area. The soil has increasingly lost its productivity due to the employment of chemical based farming. Employing organic farming techniques and practices is the most effective way to protect and conserve the soil and water resources in the area while ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth and development of the community.

The Rishi Valley School has therefore embarked on a project – the Rishi Valley Organic Farming Initiative (RVOI).

Based on the in-house experience in organic farming and a long standing relationship with the surrounding community the school embarked on a programme to help the surrounding farmers to convert from chemical based to organic farming. To assist in the preparation of this programme, the Rishi Valley School invited Dr. Sultan Ismail and Dr. Claude Alvares of the Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI) in August 2008 to visit the area, interact with the farmers and provide guidance. Following a visit to several fields in the valley and meetings with groups of farmers, recommendations were provided to the school.

The visit by Drs. Ismail and Alvares was followed up with several meetings with individual farmers which led to five farmers in the area volunteering to be part of this initiative. All the farmers are from Kurabalakota Mandal of Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh. One of the farmers started practicing organic farming about two years ago but resorted to using chemical pesticides once in November 2008 when his tomato crop had been attacked by pests close to the harvest period. Following discussions with us he has decided to replace the chemical pesticide by using natural formulations.

A second farmer has been practicing organic farming in a quarter acre of his land for one year and is committed to converting the remaining land to organic farming. While the remaining three have committed to setting aside quarter to half acre areas of their land to begin organic farming by April 2009. Discussions are ongoing with the farmers to provide support in the form of advice on crop planning, use of manure and bio-fertilisers, and natural pesticidal formulations as well as provide a market for their produce. The school has an active vermicomposting unit which could serve as a source of compost for these farmers in the initial stages.

To support this initiative and the farmers in the process of converting to organic farming, RVS is creating an organic resource centre on the school premises. This centre will first set up demonstration units for composting as well as bio-pesticide preparation and facilitate education and training to all farmers in the area on sustainable farming practices.

The farmers are also being requested to maintain information on inputs into their farms (both for organic and chemical farming). This information will then be used in community meetings to provide confidence to other farmers to wean them away from chemical based farming to organic farming.

The next step is the establishment of a seed bank at the school to propagate, store and maintain native seeds for the vegetables and crops grown in the school. This seed bank will also serve as a resource for the surrounding community and help in the setting up of a community seed bank.

Several other activities in the areas of natural re-vegetation, livestock management, empowerment of women, health and nutrition and education are proposed under the RVSDA. An integrated action plan that recognises and takes into consideration the interdependencies of the stakeholders and the resources is currently under preparation.

(Source: Radha Gopalan and Santosh Kumar in communication with OIP)

s/o Fakirreddy, At post Muthyala cheruvu, Mandal Kadiri, District Kadiri, Andhra Pradesh.

G Venkatareddy, son of Fakir reddy has experience of 25 years in farming. He has 4 acres 30 cents of dry land and 2.25 acres of wet land. He farms on both.

In his dry land he grows: Ground nut – TMV2, JL24 and a spreading variety which was grown about 20 years back; tur – Nalla kandi (black tur), Tella kandi (white tur), Nati Kandi (a local red variety); horse gram, cow pea, jowar, bajra and Saama – Pedda Saama.

In wet land he grows: Ragi, Paddy, Sunflower and Groundnut.

He has been preserving traditional variety of Paddy – Delhi Bhoghalu which was a well known fine paddy variety about 25 years back. He has kept this variety alive and has distributed the same to others. Alongside which he is also maintaining 4 more local varieties – Karthika Pisanalu, Chaowti pisanalu, Pedda kesari vadlu, Jake vadlu.

He has good knowledge of the traditional farming systems and follows crop rotation and also uses the manure from his livestock. He is cultivating the paddy thorough SRI method. He controls pests through the use of biopesticides that he prepares by himself.

He is involved in training of farmers about biopesticide preparation and usage.

(Source: Dinesh Kumar)

B.K. SUBRAMANYAM

Margadarsi, 19-29 J P Road,
Newpet Kuppam - 517 425, Andhra Pradesh.

(Source: ARISE)

K. RAMANA KUMAR

Care for Nature's Creatures, 10-3-142 Panja Street, Bapatla - 522 101, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.

(Source: Communication with OIP)

P. VISWANATH (VISWAN)

Vikasa Cooperative Colony, Chodavaran - 531 036, Visaka District, Andhra Pradesh. Email: vikasa@rediffmail.com

(Source: K. Ramana Kumar)

K. SURESH

Sir Albert Howard Memorial Trust, State Seed Farm, Ghantasala, Krishna District - 521 133, Andhra Pradesh.

(Source: ARISE)

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION IN AP FOLLOWING THE PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS)

Andhra Pradesh has 634 organic farmers registered through 58 farmers' local groups. Timbaktu Collective and DDS are the PGS Organic Facilitation Councils with 17 and 41 grassroots level local groups respectively.

Details of these local groups and their organic produce is posted at the www.pgsorganic.in