

## Organic Farmers and Farms in Punjab

### KHETI VIRASAT MISSION (KVM)

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Kheti Virasat Mission (KVM) is a not-for-profit, civil society action group working on organic farming issues since 1998. It was registered as a trust in March 2005. KVM enjoys the patronage and support of eminent experts and personalities from the field of environmental health, medicine, agriculture, ecology etc. Its mission is to return ecological stability to Punjab through sustainable agricultural practices. KVM has a strong grassroots presence among the farmers of Punjab. Its outreach, training and awareness programmes have influenced the conversion of 20 farms to natural/organic farming, another 200 are under conversion process and over 500 have taken a step forward by growing organically for self consumption.

KVM has two distinct functioning bodies: Vatavaran Panchayats and Environmental Health Action Group (EHAG). EHAG is a forum for physicians, medical professionals and experts of life sciences to take up issues of environmental health.

Over the last few years, KVM has set up several village-level participatory forums called Vatavaran Panchayats (comprised mostly of farmers) seeking local holistic ecological solutions. Model natural farms are being setup. These farms serve dual purposes; as research laboratories for experimenting with new techniques and refining existing natural farming techniques and as 'paatshalas' (schools) for farmers.

Vatavaran Panchayat has its units in most districts in Punjab. It may be rightly called a peoples' initiative for grass root propagation of natural farming, conservation of natural resources and ecology through voluntary participation and contribution.

For promoting the use of indigenous seeds, community seed banks have been set up at the village level. Each seed bank serves a cluster of villages. They undertake conservation, multiplication (both in-situ and ex-situ) and distribution of seeds. Construction of water harvesting structures is being initiated particularly in Malwa.

The organic crops and processed products of the KVM farmers may be collectively listed as follows:

Rabi : Wheat, mustard, coriander, methi, metha , masoor, black gram, potato, radish, carrots, peas, barley, oats, onion, turnip, saunf, ajvaine, palak, sunflower, cauliflower (gobhi), cabbage, chukandar, garlic; horticulture produce: citrus family fruits - keenow and malta, and others - ber, avala; oil seeds - taramira, halon, alsii.

Kharif : Cotton, paddy, basmati, maize, green gram, arhar, urad, groundnut, soybean, bazra, castor , jawar, kaddu, okra, brinjal, cowpea, lauki, pettha (pumpkin), ram tori, tomato, kakdi, kheera, lobiya, brinjal, gawar, bhindi, chilli, turmeric , sugarcane, etc. Fruits: jamun, guava, peach.

Organic Products: Biscuits, besan-gram flour, dalia, moth dal, bazra flour, bazra dalia, corn flour, wheat dalia, gulab jal, basmati rice, lady's finger seeds, mustard oil, gur, shakkar, desi ghee, sharbat, rice, wheat atta , desi moong dal, sewian-vermicilli. Quilts, razai and pillows from naturally grown cotton.

On farm participatory research by farmers is taken up under Vatavaran Panchayats.

Studies on reproductive health crisis, health impacts of pesticides and environmental impacts of coal based thermal power plants are taken up by EHAG.

KVM brings out a Punjabi journal, 'Kudrati Kheti' and has published several booklets for awareness and education.

Umendra Dutt says: 'Though KVM is registered as a charitable trust, it is more of a farmer centric ecological movement. It is the only one totally devoted to establishing ecological

agriculture in the Punjab. The collective backing and mass support of farmers, farmers' groups, medical professionals, advocates, mainstream and (other) scientists, bureaucrats, academicians, etc., has given KVM the strength to earnestly present the case of ecological agriculture in Punjab. With a small fleet of full timers and a wide spectrum of voluntary supporters, KVM has established a strong, capable and penetrative civil society organizational structure. It works on all components of farming crisis in Punjab and is presently organising an assertive nationwide campaign against Bt brinjal.'

(Source: Communication with OIP)

### **AASHISH AAHUJA**

Vill & Post Khubban, Teh. Abophar, District Ferozpur, Punjab. Cell: 09417096709, Email: haldighati@gmail.com.

Aashish Aahuja comes from a farming family and has a 30 acre farm. He has been farming organically for the past three years using natural farming techniques of Subhash Palekar. His farm is irrigated using canal and tube well sources. He has never been involved in chemical farming before. He grows wheat with companion crops, rice, vegetables, green gram, mustard, basmati rice, citrus fruits. Bajra is grown for animal fodder only. The farm inputs are biogas slurry, ghan jeev amrita, jeev amrita and farmyard manure etc. He maintains a number of cows and buffaloes. His crops are protected using herbal repellants and trap crops etc. The only difficulty he faces on the farm is the reluctance of labour to do labourious farm activities. The surplus produced is directly marketed and sent to the local mandi. He gets a good premium price for his produce. His produce is also labeled organic. Initially the yield on his farm was not very encouraging but with persistent use and full-fledged implantation of natural farming techniques the output is now satisfactory.

(Source: Kheti Virasat Mission)

### **AMARJIT SHARMA**

Vill & Post Chaina Teh. Jaitu, District Faridkot, Punjab. Ph.: 01635 290132, Cell: 09463550720

Amarjit belongs to a farming family and has been farming on 5 acres of land for 25 years. He switched to organic farming 4 years ago. His farm is irrigated by tube well. Failure of chemical farming and the adverse effects of pesticides and fertilizers on his farm made him switch over to organic practices. He grows wheat with companion crops, cotton for commercial purposes and vegetables for domestic use. Jowar and bajra are grown for animal fodder. He follows natural farming techniques of Subhash Palekar and uses biogas slurry, ghan jeev amrita and jeev amrita for inputs. He maintains two Indian hump cows, two buffaloes and one ox. He laments that labour is expensive and also unwilling to work on elaborate farming practices. To deal with pests he uses herbal repellants and trap crops. The farm surplus produced is sold to mandis and also through direct marketing. Initially when he shifted to organic there was a decrease in the yield. The yield has stabilized to the same as when he was practicing chemical agriculture. His produce is not certified. A few of his neighbours also practice organic farming. He is happy to have switched over to organic because it has given him peace of mind.

(Source: Kheti Virasat Mission)

### **GURTEJ SINGH**

Village- Khurrampur, P.O. Shahpur (mehatpur) Teh. & District Jalandher, Punjab. Cell: 09915241089.

Gurtej belongs to a farming family and has been practicing farming for the past 10 years on his 9 acre farm. His farm is irrigated through canal and tube well. He switched to organic farming two years ago because he was in search of cheaper and better farming practices as compared to chemical farming. Gurtej grows wheat, maize with companion crops and rice. Jowar and bajra are grown as fodder crops. He follows the traditional farming methods as

practised in Punjab and also natural farming techniques of Subhash Palekar. He uses biogas slurry and farmyard manure as inputs and herbal repellants and trap crops for pest control. He maintains one Indian hump back cow, 8 buffaloes and one mixed breed cow and claims he has had no difficulties in switching to organic practices. Excess surplus produce is sold through direct marketing and mandi. His produce is not certified. He says that when he first switched to organic the output decreased. It has now stabilized to the same as before. None of his neighbours practise organic farming.

(Source: Kheti Virasat Mission)

#### **HARJANT SINGH S/O SH.GURDEV SINGH**

Vill & Post Rai ke Kalan, Teh. & District Bathinda, Punjab. Cell: 09417620814

After practising chemical farming for 17 years Harjant Singh switched to organic farming 8 years ago because of the adverse effect of chemical farming and also for a sense of well-being and self worth. Harjant Singh has 37 acres of canal and tube well irrigated farm land and hails from a farming family. He grows wheat, maize, jowar, bajra and cotton. His farming practices have been influenced by natural farming techniques of Subhash Palekar. He uses beej amrit, ghan jeev amrita, jeev amrit and also does manual weeding. Biogas slurry is also used as organic input. He keeps sahiwal breed of Indian hump back cows and some buffaloes. He has no difficulties in practicing organic farming. Herbal repellants and trap crops are used to deal with farm pests. Surplus is sold at a premium through direct marketing. He says the output decreased in the beginning but has now stabilized. None of his neighbours practise organic farming. Harjit has this to say regarding his experience in organic farming: 'If you go with nature and treat your field as your children there is no option but for farm yields to improve. Farming naturally is as peaceful as the eyes of a new born baby.'

(Source: Kheti Virasat Mission)

#### **HARTEJ SINGH MEHTA**

Vill & Post Mehta Teh. & District Bathinda, Punjab. Cell: 09417507771

Hartej Singh Mehta belongs to a farming family with 11 acres of farmland. The farm is irrigated through canal and tube well. He has been farming for the past 25 years and switched to organic techniques 5 years ago because of the failure of chemical farming and the adverse effects of pesticides. He cultivates wheat with companion crops, cotton for commercial purposes and jowar and bajra as animal fodder for his Indian hump back cow and one buffalo. Biogas slurry and farmyard manure go in as organic inputs. Herbal repellants and trap crops are used for controlling pests. The surplus is sold at a premium directly and also through the mandi. Initially his output decreased but it has now stabilized. There are no farmers in his neighbourhood practising organic methods. Greatly influenced by the natural farming techniques of Subhash Palekar, Mehta says, 'Natural farming is pest free farming.'

(Source: Kheti Virasat Mission)

#### **JARNAIL SINGH**

Vill & Post Majhi, Teh. & District Sangrur, Punjab. Cell: 09417146066

After farming chemically for 30 years Jarnail Singh switched to organic farming 5 years ago because of zero input costs in organic practices. He comes from a farming family that owns 8 acres of farmland. His farm is irrigated through canal and tube well. He grows wheat with companion crops. Basmati rice and vegetables are grown for home use. Jowar is cultivated for animal fodder. He keeps a number of cows and buffaloes and uses biogas slurry, ghan jeev amrita, jeev amrita and farmyard manure as inputs. Crops are protected using herbal repellants and trap crops. Surplus produced is sold at a premium through direct marketing and also sent to the local mandi. Jarnail Singh says he has no problems at all in practicing natural farming and has been improving his yields continuously through innovations and developing techniques to this farmland. Initially his yield decreased but has stabilized within a couple of seasons. His neighbours too are practising organic agriculture.

(Source: Kheti Virasat Mission)

### **MADAN LAL**

Vill & Post Bullhowal, Teh. & District Hushiarpur, Punjab. Cell: 09872092162

Madan Lal hails from a farming family and farms on 3 acres of irrigated land. He switched to organic farming 2 years ago – after 8 years of chemical input agriculture – because he was informed about safe and healthy food and the environmental consequences of chemicals. He practises traditional farming methods of Punjab alongwith the natural farming techniques as proposed by Subhash Palekar. Wheat and maize are grown with companion crops, vegetables for domestic use and jowar and bajra for animal fodder. He maintains two buffaloes, one Indian hump back cow and its calf, one goat and its two kids. Farm inputs are biogas slurry, farmyard inputs, jeev amrita, ghan jeev amrita and for pest control herbal repellants and trap crops. Surplus is sold at a premium through direct marketing and also sent to the mandi. The crop yield has stabilized after an initial setback. None of his neighbours practise organic farming. The problem he faces just now is lack of farm labour, weeds and pest control. He believes that natural farming is the farming of the future.

(Source: Kheti Virasat Mission)

### **VINOD JYANI**

Jyani Natural Farm, Vill & Post Katehra Teh. Fazilka District Ferozepur, Punjab. Ph.: 0163 823302, Cell: 0941723325, Email: vinod-jyani@yahoo.co.in

Vinod Jyani is a big farmer with 130 acres of farmland. He comes from a farming family and has a farming experience of 20 years. He switched to organic farming 4 years ago. His farm is irrigated by canal. Continuous use of chemical sprays, increasing quantity of chemical inputs required and the ill effects on the health of his staff involved in spraying poisonous pesticides influenced his decision to switch to organic farming. His farming practices have been influenced by Subhash Palekar's methods. He uses jeev amrit, biogas slurry, farmyard manure etc. as inputs. Homemade biopesticides and trap crops helps in pest control. He maintains 40 Indian breed cows for supply of organic inputs. All his produce is sold at a premium through direct marketing. Initially his output decreased but focused personal involvement and the use of local seeds, trap crops, nitrogen fixing trees and plants and inter cropping has helped him to get premium yields. He says that interaction between farmers is crucial to the growth, spread and promotion of organic farming. He grows rice, wheat, maize, jowar, bajra, cotton, sugarcane and also maintains citrus orchards.

(Source: Kheti Virasat Mission)

### **SWARAN SINGH**

Village Karamgarh Satran, P.O. Sardargarh Teh. & District Bathinda, Punjab. Cell: 09814963883

Swaran Singh comes from a farming family with 6 acres of canal and tube well irrigated land. After farming chemically for 38 years he switched to organic farming 4 years ago because he was in search of a natural and earth friendly farming techniques. He grows wheat with companion crops, mustard, green gram, black gram, cotton, sugarcane. Jowar is grown for animal fodder and vegetables are cultivated for domestic use. He has been following traditional organic practices of Punjab and has incorporated some natural farming techniques of Subhash Palekar into his practices. He keeps one Indian hump cow, one ox and one buffalo. Biogas slurry, ghan jeev amrita, jeev amrita, FYM are the farm's inputs. Herbal repellants and trap crops keep away pests. His only woe is unwilling labour. Farm surplus is sold at a premium through direct marketing and the mandi. Swaran Singh says that the key to successful organic farming is hard work. Initial decrease yields were overcome by persisting with natural practices. He says FYM does not make too much of a difference but is responsible for increasing and stabilizing yields during the initial stages of conversion. To him natural farming is all about passion and a way forward and suggests that farmers should

use farmyard manure in greater proportion during the conversion period and work towards increasing yields only through natural techniques.

(Source: Kheti Virasat Mission)

### **TILAK RAJ**

Vill & Post Khui kherha, Teh. Fajilka, District Firozpur, Punjab. Cell: 09417338131

Tilak Raj switched to organic farming two years ago after practising chemical agriculture for 8 years. He hails from a farming family with 25 acres of canal and tube well irrigated farm land. His reason for switching to organic was that chemical farming is full of poison and is anti-religion. He grows wheat with companion crops, mustard, cotton. Vegetables are grown for domestic use, jowar and bajra for his animals. He keeps two Indian hump back cows. The farm is based on natural farming techniques of Subhash Palekar. Biogas slurry ghan jeev amrita, jeev amrita and FYM are the farm's inputs. Herbal repellants and trap crops help to protect crop from pests. His farm faces hurdles in the form of unwilling labour, depleting soil fertility and insects. Surplus is sold at premium through direct marketing and mandis. He says his yields decreased initially but recovered stability with use of farmyard manure. He says natural farming is stress free farming but would appreciate if established natural farmers can extend assistance to farmers who have recently ventured into organic practices.

(Source: Kheti Virasat Mission)

### **UPKAR SINGH**

Vill & Post Chakk Desh Raj, Teh. Philaur, District Jalandhar, Punjab. Cell: 09463360294

Upkar Singh hails from a farming family. After 10 years of chemical farming he switched to organic 4 years ago because of the increasing demand for chemical free farm produce. His 4 acres farm is irrigated by canal and tube well. He grows wheat, maize with companion crops, rice, sugarcane, green gram, mustard and basmati. Vegetables are grown for domestic use. Bajra and varsim are grown for animal fodder. On farm he has incorporated natural farming techniques of Subhash Palekar into the traditional farming wisdom of the Punjab. Biogas slurry, ghan jeev amrita, jeev amrita, FYM, vermicompost etc., are the farm's inputs. Herbal repellants and trap crops are used for pest control. He maintains two Indian hump back cows, two holestin breed cows and a calf, one buffalo, one goat and its kids. Surplus is sold at a premium through direct marketing and the mandi. Initial decrease in production has now recovered. His neighbours too practice organic farming. He says organic farming means dedication and the willingness to work with ones hand. He is convinced that natural farming is the best way one can protect nature, heritage, traditional wisdom, environment and mother nature.

(Source: Kheti Virasat Mission)

### **BHAKAR ORGANIC FARM**

Kalalwala, Teh. Talwandi Sabo, District Bathinda, Punjab. Ph.: 01655 218375, Cell: 09417337602

(Source: Brochure)