

Box. No.3.6**A small step in the right direction****Success story of organic vegetable cultivation in Tumakuru district**

Tumakuru district is traditionally known for vegetable cultivation. However, in the recent past, the number of farmers engaged in vegetable cultivation in the district has been decreasing drastically, as the cost of cultivation has been going up and not matching with price realisation. Further, on account of soil degradation, pest attacks, failure of monsoon, poor extension support etc, the productivity under vegetable cultivation has also been on a diminishing scale. Farmers were really struggling to find another alternative for their subsistence. Many farmers have abandoned agriculture and migrated to urban areas. But, Association for Village Institutions Social Health, Agriculture and Rural Development (AVISHKAR) an NGO, operating in the district for more than a decade, had rightly understood the problems of the farmers at the right time and came out with a solution.

AVISHKAR conceived a pilot project, for promoting sustainable livelihood and to reduce poverty, by developing and strengthening a Vegetable Growers Association through Organic Farming. The project aimed at bringing back the community participation in sustainable, eco-friending, cost-effective agriculture, understanding organic vegetable production systems, capacity building of the rural community with creation of a cadre of master farmers, who, in turn, would motivate five to ten farmers to adopt organic vegetable cultivation practices. The ultimate goal of the project is to integrate the organic vegetable cultivators and form themselves into a Producer Company.

The agency had selected three villages of Tumakuru block of the district for the pilot. It planned to cover 300 farmers from these villages and to train 60 farmers as master farmers. The project period is for two years, commencing from August 2014, with an outlay of ₹3.69 lakh. NABARD funded this project under Farm Sector Promotion Fund in 2014-15. The end-to-end approach adopted by AVISHKAR yielded good results. 960 families are now covered under the project. Many interventions like composting techniques, mixed cropping, crop rotation, crop based bio-pesticides, establishment of seed bank for vegetables, market linkages etc. were made in the project area. A few highlights of the project are :

- Two Vegetable Growers Associations have been formed and registered viz., Sri Rama Tharakari Belagarara Sangha covering Janupanahalli village and Sri Marikamba Tharakari Belagarara Sangha covering Kandaranahalli village.
- 10 capacity building programmes were organized covering 361 participants which included training on integrated pest management, soil testing, composting techniques, exposure visits etc.
- 12 field demonstrations were organized, covering 189 participants, which included establishment of vermin compost units, vermin wash units, promotion of kitchen garden, popularization of Japanese model of composting, cultivation of high yielding variety of drumsticks, preparation and application of Jeevamrutha, setting up of demonstration plots on organic farming of potato, tomato, beans, cabbage etc.

Shri K.H.Manjuantha, a small farmer of Kadaranaahalli village had taken up cultivation of organic potato crop in his land measuring to 3.5 guntas. Inputs such as neem cake, other organic manure, trichoderma, arka microbial consortium (AMC) were used for cultivation. Neem and pongamea soaps were applied for the control of pests and diseases. Jeevamrutha was applied twice during the cropping period. Keen observations on the performance and health of the crop were taken up by himself as well as by the village level vegetable growers' association. The yield was tremendous! -3.5 quintals of organically grown potatoes from 3.5 guntas of land !!! As the product is toxic free, he could market the produce at a premium price. Shri Ganganna and Shri Manjunath of Janapanahalli village got similar high yield in tomato. They could reduce their fertilizer cost by 75 per cent and fetch 20 per cent more in crop yield.

In short, there is perceptible momentum of integration of farmers in these villages as is evident from the higher level of participation in the monthly meetings. Farmers consult mutually among themselves on various crop related issues. The awareness level on organic cultivation among the farmers is very high. This small intervention of NABARD, facilitated by AVISHKAR, had brought back the confidence of farmers of the district in vegetable cultivation. In fact, this pilot project could be an eye-opener for many sustainable interventions to come in other parts of Karnataka.