

Organic Farming-sustainable hill agriculture

Category: Stream-I- Promotion of Organic Farming.

Challenge: Farmers of the state of Himachal Pradesh have small and marginal land holdings which generate very less income particularly in the hilly and tribal areas. Moreover, continuous use of chemical fertilizers has led to several problems in hill soils i.e reduction in PH, deficiency of micronutrients and reduced biological activity. It is tradition in hills to add organic manures in soils which also supplement nutrition and also improve physical and biological properties of soils. Practice of incorporation of organic manure is good but farmers usually add partially decomposed biomass which account for immobilization of available nutrients in soil & is also the chief source of insects/fungal attack and weed infestation.

Initiative: To improve the socio-economic conditions of hill farmers and help them in getting higher returns per unit area due to reduced cost of production, high quality produce in terms of taste, flavour with longer shelf life, saving of chemical fertilizers & overall improvement in soil health/productivity alongwith increase in the export potential of farmers produce, specific interventions have been made under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) during 2013-14 in the state of H.P for the promotion of Organic Farming. Under this project special impetus has been given to the construction of vermi compost pits/HDPE vermibeds, area expansion under organic farming, certification of the organic produce and assistance for promoting bio-pesticides/bio-agents so that in the near future, farmers get competitive and better returns for their produce in the domestic as

well as international markets. An expenditure of Rs. 750.00 lakh has been incurred on these activities for the entire project period.



Area expansion under organic farming & certification was implemented with the help of experienced service providers having certification tie up with the approved agency of APEDA. Cluster approach was followed for the identification of potential areas and emphasis was given to promote the organic farming in selected pockets. Specific zones were identified and developed as niche areas of organic production. First of all, a baseline survey was conducted in all the areas where the project was to be implemented & thereafter the farmer's meetings were held jointly by the service providers & Department of Agriculture so as to orient the farmers about the implementation of the project.



The farmers were given demonstration on the methods of preparing different kinds of on farm inputs and their uses viz. Composting, FYM, Vermi compost, Matka Khad, Jeevamrit, Bijamrit & Vermin. The literature in Hindi language was also distributed among the farmers.



After that the farmers were given comprehensive trainings on all aspects of organic farming involving experts from Agri. Deptt. & KVK/SAU Palampur with major thrust on the management of soil fertility, insect pest and disease management, post harvest management, use of mixed cropping, crop rotation & green manure etc. Some of the basic inputs in form of bio-fertilizers, botanicals etc. for managing soil fertility and pest/diseases were also distributed among the farmers as an incentive and they were also acquainted with the uses, doses, time of application, stage of growth and source of availability of these bio pesticides/bio agents. External audit was also carried out by the external audit agency i.e. two audit in a year.



Key result/ insight/ interesting facts: The farmers were made aware about the various practices under organic farming through the programme RKVY and this motivated the farmers to adopt the organic programme in the holistic way which led to the construction of 1000 vermicompost units & production of 12000 MT of vermicompost annually (in 4 lots). The farmers are not only using the vermicompost at their farm but also generating revenue by selling the vermicompost. The farmers of one of the organic grower group Salogra (SOGG) have also been linked with Big-basket New Delhi, Noble Hear Amritsar Punjab, Regal kitchen fresh Baddi HP and Hasora Organic at Gurgaon and the farmers of this group have marketed organic vegetables to the tune of Rs 40 lacs.



Impact: The organic programme brought a significant change in the awareness among the farmer about less cost of production/inputs in the organic cultivation and the higher market value of the organic product (certified as well as uncertified) vis-a-vis conventional farming/produce and thus generating higher income per unit area. Due to the efforts undertaken under the organic project, 1260 new farmers have switched towards organic farming and they **have got registered themselves** for organic certification and additional

1000 ha of area has been brought under organic cover. By practising organic farming in cluster approach, farmers of the state which do not have big landholdings have got higher and better prices for their produce and also maintained the soil health. This project has benefitted the farmers economically and ecologically by cutting costs of inorganic inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. The farmers have acquired the knowledge of onfarm input generation, bio-formulation, enrichment of organic manures by using bio-fertilizers, crop rotation, mix cropping and green manuring.

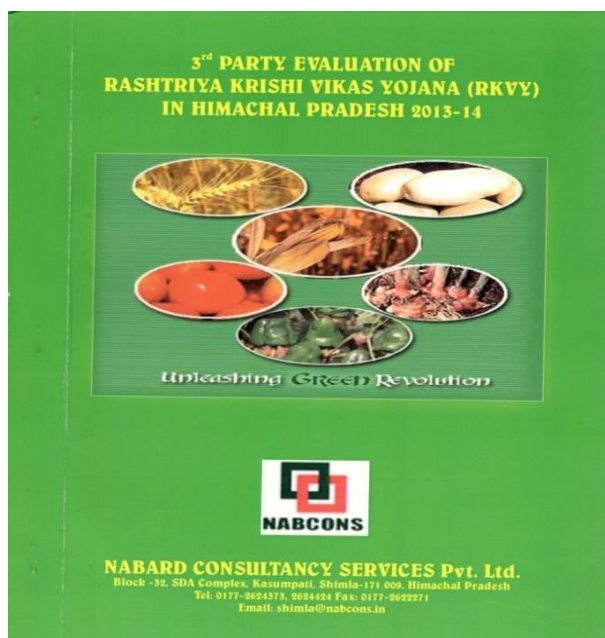
Lessons Learned:

1. Adoption of organic farming reduces the use of chemical fertilizers and help in leaving a better legacy for future generations.
2. Organic farming not only increase the quality of agriculture/horticulture produce but also help in better use of cow dung ensuring better cleanliness.
3. Selling worms and vermicompost is an additional source of income.

Supporting Quotes and Images:



*Nisha Chauhan, Village Gasoh, P.O Jhakri, Rampur, Distt. Shimla (Mob. No. 094180-01675) founder of Organic vegetable Producer Group Rampur is staunch supporter of organic farming and in her opinion **“Switching over to organic farming has led to considerable increase in my income & reduction in production cost. I have carried out the organic cultivation of pulses & vegetable crops which is very helpful in maintaining the soil fertility”.***



NABARD Consultancy Services Pvt. Ltd (NABCONS) carried out the Monitoring & Evaluation of Organic Farming project implemented during 2013-14 under RKVY and reported that there was considerable improvement in farm produce with the use of vermi compost and the farmers got 15% to 20% more price for their produce. Quality of soil was also improved by using vermi compost. It has also been observed that providing vermi compost pits to women farmers resulted in better care & better utilization of the vermi units.

Checklist:

S. No.	Question to consider	Yes	No
1	Is the story interesting to the target audience of the project/activity report?	✓	
2	Does the story explain what new insights the project brings? What is the main lesson learned from this story? Does the story describe a key insight on what works and what doesn't and something that future project could build on	✓	
3	Does the story describe the outcomes the project produced and the people who are benefiting? What changes-in skills, knowledge, attitude, practice, or policy-has the project brought, and who is benefiting from these changes?	✓	
4	Does the story make a compelling point that people will remember? Does the story show how the project makes a difference to livelihoods and lessening poverty?	✓	
5	Does the story provide an interesting fact that people will remember? For example, how much yields increased, how many hectares of land could become more productive from this innovation or technology?	✓	
6	Does the story explain what kind of impact this innovation or technology could have if scaled up?		✓
7	Does the story show which partners contributed and how?	✓	
8	Does the story include quotes from Stakeholders or beneficiaries?	✓	
9	Have I provided links to other media (journal articles, website news, newsletter, blogs, annual reports of other Programme/ project) that also feature this story?		✓
10	Have I provided the contact details of people who can provide more information?	✓	

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