



Sustaining Small Holder Agriculture: a case of Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture from India

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The quest to modernize agriculture that has promoted an increasing use of high-yielding varieties/ hybrids, chemical pesticides and fertilizers across crops and situations displacing farmers' knowledge, own seeds and practices. The country became self-reliant in grain production for awhile but farmers lost their self-reliance in the process due to excessive dependency on external inputs. Farmers are now caught in serious ecological and economic crises manifesting in the forms of migration, indebtedness and in extreme cases farmers' suicides.

Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture

- Initiated in 2005-06 by Government of AP¹, in collaboration NGOs², and managed by Federations of Women Organisations
- Main focus on
 - Changing to location specific cropping patterns and production practices
 - Non Pesticidal Management, Organic Soil Management, Community Seed Banks, social regulation of Water
 - Integrating livestock and horticulture
 - Food and livelihood security
- Supported by under National Agriculture Development Program (*Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana*) (\$ 45.5 million for five years).
- Only extension supported provided (US\$11/ha)

The reach (2007-08)

- 350,000 farmers cultivating 280,000 ha 1800 villages in 18 districts
- Proposed to cover 10 million ha in 5000 villages in next four years.
- Covers all crops like paddy, groundnut, cotton, chillies, pulses, vegetables etc

Community Management

- Program implemented by Community based organisations
- Village plans made and monitored by the CBOs

Learnings

- Sustainable Agriculture only way out for agrarian crisis-economically, ecologically
- It provides more employment opportunities and
- Organised Communities form better platform to adopt sustainable models
- Community Managed Systems in planning and monitoring are more efficient
- Local food systems are more sustainable
- Support to agriculture should move away from external input based to knowledge based and local resource based

Andhra Pradesh (AP)

- 16 out of 32 districts crisis effected districts in India
- More than 500 suicides in last 12 months (>5000 in last five years)
- Serious indebtedness-
 - 82 % indebted
 - Avg: Rs. 23,965/family
- Only 9.4 per cent of the farmers had access to information from extension workers in 2002 with 30% accessing information through private traders

Impact

- Internalization of inputs and reduction in costs of cultivation by \$ 15-150/ha
- Productivity maintained and improved
- Ecological costs reduced
- No suicides reported from these villages
- 50 villages and 250 thousand farmers became pesticide free
- 7 villages and 100 thousand farmers became organic
- Small farmers and agricultural workers taking more land under lease for cultivation

¹ Through Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (<http://www.velugu.org>) , Department of Rural Development, Govt. of AP

² Sustainable Agriculture Network of NGOs with Technical support from Centre for sustainable Agriculture (<http://www.csa-india.org>)