

QnA from chapter update : August – September 2010

1. Why only cow, and not a goat?

Answer : Quantity from cow is more - its cost effective.

2. How long does it take for farmers to move to organic farming?

Answer : Typically 3 years.

3. What can be done create consumer awareness?

Answer : Most people are aware. Hesitation is mainly cost. Process takes longer. Once the cost is reduced, people should shift to organic farming.

4. What is being done to make the resource center more greener?

Answer: Other than individuals bringing in personal care items, there is nothing on the farm that is not environment friendly.

5. Find out if buying hay from outside is one-time. What is the sustainable solution?

Answer: Last year Rs 5000 was spent to buy dry grass. It was a one time charge. The cows fell sick and there was no dry grass in the neighborhood. This year (in 2010) excess fodder was grown in advance.

6. Is the weed used as pesticide is alive or decomposed? Do they not compete for they nutrients with the crop?

Answer: Weeds are used as pesticides -- they process the weeds and ferment it, before using it.

7. For a small-scale farmer, how does organic farming make economically make sense. Is there a minimum acreage for organic farming to be adopted by a farmer?

Answer: Another way to present this question is
What does one need to setup an organic farm from scratch?

- 1 cow
- 1 cow shed which is covered
- compost pit
- ~10000 Rs
- cow fodder which can be grown surrounding the growing area
- organic farming cannot be used on cash crops like sugarcane
- The first year the farmer will be losing the crops since the land needs to start sustaining itself there are some new ways which we can use to remove the chemical salts from the land, but still they will lose some land in the first year at this point 10 farmers in the area have taken this up:
- RC supports them for manure, since they have no cow
- currently in the process of involving govt, they have responsibility and resources
- long term the resource center cannot keep providing this, since its not sustainable
- If govt will not come in, this will not work...the way to do that is to convince a lot of people

8. What is being done with the income from sale of crops?

Answer : Rs 90,000 was made from paddy sales. Some of the money was used to remove the

rocks which had fallen on the Resource Center land (Rs 60,000 was spent for it). Rs 30,000 should still be with the Resource Center.

**How does the seed-bank function? How many seeds are stored?
How many farmers can the seeds be distributed to?
Is it just a sample or large quantities?**

The seed bank has seeds mostly cultivated at the resource center.

One set of Ragi stored at the seed bank is something that was bought 4 years back from a neighbouring farm. All the local farmers only get seeds from the seed bank. Paddy, dal, ragi, gram are all grown at the resource center and stored in the seed bank. Corn grown at the farm not be used in the seed-bank this year.

The seeds in the seed-bank are thenai, sanai, ragi, paddy(Nelly) and white jowar. Peanuts are this year in the seed bank due to insect infection and are being stored in mud pots.

Do farmers grow genetically modified crops? Food is not GMO in India?

The GM seeds are environmentally unfriendly. GM Cotton is the most cultivated GM crop in India. GM brinjal affects even the insects that eat it. GM brinjal is no longer cultivated in India. Sugarcane is not really GM but a lot of chemical fertilizers are used to grow it. Sugarcane is more than needed in India. Mulberry leaves are used to feed silk worm. Chemical fertilizers are used to grow these plants. This silk is mostly used for exporting. Eucalyptus and bamboo used for paper making need chemical fertilizers which spoil the soil in the neighboring regions .

Experimenting with chemical fertilizers are on hold in Tamil Nadu for experiment. It is completely banned in Kerala. Strong efforts are underway in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

What tangible benefits will come out of this project?

The main idea of the resource center is imparting awareness of the importance of organic farming to the local farmers. Once a number of local farmers have been convinced, the hope is to convince the state/local government to promote organic farming and start supporting these local organic farmers fully.

How are the 20 farmers doing today? Have they found the methods effective? Will they be willing to pay for the manure? Why have others similarly not adopted these practices?

The 20 farmers working on their lands are making progress with setting up their farms. They have found the methods effective. The others have not accepted it so far. The main idea of the resource center is imparting awareness of the importance of organic farming to the local farmers.

In parallel to the efforts from the organic farm, the local farmers are also being brainwashed by the people from chemical fertilizers. So, this sometimes deters the process.

How does Siddamma hope to become sustainable in the next 3-4 years?

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Budget related queries

Last year there were 8 field workers paid 4000 each. This year they want to pay 6 works 5000 each.

Answer : The number of workers have reduced but the current set of field workers are expected to stay longer. Siddamma requested a little additional funds this year for the field workers.

Training camps is 20,000 this year compared to 60,000 last year.

Answer : The organization cost for the training camps have reduced for the coming year. The plan is to use the income from the rice grown on the land for some of the training camp expenses. Siddamma and the workers plan to travel more this year to the neighboring farms and help the farmers in the neighboring region set up their farms. Thats the reason the travel expenses are additional this year.

Travel was 20,000 and is now 36,000.

Answer : Siddamma and the workers plan to travel more this year to the neighboring farms and help the farmers in the neighboring region set up their farms. That's the reason the travel expenses are additional this year.

Audit fees have gone up from 10,000 to 30,000.

Answer : In the last funding cycle, the actual costs for the audit fees was more than estimated. The costs for the audit fees was close to 25k.

Total budget without the cow shed is about Rs 458,000 (close to the funds disbursed last year).