



*Building possible 'Alliances'*

**LEISA Enthusiasts Meet Proceedings**

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## LEISA India – Genesis and Growth

LEISA magazine is recognized as the leading magazine for sharing field based experiences in **Low External Input** and **Sustainable Agriculture**. LEISA magazine published by ILEIA, the Netherlands, is being subscribed by around 45000 and expectedly reaching around 2.5 lakh people across the globe ([www.ileia.org](http://www.ileia.org)).

Together with ILEIA, AME nurtured interest in sustainable agriculture in South India. Since 1997, they have collaborated in participatory research and distribution of ILEIA newsletter in India. Subsequently, since the year 2000, AME started producing the Indian edition of LEISA magazine (<http://india.leisa.info>). LEISA India, is being published in English, with an Indian focus and an international perspective.

LEISA India's subscriber base has grown significantly over the years. LEISA India magazine, which started as an Indian edition in 2000 with a readership of around 800, is presently being received by around 10000 readers including over 500 readers in the neighbouring South Asian countries. The annual average growth of readers has been in the range of 20-30%. The contributors and readers include academics, researchers, farmers, NGOs, government departments, banks etc.

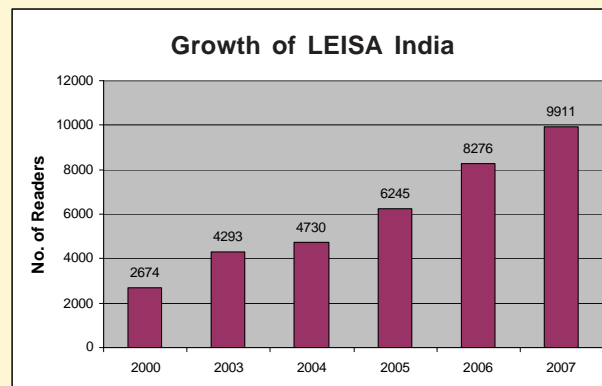
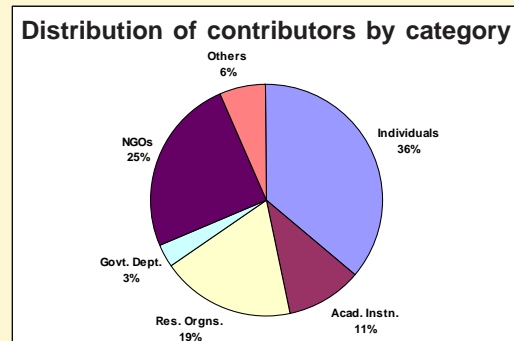
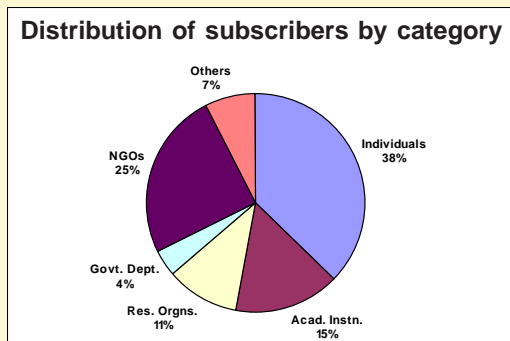
### LEISA India Consortium

Besides, publishing the magazine, AME Foundation in collaboration with ILEIA, has forged a consortium of partners - **LEISA India Consortium**, to promote enhanced sharing of LEISA experiences. The consortium of willing partners involving large networks of NGOs like MYRADA, GEAG, and LEISA Network, have been involved in promoting LEISA concepts and approaches by bringing about changes at the field level through participatory processes. They also have been documenting and sharing their experiences through various mechanisms and modes.

The partners have been involved in a focused two year documentation and communication programme (2003-05). The programme resulted in enhancing organizational capacities on documentation and sharing, both within the organisations, as well as in the public domain.

### Building LEISA Alliances

Given the proportion of farming population in India, the diverse languages and the number of institutions involved in agriculture development, there is a need for intensifying efforts for scaling up dissemination and use of LEISA knowledge. One of the efforts includes building **LEISA Alliances**, an unstructured group of LEISA enthusiasts, for enhanced adoption of LEISA approaches and intensified sharing of experiences.



### Cover page photos

Top (L to R) - Shri Ramachandruppa, farmer, sharing his experience; Participants during the meeting. Center - Dr. R. Dwarakinath, AMEF, sharing his views. Bottom (L to R) - Dr. H.N. Chanakya, IISc, sharing his ideas; Ms. Ritaraj, MANUSHI, sharing her experiences

## LEISA Enthusiasts Meet Summary

LEISA India is emerging as one of the preferred platforms for sharing practical experiences on LEISA and ecological agriculture initiatives. The readers survey and regular feedback have been reiterating the usage of magazine content for field application, awareness building, teaching and training by diverse reader groups - farmers, NGOs, academics, individuals, researchers etc. The steadily growing outreach does indicate impressive growth in the number of readers and increasing interest in the contributors.

It is obvious that much more is happening in the field. This knowledge needs to be sourced, documented and widely shared. With this objective in mind, way back in 2001, interested agencies came together to forge a **LEISA India consortium** to strengthen efforts to intensify information sharing on LEISA. They worked together on a two-year documentation and communication programme (2003-05) to strengthen in-house capacities on documentation and communication in terms of skills, systems and habits. This has strengthened their efforts towards enhanced information sharing in public domain on LEISA. This process is being envisaged with more civil society organizations and those interested in sourcing, documenting and sharing field based experiences. However, this is **one** of the strategies for enhancing information sharing on LEISA.

### ***Enhanced LEISA Knowledge use and sharing***

During one of the meetings with well wishers like Dr. Valli Seshan and Dr. N C B Nath, it was thought that if LEISA India has to become a **movement** it has to be built in small 'steps'. These steps need to be rooted in democratic principles and a spirit of volunteerism. At the same time, they need to be useful to those involved and in fulfilling the overall objective of such a movement. One idea was to move towards building unstructured alliances of LEISA enthusiasts. The assumption was, if such alliances happen in various parts of the country, facilitated by the consortium partners, possibly, further strengthening of the LEISA knowledge use and sharing would take place. This meet was an attempt to make a modest beginning in this direction. This meet had to be based on a process, which would attempt at operationalising principles stated earlier.

### ***'Face to Face' - a challenging process***

It is well known how effective are discussions in e-groups on the cyber space where lot of information exchange does happen. Of course, sometimes, you may hear the same voices again and again. We thought of experimenting in a different way - bringing together - readers of LEISA India who are 'putting into practice' LEISA in various contexts, be it in the field, training and teaching. The challenge was, to bring them face-to-face – sharing anecdotes of their experiences. Also, the idea was to explore with them how this exchange can slowly move towards unstructured alliances, if they feel appropriate. To make a beginning, we planned to organize a meeting.

With LEISA India subscribers touching the 10,000 figure, it was a challenge to shortlist and select people to be invited to this meeting. We had to develop and follow certain criteria to restrict the participants to a manageable size. The criteria followed were: a) Limiting the geographic area to the four States of Southern India (Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala) b) Short listing those readers who provided feedback during surveys or even otherwise on the use of the magazine content c) Those who contributed to the "farmers diary" section of the magazine d) Select authors with diverse backgrounds and lastly, a desirable balance of region, background and gender. Initially, invitations were sent to 147 readers. Continuous follow up was made through emails, telephone and fax to get their confirmation. Finally, 38 readers participated. Participants included farmers, NGO representatives, Academics, media, and LEISA enthusiasts (Annexure 1).

### ***Creating space for every voice***

The meeting was unique in the sense that every participant was given an opportunity to speak for a few minutes each - no power point presentations or lectures. The focus was on their experiences in the use of LEISA India magazine or promotion of LEISA. The *'time keeping'* was done by volunteers among the participants.

The meeting had moments of tradition - Lighting the lamp and honouring outstanding contributors (Dr. R. Dwarakinath, Shri. Narayana Reddy and Shri. Shreepadre). Brief opening remarks by Dr. Dwarakinath and Dr. Nath, set the tone for

the workshop. While Dr. Dwarakinath spoke about the relevance of LEISA in today's agriculture context, Dr. Nath gave the required clarity and understanding on what Alliances are all about. The LEISA India consortium partners Ms. Vidya and Dr. Shiraz highlighted the spirit of working together as a consortium. They also spoke on what more should be done.e.g., playing an advocacy role for LEISA.

### **Interesting stories**

Participants shared **interesting stories on the way they used the magazine**. What they mentioned include, articles of use being...Low tillage; Growing paddy on permanent rice beds with 50% lesser cost; Compost method of Philippines helping more water retention; Composting using sugarcane trash - an adaptation to using leaves; Rudraaradhya's model of IFS; SRI practice and in general, Narayana Reddy column. NGO representatives and Academics used LEISA India contents in training and one of them, even for writing proposals.

### **Few suggestions**

Some suggestions included, adding new features like - What's new in Agriculture?; Question and Answer Column; New Technologies; Readers feedback; Special supplements on subjects , for instance, SRI; Inviting ideas; and lastly, insisting on mandatory payment for the magazine. Suggestions for enhanced outreach included, translations into local languages and using other media like video and farm radio for reaching out to non-literate farmers.

### **Strengthening the 'Alliance' - Brainstorming session - some views**

- Meeting on a regular basis
- Organising meeting on farmers field
- Farmer organizations strengthening LEISA Alliance
- Forming a subcommittee of editors of other farm and mainstream journals
- Membership payment to sustain the momentum
- Organising meets in different locations - North, East, West zones of India

Some enthusiastic participants promised to be in touch regularly and contribute to the magazine. A couple of them promised to send articles in local languages too. Overall, being the first of its kind among LEISA enthusiasts, the meet helped to create a **dynamic connect** between LEISA team, readers and contributors.

### **Quotes**

*This is an innovative approach for a journal in bringing readers together, getting their comments, feedback, opinions and looking this as a movement and not just a journal.*

Dr. Prakash Kammaradi T N, UAS, Bangalore

*I have no words to express the way LEISA India team has been encouraging farmers to write. Its fantastic and I bow my head for that.*

Shri. Madhu Ramakrishnan, Farmer, Tamil Nadu

*To me, reading LEISA India has become a habit like Down to Earth.*

Mr. Danesh Kumar, RASTA, Kerala

*If farming is under threat then farming journals will also be under threat.*

Mr. Shreepadre, Water Journalist

*I can say confidently that agriculture is a remunerative profession.*

Shri. Narayana Reddy, Farmer and LEISA India columnist

*A small organisation like AME through LEISA India has done something more than what the State could not do.*

Mr. Maria Joseph A, NGO, Tamil Nadu

*I am literally making a living from LEISA India through its ideas.*

Sylvester E G, NGO, Tamil Nadu

## LEISA Enthusiasts Meet Proceedings

Prasad welcomed the gathering. He talked about the purpose of the first ever face-to-face meeting of LEISA enthusiasts. He said that there were two main objectives for this meeting. Firstly, experience sharing by **all** the participants. The second objective was to explore ways of going ahead in strengthening the LEISA movement through appropriate mechanisms, one possibly being, 'Building LEISA Alliances'.

Sharing the process to be adopted for the meeting, he said that every participant would get an opportunity to share about how they have used the magazine – either practicing on the field, or enabling in promoting LEISA or supporting LEISA philosophy. The criteria followed for extending limited invitations was explained - limiting to the South Indian States, inviting those who were active in giving feedback. The seating arrangements and the ambience reflected the 'informality' warranted for uninhibited participation and sharing. However, some traditions were followed - decorating the floor with traditional food grains (Navadanya), lighting the lamp and honoring outstanding contributors.



Lighting the lamp - Ms. Ritaraj, Mr. Narayana Reddy, Shri. CK Subramanian, Dr. NCB Nath and Dr. R Dwarakinath

The meeting was formally inaugurated by lighting the lamp by Dr. R Dwarakinath, Dr. NCB Nath, Mr. L Narayana Reddy, Shri. C K Subramanian and Ms. D C Ritaraj.

Some of the participants shared their views in their native language which was translated to English during the workshop. However in the proceedings, their views have been translated into English.

### 10:30am – 11:00am – Session 1 – Opening Remarks

#### **Dr. R Dwarakinath, Special Invitee**

He talked about his association with farming – starting from being a part of a farm family to moving into a career in agriculture – starting as an Agriculture Officer. He spoke about the need for Green Revolution just after the independence period, when the nation was reeling under food scarcity. The Department went ahead with HYV, high grade fertilizers with full enthusiasm. The only idea was to improve food productivity. There was no awareness on the damage being done to agriculture and ecology. Also, the efforts reached only elite farmers who are resource rich and venturesome. The non elite farmers who constitute the majority of the farming community are often trying to make a living while grappling with degraded farm resources. Now, with LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation), agriculture is slowly getting out of farmers' hands. Farmer has to deal with agriculture as a 'business'. LEISA is the only relevant solution for farmers to continue farming.

**Prasad** highlighted the genesis of **LEISA India Consortium**. LEISA India, interacted with interested partners to explore how enhanced sharing of practical experiences could be strengthened. They agreed to be identified as a consortium. One of the suggestions was to invest in building in-house capacities through a purposeful programme.

That was the time when the consortium partners wanted to do something - came together for learning and sharing. He invited the consortium partners to share their experiences.

### **Ms. Vidya Ramchandran, MYRADA**

Talking about the consortium and its efforts, Vidya said, "We are four organizations in the consortium and probably "consortium" is a big word for what we are currently. It indicates what we want to be rather than what we are. As partners we have attempted to share. One concrete thing which we did together was the "Documentation and Communication" programme. Vidya also said that there were concerns like only old people remaining in farming while the younger lot do not find it very remunerative and secondly the "attitude" towards farming itself. She said that as a consortium we need to become a part of the advocacy on how farming should be viewed.

### **Dr. A Shiraz Wajih, GEAG**

He started saying that he is a product of AME and they too bring out a publication called "Vasundhara" in Hindi. He said that the consortium was not formally structured but evolved through a process. He said that through a simple documentation done on women farmers through the documentation and communication programme, as a partner, they could start off a campaign on rights of farm women in 70 districts of UP. He concluded that was the tremendous impact of documentation which happened due to consortium. He further added that they were also regularly sharing information on LEISA through the magazine.



Dr. Shiraz, GEAG, a Consortium partner speaking on consortium activities

### **Dr. NCB Nath, Special Invitee**

Dr. Nath said that he was an Economist serving public sector organizations and happen to understand farming after he became the Chairman of Gujarat Oilseed Corporation. He emphasizes that State is still the major development



Dr. N C B Nath sharing his views

partner in agriculture. State has money and power. The main interest of NGOs is empowering communities. They are also young in age and experience as compared to the State. Talking about LEISA, he said the strength of LEISA lies in its knowledge. He said the "Power of journal is a proven methodology in communication". He went on to add that the term "Alliance" has no structure per se. It is like friendship-free entry and exit. However, for a knowledge Alliance like this, sharing is an obligation. Alliance has no boundaries, no financial obligations. It is a relationship. Referring other countries, he said that knowledge is very expensive in many countries. He said that "knowledge" need to be seen as birth right - everybody needs to know - Here, bonding is one of knowing and sharing and not of power. Following are some of the points he made.

- Farmer relations with the state is always hierarchical, need not be, but it is so. It is top down flow of support. While participatory development is getting accepted as a more efficient relationship. It is difficult for the powerful to become less demonstrative. There are of course some exceptions.
- In a civil society context, it is a long chain of relationships - from the funders to their early NGOs, NGO to the community organisation located in the larger community. The relationship between these diverse stakeholders varies from altruism, contract, support, direction and participation. Even in the most democratic of these relationships, there is a bit of status. One seem as superior to the other. They are certainly flatter than the State-farmer relationships.

- What we are attempting is carrying forward the democratisation of “knowledge - practice alliance” where knowledge is available for all who desire to know. In a way it is recognition to a ‘right to knowledge’ similar to the right to information acts, which we have now where a citizen can demand information from the government, however confidential it is.
- In a knowledge alliance, some will have more knowledge than others, but that does not give status to them but impose an obligation to share. If you know something worthwhile, tell others. The voluntary obligation to update the knowledge levels of alliance indeed is a unique school where all readers are students at some time or the other. No one is one or the other for all the time.
- A successful knowledge alliance is also an action group. Knowledge without action also acts as an empty sound. When a knowledge alliance matures into an action group, the give and take is large more comprehensive. Success and failure binds the participation in a way no hierarchy can bind them.
- Knowledge becomes *practice* - When it becomes an *accepted practice* - a culture of doing things - it becomes a *tradition* -our tradition - the way it is done in communities. Once tradition gets fully internalized it becomes a *movement* which is a dynamic form of alliance building.
- At all stages, the entry/exit, in reality, is free. The overall alliance is a democratic sharing - an obligation for those who should share.

#### 11am-11.10am – Honoring Outstanding contributors to agriculture

Before the second session, few outstanding personalities were honored. Radha briefly shared the contributions made by these role models. Outstanding personalities themselves were requested to honor our distinguished guests.



Dr. Shiraz felicitating Shri. Shree Padre

Dr. Nath honoured Dr. Dwarakinath for his outstanding contributions to Agricultural Development. Dr. Chanakya honored Shri. Narayana Reddy, the legendary organic farmer. Dr. Shiraz Wajih honoured Shree Padre for his contributions as development journalist.

#### 11:10am – Tea Break

#### 11:30am – 1:30pm – Session 2 – Experience Sharing

The session started with Prasad reiterating the purpose and the proposed process. Volunteers from the participants served as time keepers – 5 minutes for each participant (including the facilitators!) to enable sharing by everyone. Prasad invited one by one. Some sought to present earlier. It was a mix of academics, farmers, NGO staff, media persons. Few shared their experiences in their local language. Translations were done into English by Radha and few volunteers from the participants. Prasad shared a **fact sheet on LEISA India** prepared for the occasion which when

folded could serve as **desk calendar**. Displays included publications, posters of LEISA India Reader's surveys and collages of LEISA India magazine covers.

### **Dr. Chanakya H N, ASTRA**

I was in the committee on deciding whether AME should be in Bangalore. After so many years, it is good to see that AME is doing such good work. Presently we are looking at farming as business of survival, but, may be, we need to look at it as business of sustainability. Today, LEISA India should look at the processes - for instance, the magazine has been targeting the literate farmers. How do we take this to the non-literate farmers? Methods like videography may be tried to capture experiences to reach the non-literate farmers.



Dr. Shivashankar sharing his views

### **Dr. Shivashankar K, Special Invitee**

My association with LEISA is from the beginning. Anything that is simply explained will appeal to the readers. For eg., the use of re-used water explained in Narayana Reddy column is interesting and is simply explained. A few suggestions for LEISA India are:

- 1) it could carry a supplement with its issue on a very important subject like SRI and
- 2) the content needs to be brought down to the farmer level.

### **Mr. Gangi Reddy P, Chaitanya**

In the past, 70% of the rainfall flowed into tanks and rivers. Top soil was supported by sub soil

moisture and sub soil was supported by ground water. Rainfall was only a secondary source. But now with our practices, we have created a hard pan in the soil. More and more water is being pumped to soak the top soil, giving least attention to subsoil moisture. Dry subsoil is a matter of concern and no organic agriculture can be successful if soil moisture is scarce. Scientists and experts are not giving focus to this concern. The watershed programmes are talking about structures and no one is serious about water conservation. Activities towards developing green cover in catchment areas, internal bunding, micro irrigation etc., will help revive the situation. Farmers are aware of this reality and we all need to go to the farmer and discuss as they have a lot to do. LEISA India should focus on water issues as well.



Mr. Gangi Reddy sharing his concerns on water

### **Shri. Ramachandrapa S, Farmer**

I have been reading LEISA India since 4-5 years and I am inspired by different experiences published in the magazine. In fact, I read many farm magazines. I find both LEISA India and Adike Patrike (Kannada farm journal) very interesting. We grow Betelnut, Banana, Pepper. Low tillage was practiced after reading it in LEISA India. No external inputs are being used. I have started using "bio slurry" to betelnut. Others are also following this practice after seeing me.

A suggestion to LEISA India is that a feature on "what's new in agriculture?" could be included. I had written about a new innovation in LEISA India (Farmers diary) and many farmers have started following the technique. I feel it is not enough to suggest to LEISA India to include farmer's experiences. We, as farmers should subscribe to share our experiences by which many others benefit.

### **Mr. Nandish B N, Farmer**

Though I belong to a farming family, I did not know much about farming when I started it. I had 15 acres of paddy and wanted to do very well. Therefore, contacted departments and used more inputs. There was almost 50% loss in yield. I used to have too much tension. Chemical farming itself, I felt, as a nuisance. Then I came into contact with publications of Fukoka, LEISA India etc.



'Growing paddy on permanent rice beds', an article in LEISA India inspired me to adopt the method with 50% lesser cost. A saving of 50% is equal to making profit.

**Er. Madhu Ramakrishnan, Farmer**

I have been doing Natural Farming from 11 years (Fukoka's concept) under the guidance of Narayana Reddy and Nammalwar. I was trained by Fukoka himself.

I was most attracted by articles on FFS principles - published in the LEISA India magazine. They explained the concepts very clearly. I have no words to express the way LEISA India team has been encouraging farmers to write. Its been fantastic, I bow my head for that.



Mr. Madhu sharing his experience

**Mr. Manivannan G, Mannivannan's Agricultural Farm**

I have got lot of ideas from Nammalwar. I was also trained under Subash Palekar. First thing I read when I receive LEISA India magazine is Narayana Reddy's column. One article in LEISA India talked about collecting leaves and making compost. After reading this, we are collecting sugarcane trash and using this for mulching.

**Mr. Muthusamy K R, Farmer**

This type of meetings should be done in open air and not in closed spaces.

**Mr. Seetharam B K, Farmer**

I have been growing plantation crops. Also started diverse cropping. The article on the experience of Phillipines – using a compost method for greater water retention was very useful. Also shared with other farmers. From 1990's, I have converted to organic farming.

**Mr. Narasinhamurthy Hegde V, Farmer**

I want to make some points, both good and those which need to be improved.

- CD brought out by LEISA is a wonderful source of articles – very handy.
- Columnist could be changed once in every one or two years.
- A special Technology Column could be included.
- More books and sources which could be accessed to be included.
- Failure / bad experience should also be a part of the articles.
- IT / BT options - money / farming / life should be included.
- Readers Feedback could be included.
- Editors exchange could be thought of. Editors of various farm magazines could form a network and share.
- A space for new research initiatives could be included.
- Economic aspects need to be included.

**Mr. Vinayak Rao B R, Farmer**

I am a post graduate in Agriculture and doing farming since 9 years. I grow Arecanut, pepper, coffee, mango, sapota. Earlier I used fertilizers and chemicals. After reading farm magazines like LEISA India, I changed my thinking. I am a LEISA farmer.

LEISA India articles are precise and very well concluded. The one-acre model ("Rudraaradhya" model) in LEISA India inspired me a lot. I along with 4-5 farmers went to the farm and saw it.

I wrote to Farmers diary - "Mulching with newspapers". Now many farmers are following it.

Suggestions to LEISA India -

- a) Start a Question and Answer Column
- b) Have a fee
- c) Conduct a study on LEISA Farms.

Regarding LEISA Alliance - This is a wonderful beginning. These interactions are good to share ideas.

**Mr. Poornaprajna B R, Farmer and Agricultural Journalist - Krishisampada**

Translated BT supplement of LEISA magazine to Kannada language and shared with fellow beings. In our area, this was the first material people interested in BT had got access to.

An IPM programme was being implemented in our area. Saw the IPM article in LEISA India, translated that into Kannada and shared with them.

An African experience of a plant grown in soil, water and air - used this in my research.

Finally, I have helped 10 farmers to become LEISA India subscribers.



Mr. Poornaprajna sharing his experience

**Mr. Shyam Prasad T, All India Radio (AIR)**

I am a post graduate in Agriculture, also a small farmer following mixed cropping in plantation crops.

Farm programmes are broadcasted twice a week – 5000 farmers have been interviewed in the last 13 years. We use LEISA India as a source for our farm programmes. In our area, Coffee husk is being converted into compost. Other material like banana sheath is also being used for compost making.

**Dr. Keshav Korse H, Sri Dharmasthala Manjunatha College**

We have regular interaction with farmers. Started receiving LEISA magazine in 2000. We started using the material in training - eg SRI Cultivation, compost preparation. 150 farmers are there in my network. Translated articles into kannada language and shared.



Mr. Keshav Korse sharing his experience

Based on an article in LEISA India, we advised farmers to sell milk in the local markets instead of Karnataka Milk Federation.

Some thoughts about this meeting - The myth that organic farming is not suitable for big farmers - could be destroyed through these meetings. The LEISA approaches should reach the corporate farming also, looking beyond the small farmers.

**Ms. Ritaraj D C, Manushi**

We are an NGO conducting training to agriculture based communities on several issues. Used LEISA India as a source in agriculture trainings. Some sources provided in the magazine have also been useful.

I am very happy to know that Tamil Nadu has many LEISA India subscribers. Experiences in video form will be very helpful in reaching the illiterate farmers.

**Mr. Palaniswamy, DHAN Foundation**

LEISA India has been identifying farmers best practices and spreading to others. Farmers experiences in LEISA are very useful. The articles published are very interesting with full of experience and not tables and numbers. I am not interested in articles with figures and charts.

I suggest that LEISA India should bring in many more Narayana Reddys of India and their experiences should be widely shared.

**Mr. Shrikant Shenoy, IDF**

I only browse through the journal. Experiences on value addition and financial aspects need to be included.

**Mr. Subramanian C K, Special Invitee**

There is a need to target the younger generations with LEISA concept. Groups can be formed for operationalising LEISA.

**Mr. Jayachandran R, Farmer**

Followed chemical agriculture for a long time. Got frustrated and switched to organic farming.

I read and learnt from books and magazines like LEISA India. I was a Panchayat member and promoted organic farming in the village. Our village was declared as "Bio-village".

Came to know about biodiversity registers through LEISA India articles describing experiences of biodiversity registers in Karnataka and Uttaranchal States. Also translated SRI article from LEISA magazine to Tamil language which was published in Tamil magazine.

I will be practicing direct sowing in SRI, which Narayana Reddy explained in his article in LEISA India. I have many learnings from LEISA.

The talk concluded by an interesting discussion on Amaranthus varieties and their nutrition value.

**1:45-2:30 – Lunch**

**2:30 – 3:45pm – Session 2 – Experience Sharing (continued)**

**Mr. Mohan Reddy V, ROSES**

I have been reading LEISA India from last one year. Green Revolution is not just about chemicals but it is also about water. Traditionally we were "Swayambhu" having self sustaining water bodies. We did not have rainfed lands, but now we have become mostly dependant on rainfall. Mass organic production is possible over the entire nation. I suggest LEISA India to open a page on water issues.

**Mr. Sylvester E G, Human Formation Organisation**

Five years back, I got LEISA magazine. But, did not read the first 2-3 issues. Later started reading. We work with many SHGs for whom training is provided. The government supported trainings are useless as they only focus on Income generating activities. But to bring out a real change, the life system has to change. Hence we found the content of LEISA relevant and used it as a material for trainings.

We found the magazine a good source for writing innovative projects. 75% of the projects written on ideas taken from LEISA India have succeeded. For example, the scaling up project of post-Tsunami - the idea was from LEISA magazine. To be honest, I am literally making a living from LEISA India.

**Mr. Maria Joseph A Tho, SEEDS**

Became a subscriber from 2003 - 2004. I came to know about Azolla, vermi composting etc from LEISA India. We started promoting them. Starting with 4-5 farmers, now it has spread to many.

Now many scientists are coming and talking to farmers, it is all because of LEISA. If we continue Conventional Agriculture, in another ten years, there will be no food grain for people but if we follow LEISA for 5 years, everyone will get food. *A small organisation like AME through LEISA India has done something more than what the State could not do.*

### **Dr. Prakash Kammaradi T N, UAS/ Hittala Gida**

Credit goes to AMEF and LEISA India for giving a message like Low External Input on Sustainable Agriculture and showing how to operationalise the concept. It is definitely very good in content, but limiting to technologies.

The challenge is to make LEISA as a mainstream - so get into policy. Readers should be made aware on the present policies.

Bringing out in Kannada language will help reach many more.

LEISA Alliance - This is an innovative approach for a journal to bring readers together, getting their comments, feedback, opinions and looking this as a movement and not just a journal.

### **Dr. Vishwanath B N, Kadur Agro**

Regional language edition will help in greater outreach and usage. LEISA India could collaborate with visual and audio media for farm programmes.

### **Mr. Ramakrishnan V, Voice of Nature**

Subscribed to LEISA magazine 10 years back. SRI article in one of the latest issues motivated me to adopt it. Now the SRI crop is two months old and I expect a very good yield.

### **Mr. Krishnamurthy P, DHAN Foundation**

In general, communication has also become top down. We have set up a Community Radio like Namma Dhvani in Nagapattinam which believes in people's own content. LEISA India can get together with Community Radio. Around 5000 Community radios are coming up in India. Inspired by the article by Shree Padre in the Documentation issue, I contacted Shree Padre for providing training.

### **Mr. Danesh Kumar, RASTA**

There is Unity in diversity. Someone said that LEISA India should be more of Indian articles as articles from other regions may not be very practicable. But, even if they are from western origin, we can still derive knowledge, which can be used. For eg : SRI, PTD - may be, we understood and developed from western articles.

To me, reading LEISA India has become a habit - like Down to Earth. I do a lot of sharing and learning through that. I have also used the contents on topics such as Composting, SRI and PTD.

Reading book abstracts - helped us immensely by giving an overview of the books. Sources and networking keep us updated.

### **Mr. Abdul Kareem, Rural Development Trust Ecology Centre**

We are working in 240 villages in 5 village clusters. Shared our varietal trial's experiences in LEISA India. Started adopting LEISA practices after subscribing to LEISA India.

### **Dr. Shiraz Wajih, GEAG**

We have been using ideas from Narayana Reddy column. The page on networking has been very useful for us. The challenge is how illiterate farmers can be made to use the LEISA India content. We need to move from technology to advocacy. There are already networks in knowledge sharing (LEISA, Vasundhara, Adike Patrike) which could be made use of for advocacy.

### **Shri. Shree Padre, Water Journalist**

LEISA is doing a commendable job. Making farmers write is a great challenge. We are therefore offering courses in Diploma in farm journalism.

Information needs of farmers is also changing. Is it 'Sustainable farming or sustaining farming'? 'Sustainable farming or sustaining life'? These are some of the questions.

***"If farming is under threat then farming journals will also be under threat".***



Section of the participants during the meeting

### **Mr. Narayana Reddy L, Farmer**

Farming is the noblest job. Parents are the ones to be blamed for sending the youngsters away.

Richness of the country lies in the richness of the soil or healthy soil. Women were the ones who started agriculture when men went on hunting. But now, with Green Revolution and new technology, women are kept away from agriculture.

I can confidently say that agriculture is a remunerative profession. Started farming with 1 acre in 1970, now I have 70 acres - This was made possible by following organic principles and adopting a simple life style. One should have foresight to look after the kitchen first and market next.



Mr. Narayana Reddy, farmer and LEISA India Columnist sharing his wisdom

**Prasad** shared that the last two invited speakers were Narayana Reddy and Shree Padre. They were deliberately held back. Overall, the challenge of sharing by everyone has been accomplished. The experiences shared were interesting and exciting. A modest beginning has been made.

### **3:45pm – 4:45pm – Session 3 – Brainstorming Session – How to strengthen the LEISA Alliance**

Prasad raised few questions. Ideas were sought in a plenary as to how this meeting could be taken forward - How could we work together? We know, what binds us, our common goal, but how to operationalise our intent? Can we explore moving towards building alliances. Also, Prasad asked the participants whether we could call ourselves as an 'Alliance'. He asked whether the Alliance is needed in the first place and if so, how we could strengthen it. He also mooted the idea of possible membership to the alliance and sought a response from the participants.

The responses were diverse - ranging from 'magazine' to 'movement'. Some of the responses were

#### **a) Magazine production**

- Suggestions for reducing costs of magazine production - make b/w cover page; paper could be of low gsm, so that it could be folded and distributed.
- Invite ideas and make someone write.
- Money payment can be made mandatory.

#### **b) Increasing outreach**

- Decentralized vernacular language production of LEISA India magazine.
- At the local level, identify people who can coordinate, receive and translate local language articles to English and contribute to the magazine.
- Intimate and permit other journals to translate on their own.
- AME can become content provider for various programmes spreading LEISA.

#### **c) LEISA Alliance**

- We need to meet on a regular basis.
- Organise meetings on farmers field.
- Farmers union can be put on the LEISA Alliance.
- LEISA Alliance can have a subcommittee of editors of other farm and mainstream journals.
- Membership payment could be made once.

Prasad thanked all the participants for their enthusiasm, sharing experiences, giving feedback and more importantly agreeing to be together to strengthen LEISA.

# Annexure 1

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## Posters



**Farmers have been using the contents of LEISA India, practically. About 65% of the farmer respondents have used for field application, like adopting different methods of water harvesting, practicing SRI method of paddy cultivation etc.**


*(Source: LEISA India Readers Survey)*




**Development professionals have been using the concepts, ideas and experiences from LEISA India as a teaching/training resource material in promoting eco friendly practices among farmers. 55% said that they were using it for training farmers and NGOs. More than 43% of the NGOs were using it as a resource for developing training materials.**

*(Source: LEISA India Readers Survey)*

## LEISA India – Factsheet cum foldable desk calendar



### LEISA India – Genesis and Growth

LEISA magazine is recognized as the leading magazine for sharing field based experiences in Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture. LEISA magazine published by LEISA, the Netherlands, is being subscribed by around 65000 readers and especially reaching around 1.5 billion people across the globe (www.leisa.org).

Together with LEISA, AME nurtured interest in sustainable agriculture in South India. Since 1997, they have collaborated in participatory research and distribution of LEISA newsletter in India. Subsequently, since the year 2000, AME started the production of LEISA India edition (<http://india.leisa.info>). LEISA India is being published in English, with an Indian focus and an international perspective.

LEISA India's subscriber base has grown significantly. LEISA India magazine, which started as an Indian edition in 2000 with a readership of around 800, is presently being received by around 10000 readers including over 500 readers in the neighbouring South Asian countries. The annual average growth of readers has been in the range of 20-30%. The contributors and readers include academics, researchers, farmers, NGOs, government departments, banks etc.

**LEISA India Consortium**

Besides, publishing the magazine, AME Foundation in collaboration with LEISA, has forged a consortium of partners - **LEISA India Consortium**, to promote enhanced sharing of LEISA experiences. The consortium of willing partners involving large networks of NGOs like MYRADA, GICAD, and LEISA Network, have been involved in promoting LEISA concepts and approaches by bringing about changes at the field level through participatory processes. They also have been documenting and sharing their experiences through various mechanisms and modes.

The partners have been involved in a focused two year documentation and communication programme (2003-05). The programme resulted in enhancing organizational capacities on documentation and sharing, both within the organizations, as well as in the public domain.

**Building LEISA Alliances**

Given the proportion of farming population in India, the diverse languages and the number of institutions involved in agriculture development, there is a need for intensifying efforts for local up dissemination and use of LEISA knowledge. One of the efforts includes building **LEISA Alliances**, an unstructured group of LEISA enthusiasts, for enhanced adoption of LEISA approaches and interested sharing of experiences.

**Distribution of subscribers by category**

**Distribution of contributors by category**

**Growth of LEISA India**

**LEISA INDIA SUBSCRIBERS**  
State-wise distribution (as on Jan 2008)

STATE	Nos.
Andhra Pradesh	806
Andhra Pradesh	132
Assam	132
Bihar	40
Chattisgarh	40
Goa	40
Haryana	40
Haryana	40
Haryana & Kashmir	40
Jharkhand	40
Karnataka	2,117
Kerala	806
Madhya Pradesh	182
Madhya Pradesh	182
Maharashtra	69
Madhya Pradesh	29
Mizoram	29
Nagaland	29
Nepal	29
Oriya	731
Punjab	40
Rajasthan	40
Tamil Nadu	1,827
Tamil Nadu	182
Uttar Pradesh	428
Uttar Pradesh	143
West Bengal	204
West Bengal	9378
Other South Asian Countries	696
<b>Total</b>	<b>9911</b>



### CALENDAR 2008

## LEISA India

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