



# Diversified farming systems

**A**griculture is most neglected by the union and state governments as the revenue it generates is meagre compared to other sectors like information technology, bio-technology etc. Surprisingly, it is being neglected even by farmers, as it is not a rewarding profession compared to others in terms of hard work, time and risk factors involved. But the main reason for this tragedy is that governments have not given enough importance to provide remunerative prices for agriculture produce on par with the cost of agriculture inputs. However, one thing is true – food is the most important commodity for any living being.

As a farmer, I have learnt during my 45 years experience that only crop production is not agriculture. This is particularly true in countries like India where 80% of the total farmers are small and marginal. At least for these farmers, agriculture shall be an integrated system of cropping and livestock. Tree cropping is for green manure, fodder, food, fiber, fuel and timber. Livestock should include a variety of animals like cow or buffaloes, sheep or goats, chicken or pigs which feed on farm wastes like grasses, hay and the like, pruned branches from trees and weeds, broken and immature grains, spoiled fruits etc and produce milk, eat, eggs, money etc and valuable manure.

Trees not only provide fodder, green manure etc., but also add enormous amount of biomass to soil, host beneficial predating insects and birds, conserve moisture from hot winds, conserve water from the soil, enrich the soil fertility by accommodating trillions of micro-organisms around their lengthy root systems and of course, income. Then the animals feeding on the farm waste, keep weeds under control with proper grazing and provide valuable manure on the farm. Their excreta shall be used as raw material for gobar gas plant producing cooking and lighting gas with value added manure for crops.

Coming to the choice of cropping systems, importance should be given to those needed for family consumption as well as local communities. But unfortunately, more importance is being given both by the government and by the farmers for commercial crops like cotton, tobacco, sugarcane, chillies, eucalyptus which are grown for export. These crops neither provide food, fodder nor fuel to the farmer and local communities. Lack of fodder is also the main reason for the decline of animal population. Many small farmers depend on tractors for cultivation and chemical fertilisers for manuring. Use of chemicals has not only resulted in compacting and crusting soils but has also destroyed soil organisms. Thus, farmers are forced to buy more and more external inputs, thus, becoming indebted.

The only solution to overcome this agriculture debacle, not only in India but also in the other countries is to adopt ecologically friendly farming with diversity of trees, animals and crops. We own a 4.2 acre irrigated land near Doddaballapura, in Bangalore Rural District in Karnataka State. We are producing food like cereals, beans, cooking oil, almost all species of vegetables and fruits, enough for 10 people for the whole year. This apart we also produce about 10,000 coconuts, 8 tons of sapota, 5 tons of papaya, 2 tons of avocado, 2 tonnes of soya bean, 10 tonnes of various

seasonal vegetables and other fruits for the market. We have 8 cows, 12 goats and 25 native chickens. On the farm borders and edges, we have 300 various fodder, green manure and timber trees since 15 years. We are sure of getting an income of 30 lakh rupees by the sale of these timber trees during the next 15 years. This is apart from other benefits mentioned above. We have reared 200 fishes in our water storage tank which brings an annual income of Rs 6,000. Hence, a farm with bio-diversity of trees, animals, inter-cropped cropping system will provide food and financial security. Focus should therefore not be on monocropping that ultimately leads to debts and destruction to families and the soil. ■

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### Capacity Building on Knowledge Management in CSOs

by K V S Prasad and T M Radha

Development organizations are deeply involved in generating lot of field knowledge. Often these learnings are not adequately captured and widely shared. Building necessary understanding, systems, processes and skill sets required for managing knowledge within institutions and sharing widely in public domain therefore becomes crucial. This requires integrating practices evolving from multiple disciplines, such as Management, Information systems and Communication.



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