

Introduction

With an interest in nature and a fancy of driving a tractor, I entered this field of agriculture in 1959. With no experience in farming and with an attitude of not learning from others, I had committed many mistakes in the beginning. By the time I realized my mistakes, I had already incurred a lot of loss both financially and resource-wise also. But later I started observing nature closely and followed organic way of farming, not wasting any farm waste. I have used every inch of the land. I have planted even on waste lands to produce some biomass. I feel that every farmer should treat his farm as an experimental ground and try various methods on his own, learn and share his wisdom with others. This is how I have been farming and trying to reach out many other fellow farmers. For example, in 1968, by adopting zero tillage and not burning the trash of sugarcane harvest, allowing it to decompose, achieved higher yields in sugarcane consistently. Was able to harvest 120-125 tons/ha which was higher than the state average of 64 tons/ha. I have tried out many things on my farm, like the zigzag planting method in coconut for instance (see box) and have also got recognition from various institutions and the state government for many of the innovations.

Below is one of the trials or innovation that I have carried out and found very useful. I would like to share this with as many as possible:

Weeds as a source of wealth

An increase in weed growth indicates better soil health. But, weeds are considered as competitors to plants and there is a tendency to remove, throw or burn them. Owing to their longer decomposition time, weeds are often destroyed. However, with increasing awareness on organic way of farming, weeds are increasingly being used for making organic manure.

I tried a method which could convert weeds to organic form within 15 days. The method is as follows:

Collected about 25 kg weeds from my farm land, wastelands, roadsides etc. Then mixed them with 200gm jaggery, 200 gm salt, 200 gm. tamarind in 100 lit of water and left to decompose in a drum for 15 days. This mixture was rotated once in every three days. In 15 days the mixture was emanating a bad odour and was then converted to liquid form.

When this liquid manure was used for vegetable crops, the growth was very luxurious. Though this indicated that the manure had high nutrient content, but still I wanted to know its nutrient composition so as to recommend to other farmers. So I took one liter of the liquid manure and got it tested and was amazed to know that the manure was high in nutrients as indicated in the box.

Characteristics	Results (mg/lit)
pH	7.39
Nitrogen	32.2
Phosphorus	6.20
Potash	2000
Calcium	260
Magnesium	189.7
Zinc	0.24
Iron	0.60

I feel that it is the best manure among the various manures I have used. I feel that farmers instead of destroying weeds should make use of it, thus increasing yields and also reducing costs on fertilizers.

Farmers with large farms can prepare this in big tanks and attach sprinklers to it. This will help in releasing the liquid manure in drops to the soils, thus avoiding wastage.

Zigzag pattern of Coconut plantation

Generally 45-48 plants are planted in one acre area. But, here a new method of planting was tried out, way back in 1960, which accommodates around 120 trees in one acre of land.

In this zigzag method of planting, each plant is spaced at a distance of 15 feet within a row. Two rows are spaced 15 ft followed by a third row which is spaced at 30 ft. Plants in each row is planted at the mid point of the two trees of the previous row, thus making it a zigzag pattern. Due to this pattern, the distance between the trees between two rows comes to 16.77 ft. The 30 ft distance left after every two rows, helps the canopy to spread. This way of planting has not affected the light or air that passes through the plantation and zero cultivation has been adopted. Growing of intercrops such as banana and cocoa has also been possible during the initial years.

With an yield of 80 nuts from each tree, it has been possible to harvest 9600 coconuts annually. In the conventional pattern, this would be only 3840 nuts. Thus, yield harvested from one acre plot with this pattern is equal to the yield from a conventional plot.

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