



My Words

The greatest challenge during the uncertain economic and environmental scenario is to provide resilient livelihoods to the farmers. Converting scarce natural assets into streams of sustained incomes has been daunting for those engaged in making interventions at the grassroots. While, one-time transformations have been common, sustaining incomes to keep pace with changing time have not been fully achieved.

Statistics reveal that even today, more than 566 million people's livelihoods primarily depend on agriculture. These people don't need one-time piecemeal solutions but long-term strategic directions to make the most from available resources. Join us in our endeavour to make a difference. Stories in this edition of the newsletter not only report small successes but reflect greater challenges as you read between-the-lines.

- K.G.Wankhede
Chief Executive

Your Words

IFFDC Newsletter for January, 2011 giving successful case studies of upgradation of soil health in Bighapur block of Unnao district, artisan training in Rajasthan & a project report on reliable water supply & sanitation services in Orissa are quite praiseworthy.

Dr. V. Kumar
Ex-Chairman, IFFDC

It is a very informative newsletter on the activities of IFFDC. The initiatives are noteworthy and extremely helpful to farmers who need guidance and support in adopting the best practices in agriculture and livelihood improvement.

P. L. Kulkarni,
G.M., BIRDS- NABARD, Lucknow

Reflections

MANAGING THE COMMONS

Making a Channel of Opportunity

Spread over an area of 27 acres, the impounded water behind the check-dam makes for an excellent site in Malisahi village. Located about 30 kilometers from the block town of Ranpur in Nayagarh district of Orissa, the water body has been in existence in the village for a reasonable period of time. Built under joint sponsorship of IFFCO and the minor irrigation department, the water harvested behind the structure has been mostly been of use to the cattle and the occasional bathers. Not a drop of water could be of use for irrigation.

The households could only hope for water to overflow the embankments some day to irrigate their fields. Though unrealistic, that is what 130 households and its 755 inhabitants could hope for. The hope was not belied as adoption of village under 'Livelihood Improvement through Integrated Rural Development' transformed their plight. Not only water flows from the check dam now, it has transformed economic scenario in the village as well.

The beleaguered community was organized into a Water Users Committee for managing water distribution and for maintaining the structure. The 120 members made 25 per cent towards the cost of constructing 600 meter long concrete channel to take water from the check dam to the farmers' fields. With a cash contribution of Rs 8.41 lakh by IFFCO, a channel with 12 outlets has been constructed to irrigate 133 acres of land in the village.

Compared to the past when a single winter crop was attempted in limited area, a diversity of crops are now being grown in the village. Vegetables, paddy, oilseeds and sugarcane are now commonly cultivated in the village. A water cess of Rs 120 for each acre is being charged for channel irrigation whereas Rs 80 is levied on those lifting water directly from the check dam. The financial gains from better crop harvests have been worth over Rs 91.60 lakhs.

Malisahi has carved out a niche for itself in the district – known as fresh vegetable hub in the district.



Malisahi stop dam full of water (left) and its outlet channel (right)

CHICKENOMICS

What could poultry birds do to one's life? It could be anybody's guess because at the core of the question is the survival of the flock. No one can answer the question but Prema Devi whose fortune has been turned around by the birds. Within a short period of 21 days, the flock fetched her Rs 6,700. Confident as she is, plans are afoot to increase the flock strength to a 1,000 birds.

Not long ago, Prema had lost hope in life after losing her husband. With four children to look after, she was forced to survive on borrowed money in the village. Her social dignity was enslaved with the moneylenders.

Following an exposure trip, IFFDC enthused her towards adoption of a poultry unit. She took a calculated risk and it worked wonders for her. Located about 40 kilometers from the block town of Naugaon in Uttarakhand, Surmia village has become synonym with Prema.

All that glitters is gold!

Yes, it is! For Arun Rout and his namesake Arun Samantaray, marigold farming has opened a goldmine for the farmers in Bajrakot village in Ranpur block of Orissa's Nayagarh district. Net worth of cultivating marigold on two acres of wastelands has been worth over Rs 44,000. The flower is in demand for cultural festivities in the nearby villages, as also in small towns of Khurda, Nayagarh Chandpur. In the past, flowers were procured at a heavy price from cities as far as Bhubaneswar.

Flower cultivation is capital-intensive as it demands appropriate irrigation and timely plant protection measures. IFFDC not only trained the farmers but extended hardware support in the form of a sprinkler system. Other inputs like micronutrients and plant protection chemicals were packaged in the form of technical support to the farmer-duo. Encouraged by the response, farmers are now diversifying into other flower species viz., gladiolus. The spin-off from marigold success has meant that many more are willing to join the colorful path to economic emancipation.



Arun Raut and Arun Samantray's Marigold fields.

Change for the better

As has been the tradition, K. Bhumaiah has been cultivating paddy with limited returns in Dhamanapet, Nizamabad (Andhra Pradesh).

For many like him, drawing sustainable income from traditional cropping pattern has been a challenge. Could vegetable cultivation be an option instead? So it seemed when the matter was taken up for discussion amongst farmers in the block.



K. Bhumaiah with his tomato crop.

It was felt that tomato could be the best crop keeping in mind the ground conditions and the market trends. The first crop harvest in December 2009 was appropriately time as tomato fetched a price of between Rs 30-40 a kilo. Total production in the village watershed was close to 2 tons. Bhumaiah made more from tomato than what he could have managed from paddy harvest from the same piece of land.

However, the second harvest in early March was up against a poor market for tomato. At Rs 3-4 per kilo, it wasn't worth the effort. But that is what market uncertainty is all about. Not let down by the situation, farmers in this part of Andhra Pradesh switched to seed collection of tomato for the next season. Though there are not yet out of the woods, farmers have learnt the art and science of being resilient to such unforeseen situations. Diversifying to other vegetable crops has been on the cards for them.

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