



Farm – India

Annual Report 2004 – 2005

Preface:

Farm – India (*Federation for Agricultural Research Methodologies*) was founded by a group of enterprising women to play a crucial role in uplifting the rural economy. As we have started doing something with the rural communities in the area of education, organic farming and women empowerment, we set our own target for the coming year, 2004-2005.

Our Target group and action plan remain the same as we mentioned in our earlier report 2003-2004.

School Children:

1. Quality Education for rural children.
2. Environment education.
3. Teaching aids & support systems.
4. Job oriented training.
5. Kalvi Thiruvizha – Annual meet.

Farming Groups & Women:

1. Emphasis on Organic Farming
2. Water Management and its importance.
3. Farmers' Group vs. International buyers.
4. Creating employment opportunities to rural women.

Senior Citizens & Social Harmony:

1. To support abandoned senior citizens for their food and shelter.
2. Social harmony and piece in the villages.

Farm – India's activities during 2004 – 2005:

School Children:

1. Quality Education:

The Government of India had launched a great program called **SSA “Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan”** to bring education to every child of India. This program ensures education for all poor children who could not attend school due to economic reasons. There are dropouts in villages either because of poor living condition or due to illiteracy among village people. It's nevertheless to mention that without local support and involvement, no government program will succeed.



But this year the government has re-designed the structure of CRC and BRC centers. So we had to work on some regional basis. As we did last year, we undertook the following schools for our activities.

- a. Naduppati Primary School
- b. Kalpatti Middle School
- c. Karaiyampatti Primary School
- d. Pudukkottai Middle School
- e. Pudevadi Middle School
- f. Pudevadi – Pudur Primary School
- g. Seekampatti Primary School
- h. Naduppati Higher Secondary School
- i. Kalliankattupatti Model School
- j. Keeranur Primary School

Our activities with these schools vary from physical contribution to financial support. The list of programs that we organized during this year as given below.

- a. Enrolment awareness program for new comers.
- b. Conducted a door-to-door campaign along with the school teachers and old students to educate the poor villagers the importance of schooling.
- c. Provided monetary support to Naduppati Balvadi, a Pre-KG school run by Government of Tamilnadu to paint the inner walls of the classroom with animated pictures and national leaders.
- d. As we did last year, this year also we provided monitory support to economically under-privileged students for school uniforms and notebooks. One great thing with government of Tamilnadu is that every school will receive all necessary textbooks free of cost. So we never had to support these children to buy textbooks. But sometimes, textbooks are not enough to give full idea for the exam point of view. So we arranged to buy some guides for some of the poorest of the poor children, particularly for the upper classes (X, XI & XII Standards).

2.Environment Education:

Every time we emphasize the environment issue with the school children. We are very much hopeful with the young minds than the grown ups. So we have organized few farm visits for the school children this year also.

We conduct field visits to nearby forest area, renowned Organic Farms and Environment Friendly NGOs for the school children. A group of 40 – 50 young students are taken to the above sites



along with their class teachers. The following issues are emphasized to these young minds so that they are grown with these very important environmental concerns.

- a. Importance of trees.
- b. Bad role of plastics & safe disposal of plastics.
- c. Role of earth worms in maintaining the soil aeration and fertility.
- d. Keeping the school, street and home clean for a healthier life.

Our dream project “Green Bag Movement” remains untouched this year also. Due to pre-occupation of other priority issues, we were not able to organize it this year. We are seriously looking for a sponsor who can help us in this project.

3. Multimedia Presentation:

“ Seeing is Learning.....”

So we arrange small teaching hand tools like models, maps, sports goods, etc for the teachers, which are very much useful in explaining the children. We make special classes using computers and DLP projector to explain the children about their academic lessons. This year we have been little successful with multimedia presentations and hope to expand this to all our target schools during next academic year. For this we are looking for a car in which all teaching equipments will be fitted and we can take this car to as many schools as we want.

4. Job Oriented Training Program:

As we plan last year, we have been successful in convincing some of the BPO companies in Bangalore for the placement. However, they only promised us to give priority to our students if their ability to the work is not questionable. As we all are aware about the fast changing in the IT industry, we could only hope for the best. Anyway, the area of skill development remains same as follows:

- a. Typing skill development
- b. Basic Computer Knowledge
- c. A fairly good spoken English

The students and teachers from Naduppatti Higher Secondary School have shown great interest in this program and we are working hard to meet the people’s expectation. However, we need to pay attention to the routine academic system also so that the students Board Exam results are not affected. We are sincerely thankful to the Teachers of Naduppatti Higher Secondary School for their sincere support.



5. Annual Meet (Kalvi Thiruvizha):

This is our prime project. We have been successful in conducting “Kalvi Thiruvizha” for the second consecutive year. The following events were conducted.

- a. Science Exhibition
- b. Sports and games
- c. Drama and folk dances
- d. Literary competitions like Poetry, Speech, Singing, Drawing, etc

Teachers, parents, students and Department of Education officials attended this function. It was really great feeling for everyone at Farm-India to see the happiness of the poor village children while participating and winning in the competitions. We have determined to improve this program in coming years.

Rural Farmers & Women:

1.Organic Farming:

We organized various training programs for our farmers in the organic farming techniques. The local farmers are trained in making Vermi Composting, Herbal Extract, Panchakawya, etc. In fact we are working towards “No Input – Sustainable Agriculture”. We are insisting the farmers with the following points:

1. Try to minimize the external input as much as possible
2. Make your own farm inputs like vermi compost, panchakawya, etc.
3. Learn new technologies (rediscovered technologies)
4. Spread the knowledge to other farmers.

2.Water Management:

Water management remains in the top of our priority list. We have created various models of Micro water distribution systems like Micro Sprinklers, Easy Drip, etc. in our farm “Manitham Organics” to give a practical lesson to our entire farmer friends in this subject.

We also accumulate the requirements of many farmers together and helped them to buy the sprinklers, laterals, etc. This helps us to keep the cost per acre/ hectare at a marginally low level.

We also conducted farm level short term training courses for a very small group consists of 3 – 5 farmers in water management. We are getting excellent reaction from the farmers and we sincerely hope to expand this program to state level in coming years.



3.Contract Farming:

The major reason for the poor balance sheet of the small and marginal farmer is the prices for his / her produces. We from Farm-India try to offset the price fluctuations due to the middlemen in this field. We are arranging Contract Farming to cultivate Medicinal Herbs, Vegetables like Drum Stick, etc. This would bring the following advantages:

1. Fixed prices for the farm produces.
2. No middlemen's commission for the sale turnover.
3. Financial assistance for the particular crop (no interest).
4. No hassle in transporting, as the produces are lifted at the farm gate.

4. Export oriented farming:

We are negotiating with an importer from Hong Kong to buy our vegetables for HK market. But the problem is that they need Organic products. Even though our farmers practice Organic farming, we are not certified by International Certifying agencies like SKAL, SGS, IFOAM, etc. It's known that it's very expensive to get these certifications for the small farmers. So we are planning to get group certification for the next year and hope to enter the international market in coming years.

We have identified more products like cashew, tea, herbs, etc. to export in the coming years. But these depend on how we are going to be successful in getting through the Organic Farming. We are planning to join hands with like-minded NGOs like our AHIMSA to make the certification process easier.

5. Women Empowerment:

Women empowerment is not possible unless and until we make them financially independent. Most of the girls sit idle and spend their valuable time in just watching TV serials. This not only wastes their man-hours (women-hours) but also spoil their thinking towards family values. We at Farm-India decided to make a small beginning in bringing jobs to them. We could successfully provide jobs for 20 women in preparing dining table mats. Our future plans are as follows:

1. Make more modules like this group (20 women / group).
2. Create better working environment.
3. Identify more products having good market potential in the domestic and international markets,
4. Add small supporting equipments to make the work easier so that the "Softer part of our society" (we don't want to call our women as "weaker sex") is not burdened with heavier jobs.



In this line, we are planning to import the following machines from China.

1. Bamboo cutting machines
2. Bamboo slating machines
3. Bamboo weaving machines

China is producing excellent bamboo products like bamboo mats and their technology is really world class in this field. We are hopeful to bring those machineries to India to support the women group in making bamboo mats. We are also careful in selecting these machines so that the machines do not take away the jobs from our women. So we are planning to buy only semi-automatic or manual machines, which will still need people, but the quality of the products would be better.

Senior Citizens & Social Harmony:

1. Senior Citizens:

As we mentioned in our earlier reports, we are able to provide food support to few of the abandoned senior citizens. But we could not implement a systematic program to guarantee the continuation of the program due to financial constrains. Anyway we are looking for generous persons from our friend circle who may sponsor part of this program.

2. Social Harmony:

Every year we are conducting “Kaaman Pandigai” which is a cultural identity of our region. We could bring social harmony through these kinds of festivals. Further to these kinds of festivals, we also support the poor segment of the society to build their worship places. Even though this activity is not viewed as the priority item in the purview of many socio-economists, we believe in respecting the cultural views of the local people. We found fantastic improvement in inter-cast relations due to these activities. So we want to continue this effort to maintain social harmony in our region.

Conclusion:

We were successful in achieving our goal in the following areas:

1. Multimedia presentation to the school children
2. Kalvi Thiruvizha
3. Bamboo mats weaving units
4. Contract farming
5. Organic farming awareness
6. Maintaining social harmony



However we set the following targets for our coming years.

1. Extend the multimedia presentation to women group and farming group too.
2. Add bamboo-processing machines for the women group.
3. Set up a computer fitted car to extend the computer education to all nearby schools.
4. Identify specific agricultural produce for export market and concentrate on export.
5. Work seriously on the Organic certification.

We wish to thank one and other who extended their hands in our march towards rural development. To mention few of them, we wish to record our sincere thanks to AHIMSA, Thalaanmai – Agri. Magazine and KVK Gandhigram. We expect our performance would be still better in the coming years.

We Love Nature & God