

Mix of crop and animals in farms helps increase income

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The ability to extract maximum returns from a small area and making use of the available resources and technologies are key factors in improving income for farmers.

If some animal components can also be added to the crop production schedule, the chances of a better income increase.

The University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore is implementing a pilot project called “Holistic development of schedule caste and schedule tribe farmers for livelihood improvement” of resource poor farmers in highly populated taluks of Southern Karnataka, covering around eight thousand farm families.

Aim

“The project aims to strengthen the livelihood of vulnerable farm families through diversifying crop production and reducing input cost,” says Dr. K. Jagadeeshwara, Dean and Principal Investigator of the project, College of Sericulture, Chintamani, Chickballapur district.

The project seems to have been able to create a positive impact on the farmers’ lifestyle.

The average income in the region before implementation of project was roughly about Rs. 20,549 a year from crops and Rs. 9,447 from animals for a farmer.

But after implementation there has been an increase of Rs. 44,718 in crop production and Rs. 54,630 from animals in a year according to the Vice Chancellor Dr. K. Narayana Gowda. Mr. Ravinaik, one of the beneficiaries, is a young, uneducated farmer from Hosakoppa village located 20kms from Davanagere city and owns about five acres. His entire family of six members was totally dependent on the income from this area.

Major crop

Paddy was the major crop grown, with vegetables in a small area. Just when he was contemplating to migrate to the city in search of a job he came to know that the University was implementing a project for farmer families through his village community leaders.

He decided to take part in the project as one of the beneficiaries and attended several training programmes like vermicompost production, cattle and sheep rearing, etc

Besides providing technical inputs, Mr. Ravinaik was given timely inputs, particularly high yielding paddy seed varieties in the region, since the farmer mainly cultivated paddy as his major crop. As per the advice of project staff Mr. Ravinaik adopted the package of practices like SRI method and doubled his yield, according to Dr. Jagadeeshwara. From his vermicompost unit he was able to generate about 1.5 tonnes of vermicompost worth Rs. 4,000 which he used as manure for his paddy crop grown in an acre.

After harvest in five to six months he got a net income of Rs. 15,000. From one HF cow given to him through the project he was able to get a net income of Rs. 16,632 for six months by selling the milk and from three bannur sheep his net income was Rs. 18,140 in a year.

Net income

"In 365 days I got a net income of about Rs. 46,500 and I was contemplating to leave this work and seek a manual job in a garment factory for Rs, 3,000 a month," says Mr. Ravinaik.

Similarly, another farmer Mr. Narashimaiah was supported by providing him with hybrid seeds, horticultural plants, vegetable seeds, a cow, three piglets and three sheep. He was guided to plant in such a way as to cultivate always a combination of annual and seasonal crops along with animals. In addition the farmer also planted high quality mango and sapota trees in 20 cents and adopted organic mulching. A water storage tank was profitably used for fish rearing.

The farmer got Rs.13,000 to 14,000 from crops (mixed cropping groundnut, maize and ragi) and Rs. 18,300 from his cow, Rs. 8,245 from his pigs, Rs. 7,450 from sheep. In total he got average of Rs. 47,000 to 48,000 a year.

Important aspects

"One of the important aspects in this project is that it has been able to prevent urban migration to nearby cities for livelihood security. The beneficiaries have been encouraged to continue rearing animals and also grow the fodder for them in their own fields. By doing so the soil gets fertile from their wastes, farmers get income from the animals and there is no shortage of food for the animals," says Dr. Jagadeeshwara.

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