Organic Farming Association elects dryland organic farmer as new President

In fresh elections held on 17 November 2005, the National Steering Committee of the Organic Farming Association of India elected D.D. Bharamagoudra, a dryland organic farmer hailing from Karnataka to head the organisation.

Bharamagoudra will lead a Managing Committee comprising of Claude Alvares (Secretary), Jayant Barve (Treasurer) and nine executive members. The OFAI has decided that out of the eleven members of the Managing Committee, a minimum of four will always be practising organic farmers and a minimum of three will always be women.

D.D. Bharamagoudra brings to his new position both a deep and extensive understanding of the severe restraints imposed by nature on organic farming in dryland areas. Once a chemical farmer, Bharamagoudra switched to organic farming several years ago and has remained steadfast to this method of farming ever since. He speaks out at several forums and workshops and is widely respected and consulted in the region. Earlier he was elected as convener of the Karnataka State Steering Committee of OFAI, a post he will soon relinquish.

The new Managing Committee of OFAI will meet often in place of the much larger National Steering Committee which will now meet once a year. The next meeting of the Managing Committee is fixed in Goa for end February 2006.

OFAI today is the only organization of grassroots organic farmers. The Association makes special efforts to concentrate on the problems and needs of small and marginal farmers. OFAI also collaborates with the FAO in maintaining an authentic record of organic farmers in India. Data supplied by OFAI is fed into the FAO website exclusively devoted to organic farming in India. OFAI is also a member of IFOAM.

In fresh elections held on 17 November 2005, the National Steering Committee of the Organic Farming Association of India elected D.D. Bharamagoudra, a dryland organic farmer hailing from Karnataka to head the organisation.

Bharamagoudra will lead a Managing Committee comprising of Claude Alvares (Secretary), Jayant Barve (Treasurer) and nine executive members. The OFAI has decided that out of the eleven members of the Managing Committee, a minimum of four will always be practising organic farmers and a minimum of three will always be women.

D.D. Bharamagoudra brings to his new position both a deep and extensive understanding of the severe restraints imposed by nature on organic farming in dryland areas. Once a chemical farmer, Bharamagoudra switched to organic farming several years ago and has remained steadfast to this method of farming ever since. He speaks out at several forums and workshops and is widely respected and consulted in the region. Earlier he was elected as convener of the Karnataka State Steering Committee of OFAI, a post he will soon relinquish.

The new Managing Committee of OFAI will meet often in place of the much larger National Steering Committee which will now meet once a year. The next meeting of the Managing Committee is fixed in Goa for end February 2006.

OFAI today is the only organization of grassroots organic farmers. The Association makes special efforts to concentrate on the problems and needs of small and marginal farmers. OFAI also collaborates with the FAO in maintaining an authentic record of organic farmers in India. Data supplied by OFAI is fed into the FAO website exclusively devoted to organic farming in India. OFAI is also a member of IFOAM.

In 2005, OFAI concentrated on organizing a large number of training schools from Uttar Pradesh to Kerala. At these farmer training schools invariably between 20-40 farmers who wish to convert from chemical to organic farming are exposed to two days of practical discussions with a faculty comprising exclusively of organic farmers. These workshops, as of date, have benefited a total number of farmers in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

In the year 2006, OFAI is expected to conduct several additional training programmes with a faculty of teachers sourced from the organic farming community nationwide.

OFAI conducted a major farm auditors training course in Goa on 18-19 November 2006. There was a huge demand for participation in the course and many requests had to be turned down as the facilities could not accommodate more than 40 organic farmers.

The NSF of OFAI has taken a well-appreciated decision at the outset to base its entire farm audit scheme only on the expertise of long standing organic farmers. In other words, under OFAI, no person other than an organic farmer will be permitted to audit organic farms for purposes of certification. Farm certification under OFAI is based on a labelling scheme which will enable Indian organic farmers to market their produce domestically.

Ashok Kumar, a recognized farm certifier and an organic farmer himself, was commissioned by OFAI to draw up the labelling scheme. His report has been received and is now under circulation with the NSF members.

The farm auditing course in Goa was conducted in English and therefore only those organic farmers who could fill out an audit questionnaire in English were permitted to attend. OFAI is now negotiating with its associates in the different states to conduct further training programmes for farm auditors for those farmers who wish to join the auditing staff of OFAI but seek to conduct their surveys and farm visits in their own mother tongue.
NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE (OFAI)

Andhra Pradesh
P.V. Satheesh, Coa
Claude Alavas
Gujarat
Kapil Shah
Vijay Shah
Anvin Desai
Dr. Induben Patel
Kerala
Rony Joseph
Madhya Pradesh
Shairi Titus
Maharashtra
Moni Patrao
Jayant Barve
Manohar Parchure
Karnataka
Julie Cariappa
Babu P.
Rajasekhar G. Sridhir
D.D. Bharagamoguda
Tamilnadu
Madhu Ramakrishnan,
Mrs. T. Rajarenga,
R. Jayachandran
Uttar Pradesh
Bharatendu Prakash
West Bengal
Arndhendu Chatterjee

OFAI TECHNICAL RESOURCE CENTRES

Chetha Vikas, Wardha
Tamil Nadu Organic Farmers' Technology Association, Sathyamangalam, Ecocience Research Foundation, Chennai

OFAI CENTRAL SECRETARIAT
Claude Alavas, Co-ordinator
Rishma Pednekar
Gautham Sarang
Sumeeksha

GUJARAT STATE OFAI COORDINATING OFFICE

Kapil Shah (contact person)
Jatin, Vinoba Ashram Gotri
Vadodara, Gujarat 390-021

KERALA STATE OFAI COORDINATING OFFICE

Rony Joseph (Contact person)
INFAC - Information for Action
Kollathadypur P. O. Palai,
Kottayam District - 686674, Kerala

TAMILNADU STATE OFAI COORDINATING OFFICE

Revathi (Contact person)
79, Elancheran Nagar
Nambiar Nagar Road
Nagapattinam - 611 001, Tamil Nadu

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE OFAI COORDINATING OFFICE

P.V. Satheesh (Contact person)
Deccan Development Society
101, Kishan Residency,
Road No. 5, Begumpet,
Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh 500-016

KARNATKA STATE OFAI COORDINATING OFFICE

Babu P. (contact person)
ICAR, No. 22 'Samikrutu'
Michael Palya, NTP,
Bangalore 560-075

TECHNICAL CONSULTANTS

N. Gopatilakshmin, Tamil Nadu
Preeti Joshi, Maharashtra
Dr. Tarak Kate, Maharashtra
Sultan A. Ismail, Tamil Nadu
Ashok Kumar, Karnataka

(OFAI) MANAGING COMMITTEE

D.D. Bharagamoguda, President
Claude Alavas, Secretary
Jayant Barve, Treasurer

ADVISERS

Bernard Declercq,
organic farmer, Auroville
Naryan Reddy, organic farmer, Bangalore
P K Thampa, horticulture expert
S R Sundararaman,
organic farmer, Sathyamangalam
G Nammalvar,
organic farming leader, Tamilnadu
Braskar Saver,
organic farmer, Gujarat

Want to work for the Organic Farming Association?

We here at the Central Secretariat of the Organic Farming Association of India are looking for people who can help us with our administration. We need persons (men/women) who are interested in farming and who are willing to give us one or two or three years of their life in this cause. Of course, we do pay salaries!

Ideally we would like to have persons between 25-35, preferably from organic farming families, persons who can work in an office, travel to organic farming meetings, help in documentation of organic farmers, work on literature for the organic farming movement and many more. But we are not very strict about the age.

If you think you fit the bill, give us a call at 0832-2255913. You could also send us your biodata and references by post or email at admin@ofai.org.

The best part of the job is that you get a chance to live in Goa! It’s a great and exciting opportunity. A similar chance may not come your way ever!

OFAI NEWS

Training School on Organic Farming (TOT)
A training school for trainers of organic farmers was conducted by Tamil Nadu Organic Farmers Trust (TNOFT) in collaboration with OFAI from 7 to 11 February, 2005 at the Organic Farming Research Centre, Oikkur, Shivasangam dist., Tamil Nadu. Twenty farmers with organic farming background participated in the training programme.

Organic farming schools organized by Tamil Nadu Organic Farmers’ Technology Association, Sathyamangalam with assistance from OFAI.

The Tamil Nadu Organic Farmers’ Technology Association led by S.R. Sunderaraman organised a series of small training workshops to introduce chemical farmers to organic methods. These were held at:

- 1 Ammappettai from 11-12 Dec. ’04
- 2 Sathyamangalam from 22-23 Jan. ’05
- 3 Vadippattai from 26-27 Feb. ’05
- 4 Vadippattai from 16-17 April ’05
- 5 Namakkal from 7-8 May ’05
- 6 Pollachi from 25-26 May ’05
- 7 Sathyamangalam from 6-7 Aug. ’05
- 8 Sathyamangalam from 17-18 Sept.05
- 9 Vadipatty from 24-25 Sept. ’05
- 10 Coimbatore from 12-13 Nov. ’05

One of the unique aspects of these schools was the sharing of the techniques on producing organic nutrients and pest and disease management developed by Sunderaraman and his team. These techniques are easy to practice and could be adopted by farmers who would like to turn to organic farming.

Banda Organic Farming School
Vigyan Shiksha Kendra (VSK) and Dr. Bharatendu Prakash represent the best of voluntary action in Uttar Pradesh. Bharatendu Prakash is one of the founding members of the organic farming movement in India. He is also an NSC member. OFAI and VSK jointly organised a three day organic farming school in Banda between 14-16 Feb, 2005 at Kisan Vigyan Kendra campus, Banda, U.P.

The participants were drawn from 4 districts in UP and two districts in MP. The participants comprised of farmers, agriculture students, researchers and scientists. The resource persons included, among others, Shoor Veer Singh, and Dr. U.P Singh, a scientist who has released many pulse varieties with a pro-farmer commitment. They were ably assisted by Smt. Shobhana, Bhaumr, Prem Singh and Ramakrishna.

Shahdol Organic Farming School
Vigyan Shiksha Kendra and Sahjeveen organized an organic farming school at Shahdol. The workshop was held from 10-14 May, 2005. Dr. Arun Kumar Sharma, Dr. Bharatendu Prakash, Dr. U. P. Singh and Shri. Sarishchandra were the resource persons for the programme.
Gujarat Organic Agriculture Sammelan and Yatra

There is a network of groups that have been working for the last 20 years for spreading organic farming in Gujarat. They made a decision in 1999 to conduct a mela every two years to spread sajiv sandesh (‘message of organic living’). Since then, the melas have taken place religiously every two years. The last one was in 2003 at Lok Bharti. The mela concept however had a small disadvantage. It was conducted only in one place within the state and it was not possible for a large number of farmers to participate in it. “Nothing is enough for this type of a campaign,” said Kapil Shah, who played a key role in the organisation of these events. This year the group decided that the mela would go to the people instead. So the mela was turned into a series of events like a yatra. Usually a yatra will have a procession, banners and slogans. But this yatra one had none of these. The group concentrated more on meetings where they could interact with people more effectively. To allow maximum participation, the ‘yatra’ was organized in three different places in the state. Local field coordination committees handled the organisation and the logistics including arranging food, accommodation and venues.

The series of events started on the 2nd of May 2005. The first event was near ‘Umiya Mata’ Temple, Vandhai in Kachchh district. This was organized for the benefit of the farmers in north western Gujarat and was inaugurated by Vasantrao Bombakar, an experimenter in organic farming and an activist from Maharashtra. There were also farmers from Puskula village in Andhra Pradesh who came to interact with the villagers and to tell them of their success in banning the use of pesticides in cotton cultivation through a unanimous resolution in the village. The one day programme was filled with songs, film shows, group discussions, exhibition stalls and theatre in the evening. Since the group discussions were based on the local issues, the villagers were able to participate. It was estimated that about 850 people attended here.

The next day was on the 4th and 5th of May at Anara. Mahendra Bhatt, Dhirendra Sonaji, Rajni Bhai Patel, Rajni Dave, Dr. Rajendra Khirmani, Vinay Mahajan, Bhaskar Bhai Save, Sarvdaman Patel, and Hirji Bhai Bhingradia were there to lead the sessions and discussions. The last events in the series were at Bhattgam, Surat on the 7th and 8th of May and they were for the farmers of southern Gujarat. Bhattgam was inaugurated in an interesting way. The ceremony consisted of taking a handful of hand-ground rice from a plate and putting it into a copper pot. This was done by the speakers, some of the participants and the others who had come as spectators. “We wanted to jump directly into the issues rather than waste time on the unimportant ceremonies.”

As this was an area of sugar cane and sugar factories, the local committee had invited people from the sugar industry who came. Here, the speakers were the pioneers in organic farming like Sri. Badi Bhai Joshi, Sri Nnevabhai Patel, Sri. Mahindra Bhatt, Sri Mohan Shankar Deshpande from Maharashtra and Sri. Sandvanam Patel. The long sessions of speeches and question-answers were interspersed with the soothing flute of Sri. Bhaskar who played Gandhiji’s favourite song (vaishnava janato).

The last day was on the 8th of May at a village near Bharuch. The demonstrations were on compost preparation by Sarvdaman Patel started even before the sun came out of his blanket. It was on the second day of the Yatra in Bhattgam. The demonstration was a systematic one. He arranged every item that could be used for making compost and the other ingredients on the ground. The open air ‘classroom’ gradually became hot with the rays of the very hot sun but as everyone was absorbed by the magical words of Sri. Sandvanam Patel, it seemed as if they didn’t realize it.

The next event was field visit. Tractors were arranged for going to the fields. There were other vehicles also. Three farms were visited. Three of them were sugar cane fields. The village the group visited there were about ten organic farmers who cultivate sugar cane. Experts like Mohan Shankar Deshpande, Mahendra Bhatt and Sarvdaman Patel explained the aspects of organic cultivation, mulching and irrigation methods to the participants. The indoor session followed by this was led by the pioneer and thinker Gangaprasad A. Gavai. He had a long talk on the significance of organic farming and its role in the current context of globalization. The session was followed by a question answer session in which people participated with enthusiasm.

The group discussions in the afternoon were on the cultivation methods and problems of different crops. The groups were divided into six according to crops. Sarvdaman Patel led the group that discussed vegetable cultivation. Mahindra Bhatt led the group for sugar cane. Problematic soil was the subject of the group led by Raju Jenthraniya. Banana cultivation and orchard were discussed in two groups under the leadership of Chottu Bhai and Badi Bhai respectively. Kapil Shah concentrated on the tribal groups and their cultivation methods. Everyone participated in these discussions. Afterwards the farmers reflected on the group discussions.

There was a video show about the impacts of chemical farming. The film discussed the various dangers caused by chemicals and the traditional organic alternatives to chemicals. This was followed by a drama. In the play, the character became slowly crazy because of his chemicals. He even becomes immune to poisons and wails that his efforts to commit suicide by drinking pesticides went in vain.

By evening the winding up sessions started. In his concluding talk, Kapil Shah spoke about the importance of organic farming. This was followed by Badi Bhai’s poem on ‘Sajiv Mathal’. This concluded the 8-day yatra. The Yatra is just one facet of the whole organic movement in Gujarat. Though ‘Jatan’ took the initiative for it, it organized it under the name of ‘Akhil Gujarat Sajiv Kheti Samaj’ which is part of OAFI. The magazine named ‘Jatan’ is made available for the farmers who take membership in OAFI for free. So things are moving in Gujarat. More people are attracted to the movement. And the people behind the scene are a bright future for organic farming in this soil. Let us hope the traditional seeds of healthy food and ethical practices will grow and prosper to save the future generations from the global giants.
A group of farmers, media persons and representa-
tives of the Consumers Association of Penang vis-
it a number of organic farms in Tamil Nadu from 20-26 September 2005. The visit was hosted by Shri. N. Gopalakrishnan, one of the pioneering figures in the organic farming movement in Tamil Nadu, an excellent vermiculturist and an advisor to OFAI.

The group from Malaysia consisted of 39 peo-
ple. Two of them were from the Consumers Asso-
ciation of Penang (CAP). There were three press reporters but the farmers were the majority. The three reporters represented three different language papers published in Malay, English and Chinese. Among the farmers, there were Tamil speaking people who were Malaysian-Indians. All others, except a native of Malaysia, were Chinese.

None of them were organic farmers. But they wanted to convert to organic farming. The visit included several lectures by organic farmers. The group hired a bus in Chennai and visited several organic farms. They utilized all the six days for this purpose.

On the 20th September, 2005 they started their quest by visiting the farm of Shri. S. R. Sundararaman, Sathyamangalam. There they attended two sessions of this pioneering farmer. Maintaining biodiversity in cultivation and the appropriate preparations of bio-fertilizers were the main focus of the first day.

The next day they visited the farm of N. Gopalakrishnan himself. On that day the subjects were preparation of vermi-compost, cultivation using effective microorganisms, panchagavya, and preparation of herbal pest repellers. That evening they went to a sugar factory in Vettavattahalai. On 22 September they visited a group farm run under the ‘Saraswathi Kisan Vikas Kendra’. It was a Government project. Here they saw organic methods of rearing cattle.

Terry High Tech Nursery, Thanjavur, Siddhivinayagar Farms near Chennai were the other farms they visited. ‘Siddhivinayagar Farms’ is a semi organic farm which grows vanilla in green houses. They also visited an NGO in Dindigul run by Paul Bhaskar. A priest who is working as part of the same set-up demonstrated various methods of water harvesting.

In the final days of the visit they attended two lectures. One was by Prof. S. Punyamoorthy and the other by Dr. Sultan Ismail. Prof. S. Punyamoorthy described herbal veterinary medicines and Dr. Ismail gave them a practical talk on earthworms with the help of slides. The visit concluded on the 26 September and they returned to Malaysia the same night.

The result of the farm visit was that some of the farmers who visited the organic farms realized the possibilities of organic farming and have started the conversion.
MOFF has been working with the idea of organic farming schools. The inauguration of the first organic farming school in the hilly area of Shri Tukaram Shitole, Navi Sambal, Tal, Haiti, Dist. Pune, took place on 27th of October 2004 at the auspicious hands of Hon. Shri Balasaheb Bhende, the great Gandhian. On the same day, another 21 schools were inaugurated in other parts of the State. MOFF plans to have at least three to five such organic schools in each taluka of Maharashtra.

Organic farming schools have opened new opportunities for farmers learning on-farm techniques of organic farming. Every Thursday, a minimum of between 18 to 22 farmers meet in every organic school and fruitful discussions take place during these meetings.

Farmers are keen that their organic farm produce must fetch a good market price. However, this is possible only if the produce is properly certified. Local level standardization and certification agencies are being developed accordingly under the supervision of MOFF. In view of this, local level workshops where conducted in Vidarbha, Marathawada, Eastern and Northern Maharashtra. Farmers will be benefited in availing organic certification at very low cost. MOFF plans to take the help of the national level certification agency for this purpose.

MOFF also intends to develop the market for organic produce. A six month beginning MOFF conducted an Organic Rice Festival with the help of the Maharashtra Agriculture Department and the Agriculture Produce Marketing Department along with the Pune Municipal Corporation from 29-31 January 2005. In this festival, 32 farmers and five women SHGs participated. The festival generated a good turnover of Rs.25 lakhs in just three days.

Acceptance of GATT has led to changes in government policies concerning agriculture. Farmers have been compelled to accept these changes. However, MOFF will never allow any changes that are against the interest of farming community and in particular, resource-poor farmers. Accordingly, MOFF has taken a stand against the Seedi Bill and organized public meetings on 17th February 2005. Smt. Vandana Shiva addressed the gathering on the issue of terminator seeds and the hazardous effects of chemical fertilizers. There was a good response of from the public including government officials and scientists from agriculture universities.

Thereafter, a four member panel from MOFF presented the farmers' views and action plan regarding the Seed Bill during the meeting organized by Navdanya on 1-3 March 2005 in Delhi.

MOFF organized a national workshop on organic farming at Nagpur from 12-13 April 2005 in association with NOCF. The workshop was inaugurated by Sudhirkumar Goyal, Commissioner, Agriculture, Maharashtra State, who is an ardent promoter of organic farming.

In addition to this, a capacity building workshop for Directors of Organic Farming Schools was organized by MOFF from 25-27 May 2005 at YASHODA, Pune. The workshop was inaugurated by the Hon. Minister Shri Ajitlalrao Pawar in the presence of Hon. Agriculture Minister Shri Balasaheb Thorat. Technical experts from various fields provided the necessary guidance.

FAO, India organized a workshop from 18-19 July 2005 at Ghatkal, New Delhi on organic farming. The President of MOFF along with other four representatives presented a concept note on organic farming at the meeting. MOFF has been selected by FAO to develop an organic package of practices for four important crops viz. sugarcane, cotton, wheat and paddy.

As a part of its activities to promote organic farming, MOFF organized a fund raising program "JEVAN YANNA KALALE HO" in Pune in which famous actor Shri Shanta Patkar presented his life history. In addition to fund raising, the concept of MOFF on organic farming was appraised to urban society and received proper branding. MOFF awarded the organic farming school directors with cash award of Rs.10,000 each for the hard work. Two farming groups from Malwa Taluka were also awarded cash prizes of Rs.25,000 each by the V F Foundation at the auspicious hands of Shri Shanta Patkar.

MOFF’s apex body meeting held on 24th July 2005 passed a resolution for membership of MOFF. Participants opined that MOFF should take the lead in creating a platform for marketing organic produce. Accordingly, MOFF has started working with USAID GMED to develop a marketing chain for organic produce.

A special issue of the daily Raahat Raj was published in 1.5 lakh copies circulated to MOFF members, Grampanchayats, Zilla Parishads and various government officials to promote the concept of organic farming in entire state. Articles publish in Rashtriya discussed organic farming, seed policy, agro-technology etc.

The President of MOFF along with other members visited South India from 26-22 September 2005 to promote the MOFF concept of organic farming in other states. The tour was planned to strengthen the organic movement by taking help of other eminent organizations including the Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT) for medial intercropping or ethnobotany health care and the Kamata State Farming Association (KSF) Bangalore. Fruitful discussions were held with Shri Darshan Shankar (LLHT) and Advocate Jayaram (KSF) who suggested forming a nationwide presenigung group led by MOFF.

From "Shashwat", MOFF journal

**Organic farmers rise to tsunami challenges**

The Tsunami that hit the eastern coast of Tamil Nadu on the 26th of December 2004, among others, deprived several farming communities along the coast of their only livelihood. The salination of the agricultural land rendered it un-cultivable to the normal crops that the farmers were accustomed to.

The normal process of reviving the land using conventional means is estimated to take up to five years. However, that is too long a period for the impoverished and tragedy-struck farmers. Hence, an alternate approach was urgently needed.

The Tamil Nadu Organic Farmers Movement led by Nirmalakrishnan proposed to use a combination of organic farming methods that had borne fruits in several saline soils sites elsewhere to revive the agricultural land, while keeping the farmers active and self-reliant. The following techniques have proven to be successful in other locations along the coastal Tamil Nadu over the past few years.

1. Digging trenches in fields at regular intervals and burying coarse material like bamboo, prosopis tree pieces.

2. Sowing thakai seeds (common name: dhania) in the vicinity of the irrigation channels, another simple solution, and sea-buckthorn cannabis (Rs.20 per kg), growing the thakai seedlings in the saline fields, and incorporating the matured plants into the soil after 45 days. This increases the humus content of the soil and reduces the salinity to a great extent.

3. Applying goopathy (the conventional remedy) was not applicable to these tsunami-affected villages as there are no fresh water sources to wash away the salinity from the fields. Further, the agricultural department’s soil testing reports have shown that the pH of the soil in many fields has not increased much, only its EC (electric conductivity). So the application of gompatha is not at all necessary for many of the fields. Our regular practice is mulching the soil unto one foot height and spraying aritha solution on the mulch (amirtha solution is a fermented mixture of cow dung, cow urine and jaggery). This method of adding animal and plant water mixture has proven to be a good remedy for reducing salinity in fields.

4. Over and above all these, the most important method of removing salinity from the soil is through the application of biotechnology i.e. using the microorganisms. We have several bio solutions which improve the soil fertility dramatically, namely, vermiwash, panchagaya, attarum farmer’s cyctome solution, farmer’s EM solution, casimom, etc. These have been tested in thousands of acres of farming lands and their effectiveness has been proved successfully.

5. Raising rows of fodder trees on both eastern and western sides and in between these rows, ploughing the land and farming it using only organic methods. This alley cropping method helps to reduce the evaporation rate and therefore the capillary rise of the salts from underground to the field surface is avoided.

6. A nether important technique is sowing wheat, barley, oats, barley, rye, and Oats in intraspecific hybrid varieties as they are saline resistant and can grow good yield even in saline soils e.g., pokkali rice, ura mundane, kushtyaddan, kalar samba, etc. This practice not only provides fodder for cattle, but also improves the soil fertility to a great extent by addition of carbon rich biomass to the soil (as the consumed parts of these plants are returned to the soil following the law of return to nature).

7. The next stage is to cultivate the cultivation of fodder crops like CO-3 grass, kushkhalat grass, choral, kampa etc. This practice not only provides fodder for cattle, but also improves the soil fertility to a great extent by addition of carbon rich biomass to the soil (as the consumed parts of these plants are returned to the soil following the law of return to nature).

8. After a period of six months with these techniques, we can switch over to paddy cultivation. We have so many traditional paddy varieties that are saline resistant and can grow good yield even in saline soils e.g., pokkali rice, ura mundane, kushtyaddan, kalar samba, etc.

During this period of saline removal, parallel activities of training farmers to prepare compost, vermiculture, production of vermicultings and vermicheets etc., are carried out. Also the produce that is cultivated is grown with the utmost care as a means for survival during the rehabilitation period.

- M Revati
Panchagavya: Interview with Dr K Natarajan

CA: Can this be used as a dilution in water or as a folio spray?

N: The water in panchagavya solution contains all the major nutrients - nitrogen, phosphorus, potash, all the micro- acids like folic acid, ... It contains essential vitamins and enzymes. It contains everything.

CA: Have you done a laboratory analysis of what you have found?

N: Yes, we have done ... A laboratory analysis. It contains all these elements. It has everything. We have the reports.

The mode of usage is: It has to be made as a 3% solution with water i.e. 3% of panchagavya with 97% of water can be used as a folio spray. It can be used for root irrigation, in irrigation water. It can be used for seed treatment and also for ... These are all the uses.

Periodicity of use: Once in 15 days, it can be used for all crops. In winter crops, 1.5-2% usage is sufficient but for all other crops 3% should be used.

CA: You were saying that Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has done some work on this. What are their results?

N: They have got very good results for all crops. What they say is that it improves the immunity of the crops. It improves the growth of the plants. It also improves the shelf life. Keeping of the crops goes up and the quality of the produce is excellent.

N: In the year 1998 I got your Organic Farming Sourcebook when I was at Bangalore. While going through this book, there was an article by a French scientist who mentioned that he used cow dung and cow urine in equal proportion along with jaggery for fermentation and to keep it for 20 days until methane gas was released. After that he used 2% of the solution with water and sprayed on grape vineyards. After spraying once in 15 days, he noticed the growth of the leaves and of the fruits was very good. He noticed that the fruit was very good, and also the taste and the aroma.

A: Did you spray the tree or the leaves?

N: The leaves sir. More leaves and more dense flowering developed and the drumstick pods also improved. The pods were longer and bigger in size and they could be kept for a longer period than ordinary drumsticks. This tree was giving very few flowers and a few pods. After spraying one in 15 days, we ex- pected the production of the crops to go up and the quality of the produce to keep.

Periodicity of use: Once in 15 days, it can be used for root irrigation, in irrigation water. It can be used for seed treatment and also for ... These are all the uses.

CA: Can this be used as a dilution in water or as a folio spray?

N: The water in panchagavya solution contains all the major nutrients - nitrogen, phosphorus, potash, all the micro- acids like folic acid, ... It contains essential vitamins and enzymes. It contains everything.

CA: Have you done a laboratory analysis of what you have found?

N: Yes, we have done ... A laboratory analysis. It contains all these elements. It has everything. We have the reports.

The mode of usage is: It has to be made as a 3% solution with water i.e. 3% of panchagavya with 97% of water can be used as a folio spray. It can be used for root irrigation, in irrigation water. It can be used for seed treatment and also for ... These are all the uses.

Periodicity of use: Once in 15 days, it can be used for all crops. In winter crops, 1.5-2% usage is sufficient but for all other crops 3% should be used.

CA: You were saying that Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has done some work on this. What are their results?

N: They have got very good results for all crops. What they say is that it improves the immunity of the crops. It improves the growth of the plants. It also improves the shelf life. Keeping of the crops goes up and the quality of the produce is excellent.

N: The leaves sir. More leaves and more dense flowering developed and the drumstick pods also improved. The pods were longer and bigger in size and they could be kept for a longer period than ordinary drumsticks. This tree was giving very few flowers and a few pods. After spraying one in 15 days, we expected the production of the crops to go up and the quality of the produce to keep.

Periodicity of use: Once in 15 days, it can be used for root irrigation, in irrigation water. It can be used for seed treatment and also for ... These are all the uses.

CA: Can this be used as a dilution in water or as a folio spray?

N: The water in panchagavya solution contains all the major nutrients - nitrogen, phosphorus, potash, all the micro- acids like folic acid, ... It contains essential vitamins and enzymes. It contains everything.

CA: Have you done a laboratory analysis of what you have found?

N: Yes, we have done ... A laboratory analysis. It contains all these elements. It has everything. We have the reports.

The mode of usage is: It has to be made as a 3% solution with water i.e. 3% of panchagavya with 97% of water can be used as a folio spray. It can be used for root irrigation, in irrigation water. It can be used for seed treatment and also for ... These are all the uses.

Periodicity of use: Once in 15 days, it can be used for all crops. In winter crops, 1.5-2% usage is sufficient but for all other crops 3% should be used.

CA: You were saying that Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has done some work on this. What are their results?

N: They have got very good results for all crops. What they say is that it improves the immunity of the crops. It improves the growth of the plants. It also improves the shelf life. Keeping of the crops goes up and the quality of the produce is excellent.

N: In the year 1998 I got your Organic Farming Sourcebook when I was at Bangalore. While going through this book, there was an article by a French scientist who mentioned that he used cow dung and cow urine in equal proportion along with jaggery for fermentation and to keep it for 20 days until methane gas was released. After that he used 2% of the solution with water and sprayed on grape vineyards. After spraying once in 15 days, he noticed the growth of the leaves and of the fruits was very good. He noticed that the fruit was very good, and also the taste and the aroma.

A: Did you spray the tree or the leaves?

N: The leaves sir. More leaves and more dense flowering developed and the drumstick pods also improved. The pods were longer and bigger in size and they could be kept for a longer period than ordinary drumsticks. This tree was giving very few flowers and a few pods. After spraying one in 15 days, we ex- pected the production of the crops to go up and the quality of the produce to keep.

Periodicity of use: Once in 15 days, it can be used for root irrigation, in irrigation water. It can be used for seed treatment and also for ... These are all the uses.

CA: Can this be used as a dilution in water or as a folio spray?

N: The water in panchagavya solution contains all the major nutrients - nitrogen, phosphorus, potash, all the micro- acids like folic acid, ... It contains essential vitamins and enzymes. It contains everything.

CA: Have you done a laboratory analysis of what you have found?

N: Yes, we have done ... A laboratory analysis. It contains all these elements. It has everything. We have the reports.

The mode of usage is: It has to be made as a 3% solution with water i.e. 3% of panchagavya with 97% of water can be used as a folio spray. It can be used for root irrigation, in irrigation water. It can be used for seed treatment and also for ... These are all the uses.

Periodicity of use: Once in 15 days, it can be used for all crops. In winter crops, 1.5-2% usage is sufficient but for all other crops 3% should be used.

CA: You were saying that Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has done some work on this. What are their results?

N: They have got very good results for all crops. What they say is that it improves the immunity of the crops. It improves the growth of the plants. It also improves the shelf life. Keeping of the crops goes up and the quality of the produce is excellent.

N: In the year 1998 I got your Organic Farming Sourcebook when I was at Bangalore. While going through this book, there was an article by a French scientist who mentioned that he used cow dung and cow urine in equal proportion along with jaggery for fermentation and to keep it for 20 days until methane gas was released. After that he used 2% of the solution with water and sprayed on grape vineyards. After spraying once in 15 days, he noticed the growth of the leaves and of the fruits was very good. He noticed that the fruit was very good, and also the taste and the aroma.

A: Did you spray the tree or the leaves?

N: The leaves sir. More leaves and more dense flowering developed and the drumstick pods also improved. The pods were longer and bigger in size and they could be kept for a longer period than ordinary drumsticks. This tree was giving very few flowers and a few pods. After spraying one in 15 days, we ex- pected the production of the crops to go up and the quality of the produce to keep.

Periodicity of use: Once in 15 days, it can be used for root irrigation, in irrigation water. It can be used for seed treatment and also for ... These are all the uses.

CA: Can this be used as a dilution in water or as a folio spray?

N: The water in panchagavya solution contains all the major nutrients - nitrogen, phosphorus, potash, all the micro- acids like folic acid, ... It contains essential vitamins and enzymes. It contains everything.

CA: Have you done a laboratory analysis of what you have found?

N: Yes, we have done ... A laboratory analysis. It contains all these elements. It has everything. We have the reports.

The mode of usage is: It has to be made as a 3% solution with water i.e. 3% of panchagavya with 97% of water can be used as a folio spray. It can be used for root irrigation, in irrigation water. It can be used for seed treatment and also for ... These are all the uses.

Periodicity of use: Once in 15 days, it can be used for all crops. In winter crops, 1.5-2% usage is sufficient but for all other crops 3% should be used.

CA: You were saying that Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has done some work on this. What are their results?

N: They have got very good results for all crops. What they say is that it improves the immunity of the crops. It improves the growth of the plants. It also improves the shelf life. Keeping of the crops goes up and the quality of the produce is excellent.
Jaiva Karshaka Samithi Meet in Kerala

The Kerala Jaiva Karshaka Samithi (Organic Farmers' Association of Kerala) is the principal organization of organic farmers in the State. There are both farmers and non-farmers who support organic farming within the association.

The movement that the association represents started after people began to realize the negative impacts of chemicals and the failure of modern medicine in certain diseases. This stimulated them to think about new ways to maintain good health. The search went until someone found naturality. Though the search is not yet complete and people are still continuing it, a group of them decided to get involved in naturality as a way of life.

This group recognized the need for organic food, as the materials they got from the market were literally doped in chemicals and pesticides. Some of them were farmers and they started the enquiry of farming without chemicals or organic farming. Or to be more precise, they turned back to their old, traditional farming practices keeping in mind modern 'organic thinking'.

Later this message of organic farming and naturality spread throughout Kerala and gradually like-minded groups were formed. Some of them bloomed, some of them merged and a few others just vanished. The Kerala Jaiva Karshaka Samithi is one of the survivors and it is today one of the leading organic farmers' and naturality groups in Kerala. It is always a wonderful feeling to be in their midst.

The thirteenth meeting of the Samiti was held from 12-13 May, 2005 at the Puthenchira Government L.P. School in Thrissur District. A local committee was formed earlier for the smooth conduct of the programme. Most of the members in the organizing committee were from an informal environmental group named the Chalakkudi Puzha Samrakshana Samiti (Association for Protecting the Chalakkudi river). The group has also been involved in various other struggles related to environmental issues.

Maybe the most important and interesting part about this group must be the fact that the majority of them are either wage workers or farmers. One of the leading personalities in the group, Mr. Karim, is a construction worker. These people do all the struggle and campaigns while they try to survive with their normal income.

The local committee members wanted the meeting to be a memorable event for the participants and more importantly for the Puthenchira villagers. They observed that usually the common man always looks down on the get-togethers of villagers. The men stayed in the school and the women were accommodated in a near lodge. Everyone went to sleep with tired bodies and thoughts and visited the exhibition stalls. The accommodation for women was at a house in the village. The men stayed in the school and in a nearby lodge.

As evening gave way to night, the small school hall had filled with people from other parts of Kerala. The hall had filled with people from other parts of Kerala. They exchanged seeds and thoughts and visited the exhibition stalls. The local people came and went in between.

After this session people gathered here and there or talked with the farmers who had come in from other parts of Kerala. They exchanged seeds and thoughts and visited the exhibition stalls. The local people came and went in between.

The first major item on the first day was the talk by K.V. Dayal. He talked about the basics of organic farming. Though the committee had done a good job at inviting people, they hardly expected the crowd that turned up on the first day. The local people participated in the interaction session that followed Dayal's lecture. The session in fact had to be extended because of requests from the audience. This is something rare.

After this session people gathered here and there or talked with the farmers who had come in from other parts of Kerala. They exchanged seeds and thoughts and visited the exhibition stalls. The local people came and went in between.

Mr. Karim, is a construction worker. These people do all the struggle and campaigns while they try to survive with their normal income.

The local committee members wanted the meeting to be a memorable event for the participants and more importantly for the Puthenchira villagers. They observed that usually the common man always looks down on the get-togethers of villagers. The men stayed in the school and the women were accommodated in a near lodge. Everyone went to sleep with tired bodies and thoughts and visited the exhibition stalls. The accommodation for women was at a house in the village. The men stayed in the school and in a nearby lodge.

As evening gave way to night, the small school hall had filled with people from other parts of Kerala.

After a tasty dinner of ‘Kari’ and ‘Kappa’, everyone gathered under a tree in the open air. The talk and share session was organized all the three days. Altermedia arranged a little exhibition in one of the classrooms where it exhibited books, organic food products, wooden toys, areca plates, etc. This attracted the farmers who came from far away places as well as the public.

The topic was ‘Popular Health’. It covered areas like the bad sides of modern medicine and the like the bad sides of modern medicine and the possibilities of naturality and other branches of medicine. Healthy and poison free food came in mind modern ‘organic thinking’.

The accommodation for women was at a house in the village. The men stayed in the school and in a nearby lodge. Everyone went to sleep with tired bodies and charged minds.

On the second day, the programme started with Claude Alvaras’s talk on ‘The Living Soil’. Alvaras talked about the activities of microorganisms, biomasses and the relation between the natural populations of microflora and fauna. Though the talk was difficult, the translator did a fine job in rendering a translation.

Afterwards Claude Alvaras spoke about the ‘impacts of globalization on the farming sector of India’. His talk was translated by Mohan Kumar. R. Radhakrishnan from Alappuzha was the next speaker. He talked about his tiny farm of 10 cents. He told the audience that he had almost all the vegetables and tubers that he needed grown in his small patch of land around his home. The talk gave some insights towards making use of every available piece of land in a properly planned way.

As evening gave way to night, the small school hall had filled with people from other parts of Kerala.

After a tasty dinner of ‘Kari’ and ‘Kappa’, everyone gathered under a tree in the open air. The talk and share session was organized all the three days. Altermedia arranged a little exhibition in one of the classrooms where it exhibited books, organic food products, wooden toys, areca plates, etc. This attracted the farmers who came from far away places as well as the public.

The topic was ‘Popular Health’. It covered areas like the bad sides of modern medicine and the like the bad sides of modern medicine and the possibilities of naturality and other branches of medicine. Healthy and poison free food came in mind modern ‘organic thinking’.

The accommodation for women was at a house in the village. The men stayed in the school and in a nearby lodge. Everyone went to sleep with tired bodies and charged minds.

On the second day, the programme started with Claude Alvaras’s talk on ‘The Living Soil’. Alvaras talked about the activities of microorganisms, biomasses and the relation between the natural populations of microflora and fauna. Though the talk was difficult, the translator did a fine job in rendering a translation.

Aadv Joseph Philip (the previous President of the Madappalli Panchayath) talked about the environmental works in Madappalli Block Panchayath. He described the work he and his colleagues had done to protect and preserve the environment of the block panchayath.

Sri. A. Mohan Kumar talked on ‘organic farming and struggle against colonisation’. He described the multinational companies and their ‘black agendas’ to snatch away the rights and seeds of poor farmers.

In between these talks, there were some other interesting activities going on outside Santhosh, a veterinary surgeon from Kollikkode, did a demonstration on hand made paper while an engineer with the Kerala State Electricity Board discussed a small dynamo fitted with turbine which could produce energy by small streams.

The afternoon session was occupied with the presentations of three evening talks each active in social issues. One was Dr. Latha, the second Dr. Elizabeth Joseph and the third, Dr. Salikuttay Joseph. Dr. Latha described the struggle to preserve the Chalakkud river while Dr. Eliza- thened the struggle against colonisation. He de-
REGENERATING THE SOIL
Claude Bisquarrignon
This is a new and revolutionary book, Claude Bisquarrignon explains the natural basis of organic agriculture. Following the footsteps of Albert Howard who wrote similarly more than sixty years ago, Bisquarrignon shows how certain farming practices can make the most efficient and organic farming known ever. He then describes his experiments in following the forest model of using the soil – and the organisms in the soil – for producing food. Bisquarrignon shows how 75% of the nutrients of the plants come from the atmosphere. However, because we do not cultivate the microorganisms of the soil, we forbid their capacity to transform natural nutritional resources in a form readily available. To avoid the degeneration of agriculture that must surely come in many places where excessive chemicals have ruined this most basic ability of plants to respond to human emotions, he shows how to bring them out of the ground and utilize them for various purposes including composting and garbage reprocessing. He has a separate chapter on the use of earthworms in organic agriculture.

AN AGRICULTURAL TESTAMENT
Abbe C. Dorff
Pp. 265 (1939) Rs 250
This first truly organic farming book ever written in modern times. Albert Howard invented the Indore method of composting. His organically grown produce was always healthy, he would intentionally release insects on them to show how readily they were. Howard argued brilliantly that the best possible farming is one where we do so more than following the patterns of the earth itself.

THE EARTHWORM BOOK
Sultan Iqbal
Pp. 128 (1999) Rs 150
This first rate book on earthworms tells you everything you need to know about them, from one of India's foremost experts on the subject. The book first deals with the science, particularly the biology of earthworms, then examines their life cycles. Being a practical minded scientist, Sultan Iqbal concentrates on the culture of indigenous earthworms, how to bring them out of the ground and utilizes them for various purposes including composting and garlic reprocessing. He has a separate chapter on the use of earthworms in organic farming.

ORGANIC FARMING
A.K. Gaddar and Santu Karmakar
Pp. 100 (1998) Rs 125
The basic principles of organic farming are explained in the context of natural processes. It covers the fundamentals of soil, water, and atmosphere. It describes the practical aspects of various organic farming methods and provides detailed instructions for their implementation. The book is designed in a manner such that the pages when separated can also be used individually.

ORGANIC METHODS OF PEST & DISEASE MANAGEMENT
K. Vijayalakshmi et al
P. 20 (2003) Rs 100
This book is a must-read for anyone interested in sustainable farming methods. It covers the basics of setting up a small unit for the production of organic produce. It explains the importance of using organic matter from other sources for a healthy soil. The book also provides detailed instructions on the use of biopesticides and biofertilizers. It is a valuable resource for farmers and sustainable agriculture practitioners.

THE CASE FOR A GM-FREE SUSTAINABLE WORLD
S.C. Dey
This book offers a detailed explanation on seed selection, cultivation methods, and pest and diseases affecting plants and how to control them with organic means. It is a valuable resource for farmers and sustainable agriculture practitioners.

ORGANIC PADDY CULTIVATION
K. Vijayalakshmi et al
P. 204 (2002) Rs 125
This book is a comprehensive guide on organic paddy cultivation. It covers the important factors affecting paddy cultivation and provides detailed instructions on the use of biopesticides and biofertilizers. It is a valuable resource for farmers and sustainable agriculture practitioners.

THE PENGUIN BOOK OF GARDENING IN INDIA
Mushrooms for Livelihood
Pp 64 (1993) Rs 40
This book is a valuable resource for farmers and sustainable agriculture practitioners. It provides detailed instructions on the use of biopesticides and biofertilizers. It is a valuable resource for farmers and sustainable agriculture practitioners.