Enlivening the soil with microorganisms

OFAI organized a workshop on "Use of Beneficial Microbes for Organic Farming" on 10 and 11 January, 2008, at the Orissa University of Agriculture & Technology [OUAT], Sripur Chowk, Bhubaneswar. The Faculty/Resource Persons included Manohar Chowk, Bhubaneswar. The Faculty/Resource Persons included Manohar Chowk, Bhubaneswar. The Faculty/Resource Persons included Manohar Parchure on "Theory of Microbial Production"; Dr K Natarajan on "Preparation of Panchagavyam" preparation and use; Subhash Sharma on "Crop mix for better organic production" and Mr. N. Gopalkrishnan on "Preparation of fish-based microbials. The response of the large number of farmers was overwhelming.

The use of Amrutpani, Panchagavya and other activated microbial preparations to enrich the soil was also the main thrust of the North India Organic Farming Conference held at IGFRI-Jhansi [UP] on 9 and 10 February, 2008. On 3 March, 2008, these techniques and technologies for successful organic farming were demonstrated at Sevasram-Angamally in Ernakulam district of Kerala.

On 18 April this year, the Radio Trust, Trichy [TN] hosted a similar workshop in the ongoing series of state-level and regional workshops to educate farmers on the unutilized or underutilized wealth that exists on their own farms.

In Hindi, soil is often referred to as "murdha" which is also a term used to refer to the dead. In reality, the soil is a living system teeming with microorganisms that fix nitrogen, convert ammonia to nitrates or vice-versa, solubilize phosphates, decompose biodegradable plant and animal material. There are millions of microorganisms in a handful of soil. Hence, organic farming practitioners truthfully say, "Murdha jinda hai." The soil is truly alive!
Organic Farming Association of India

Programmes held (from January to May 2008)

1. OFAI Workshop on Use Of Beneficial Microbes for Organic Farming 10-11 January, 2008, Bhubaneswar
5. Workshop on Use Of Beneficial Microbes for Organic Farming, Angamally-Kerala 03 March, 2008
6. Workshop on vermicomposting at Trichy, Tamil Nadu, 18 & 19 April, 2008

Kusuma puvvu, Erra jonna, Aagargul, Kodi saama, Penta ervu, Erra korra, Nalla togari, Bbelbji, Baimugu, Gundo jonna, Anumu, Joddedulu, Pesari, Sai jonna, Pundi and Sajja. Total number of members in the forty groups is 200.

Timbuktu Collective operating from Chennekothapalli village in Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh, has seventeen Local Groups in the Chennekothapalli, Ramagiri and Roddam Mandal [talukas] of Anantapur District. The name of each of the seventeen “Local Groups is uniformly suffixed with the words “Sendriya Vyavasaya Sangham”. Their names are: Kalpataruvi, Dhanyalakshmi, Yellamma, Sri Gopalakrishna, Akkamagari, Sri Dutaga, Lakshmi, Dhanalakshmi, Narasimhima swamy, Dhanavanti, Bhoolakshmi, Sreeharuma, Maruthi, Dhanyalakshmi, Pothalaiah, Sirrama and Chennakesava swamy.

Sri Gopala Krishna Sendriya Vyavasaya Sangham [AP C10 004] led by Smt. Udha and Shri. Akkulapppa in village Shyapuram of Roddam Mandal, Anantapur, since November, 2005, is one of the oldest “Local Groups and has 24 farm families that have been trained to conduct farm visits. Chennakesava Swamy Sendriya Vyavasaya Sangham [AP C10 017] led by Smt. Ramanamma and Smt. Venkatarnarayana at village Brahanamali of Chennekothapalli Mandal is the most recent to be registered under pgs in Andhra Pradesh in 2007. Total number of members in the seventeen groups is 431, with each group having 19 to 31 members.

Kerala

INFAC has created the Eco-Friend pgs Group [KL A01 001] of ten member farm families led by George Anthony. It was started on 02 October, 2007 with members of the Farm Planning Team of INFAC as its core. Two of its new members have been trained for farm visits.

Tamil Nadu

Led by OFAI State Secretariat under 709F, there are four Local Groups with a total of 38 members registered in Tamil Nadu. The group led by Mr. Navaneedha Krishnan at Metturpalyam, 641301 [TN A01 001] has the maximum number of nineteen farm families. Two other groups, at Valayampattu village of Tiruvannamalai taluk and Velayudamapalayam of Karur taluka, have seven farm families each. The smallest Local Group has the mandatory minimum of five farm families at Kottur village in Moppilachi taluka. Steps have been initiated to register the groups under PGSOIC.

Uttar Pradesh

There is just one pgs Local Group of eleven members named Palkari [UP A01 001] in village Palkari of Baberu tehsil [taluka] of Banda District, U.P. led by Shri B.L. Patil. Its members are trained for farm visits and the formalities for registration under PGSOIC have been initiated. The recently held North India Organic Farming Conference at Jhansi has generated great interest in pgs in U.P. and neighbouring state of Madhya Pradesh.

Maharashtra

The Maharashtra Organic Farmers’ Federation or MOFF has 14 groups under the pgs with 5 in Latur, 3 in Amravati, and 2 each in Akola and Sangli. Thus, there are 77 Local Groups spread over five states. The pgs label for use by some of these groups has been approved by the pgs Organic India Council. The Local Groups will use the PGSOIC logo along with their 8-digit alpha numerical code as the guarantee that the product is organically produced, processed and packaged. The pgs works on peer pressure. If any product with the “organic” label is found not conforming to the “Basic Standards”, the whole Local Group will lose the right to use the label. The temptation to take risks and indulge in malpractices is highly reduced by this participatory process that involves the group of farmers.

Events calendar

Scheduled Events

1. Workshops on Organic Farming, Siolim and Margao, Goa, on 23 and 24 August, 2008
3. PGSOIC meeting at Aurangabad, Maharashtra on 18 September, 2008.
5. Organic Farming for Spice Growers (to be scheduled) at Coorg, Karnataka.

For Reservation/Details Contact: Miguel Braganza/Reshma Pednekar OFAI-CS myofai@gmail.com Phone: 0832-2255913 Mapusa 403507 Goa

Biodynamic Farming and Gardening

By Peter Proctor
Pp. 211 (2008) Rs.250

In his remarkable new book, based mostly on his own understanding of biodynamic farming and practice, Peter Proctor lays out the principal principles and features of biodynamic farming. He has also added lengthy portions on his experiences of biodynamic farming in India. For those into this method of agriculture and for all organic farmers in general, here is a major classic to relish with delight.
Indigenous crop seeds – the way to grow!

Control over seeds is control over crops and, thereby, control over food, health and prosperity of a nation. Targeted food aid and seed distribution in the past has converted people from a staple diet of coarse rice and curry into wheat product consumers. The Public Distribution System [PDS] has made a generation – raised on a healthy diet of millets – into addicts of a rice-based diet. In large tracts of land, efficient rain fed millet production has been abandoned in an attempt to grow rice under similar conditions and has led to rural indebtedness. Huge costs are incurred in India, transporting wheat grown in the temperate north to the tropical south. This increases the import bill for petroleum for transportation, increases greenhouses emissions and drains the nation of precious foreign exchange. It has created a strain on the transportation network [roads, rail and ports] and infrastructure for storage. Consumers have also been deprived of minerals like calcium and iron and a host of vitamins that were available in the millets and are not present in rice or wheat. They now need medical attention and pharmacetical products.

The ones who control seed production and distribution, also control the food we grow and eat. The sovereignty over crop seeds is the essence of food and national sovereignty. There is no other way! Stephen Lendman, in his review of William Engdahl’s newest book “Seeds of Destruction: The Hidden Agenda of Genetic Manipulation”, quotes what Henry Kissinger [USA President Richard Nixon’s Secretary of State during the last days of the Vietnam war and Indo-Pakistan war of 1971] said in 1970: “Control oil and you control nations; control food and you control the people.” A product known as “Agent Orange” was used to destroy the forests in Vietnam, ostensibly to find the Communist soldiers hiding in them. A generation was raised on food aid from America and the nation made dependent on food imports by destroying its capacity to feed itself. The Public Law 480 gave India food, but not seeds to grow crops on its own.

Ofai has involved itself in the promotion of organically grown seeds of traditional crop varieties. It has consciously associated itself with the efforts of other organizations and communities that work to preserve and promote the rich biodiversity of crops and their varieties through seed production, exchange, distribution and use of seeds through community effort, including the sharing of knowledge and skills associated with these crops. In order to make this information available to people who wish to access information on the rich diversity of crop seeds across India, Ofai has tied up with GREEN Foundation to document and catalogue the available crop seeds. It would facilitate exchange or transfer from such sources of seeds to organic farmers across the nation. It also recognizes the yeoman service of NGOs like Deccan Development Society which has promoted indigenous seed production and made such seeds available to farmers across the state of Andhra Pradesh through transfers from one village to another.

In Bangalore...

“Organic Seed Producers Workshop” was jointly organized by GREEN Foundation, Bangalore and Organic Farming Association of India, Goa from 30 - 31st August, 2007 at Bangalore with an objective of producing organic seeds mainly in food grains, vegetables and exchange of organic seeds among the seed production network partners. Participants presented their experience in saving seed of traditional varieties in their respective regions. GREEN Foundation was entrusted with this task of cataloguing the available seeds. The updated information would be put into printed catalogue which would be circulated among the network partners. This will be informal, non-commercial exchange network of organic seeds. Supply of seeds included in the catalogue would be ensured by the respective groups upon enquiries from the interested farmers or groups.

Hyderabad...

The Deccan Development Society [DDS] organized a Mobile Biodiversity Exhibition [Seeds Mela] at village Indoor near Hyderabad on 14 January, 2008, to mark the Makara Sankranti and Pongal festivals of India. The DDS is a twenty years old grassroots organization working in about 75 villages with women’s sanghams [voluntary village level associations] in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh. The 1000 women members of the Society represent the poorest of the poor in their village communities. A host of continuing dialogues, debates, educational and other activities with the people, facilitated by the Society, try to translate its vision for self-reliant village communities into a reality. The Mobile Biodiversity Exhibition is one expression of this desire of the DDS member sanghams to help each other by sharing knowledge, skills and inputs through a exhibiton that moves from village to village.

Over 1000 women farmers of DDS sanghams have established village level Community Gene Funds in 60 villages and have retrieved over 80 land races of traditional crops, which had been almost obliterated by so-called modern agricultural practices. By growing diverse crops on their marginalized lands, this effort has not only retrieved a strong agro biodiversity on their farms but has also reestablished women’s control and leadership over their community germplasm knowledge.

Since 1990, they have regenerated over 1000 acres of common land in and around their villages by raising neighbourhood forests. In 28 villages, they have planted over a million trees on the degraded village commons. The DDS women have also created about 30 Village Medicinal Commons growing over 60 different species of medicinal plants on patches of village common lands. Through this activity, they have regenerated most of the medicinal plants, which they use in their traditional healthcare system. This has helped them to regain control over their own bodies and their lives.

In Chhattisgarh...

The JSS has built up a collection of local rice varieties like Dubhreja, DRK, JMT, etc and used them in the Madagascar method or System of Rice Intensification [SRI]. These traditional rice varieties were exhibited at the North India Organic Farming Conference held at IGARI - Jhansi [UP] on 9 and to Febru- ary, 2008. There is a growing interest in traditional crop varieties. Unpolished rice from local varieties has been found to be rich in essential vitamins like A and B complex, besides containing significant levels of iron. Millets contain minerals like calcium and iron that are essential for good health. These varieties perform best under organic farming practices and do not need high doses of major nutrients.

Learn more about seeds from Annadana

Annadana is a seed savers network set up in India explicitly to safeguard farmers and gardeners by providing them access to organic open-pollinated vegetable seeds and all relevant skills related to seed saving and seed keeping.

The organisation works with open pollinated varieties which breed true to type and adapt well to low input farming using organic principles. According to Annadana, the advantages of open pollinated seeds are many: Seeds are assured for the small scale farmers for their next season; they are adapted to small scale farming which rely on crop rotation, crop diversification and systematic varietals mix up of crops from different genetic make up.

Become a subscriber and ask for their new organic seeds catalogue.

For more information, contact:
Annadana Soil and Seed Savers Network
‘Ishana’ Gopathi farms,
Singapur village, PO Vidyaranyapura,
Bangalore – 560097, Karnataka

production network partners. Participants presented their experience in saving seed of traditional varieties in their respective regions. GREEN Foundation was entrusted with this task of cataloguing the available seeds. The updated information would be put into printed catalogue which would be circulated among the network partners. This will be informal, non-commercial exchange network of organic seeds. Supply of seeds included in the catalogue would be ensured by the respective groups upon enquiries from the interested farmers or groups.
The “North India Organic Farming Conference” [niofc] was organized by the OFAI State Unit of Uttar Pradesh at the Indian Grasslands and Fodder Research Institute [igfri], Jhansi, UP. The two-day niofc on 09 and 10 Febru-
ary, 2008, was attended by practising organic farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh ary, 2008, was attended by practising organic farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the farmers and participants from the Ladakh Ecological Development Group [ledg], the organic farmers took control of the seminar in the post-lunch period and shared their experiences in organic farming as a better alternative to “synthetic fertilizers, synthetic pesticides and synthetic medicines” that now control our lives. Mahesh Sharma of jss talking about the successful System of Rice Intensification [sri] or Madagascan method of transplanted rice using native rice varieties like tem, Dhuchar, dhr and Saati and just 2kg seed against the traditional broadcasting of 36 to 70 Kg seed per acre, to Simraj Patel from Banda-UP sharing his experience with San-
jivak [30 litres urine + 2kg dung +200 G Gur fermented in a mud pot for 15 days] as the soil activator to Stanzing Namgyl of Ladakh sharing about the combination of human and Yak dung to raise barley and wheat, made the session interesting.

Surbir Singh, a microbiology graduate who went back to farming in Bijnor district reminded the delegates that, Thomas Alva Edi-
son's electric bulb did not fascinate his con-
temporaries as they believed that wax candles were better. The same attends organic farming amongst those who believe that “conventional” farming is better. Monoculture kills the soil by exploiting the same nutrients from the same layer of soil. A judicious crop mix containing nitrogen-fixing legumes actually enriches the soil.

Jayant Vaman Barve, a pesticide dealer who turned into an organic farmer, grows grapes and finds that the yield increases every year with organic manure while it progressively de-
creases after the initial increase using inorganic fertilizers. The organic grapes, sold with the message “Organic grapes. Ready to eat, No need to wash” on the package, are a runaway success. Organic fruits and vegetables are now being targeted for sale to families of IT profes-
sionals with the slogan, “If you earn well, you deserve to live well with healthy food.” Jayant Barve emphasized that there is no need to ex-
port organic food. We need to look after our own and our nation’s health first!

Mr. Shyam Behari Gupta is a promoter of organic farming, on the other hand, is an evolving process that is perpetual. On the second day, Dr. O.P. Srivastava, ex-Dean of the Soil Science presented on the soil fertility while Shri Jayant Barve and Miguel Braganza of OFAI spoke on PCS and market-
ing with Organic Label. This was followed by group discussions on drought, flood, snow-
bound regions and the finding of each group were presented in the afternoon session after a field visit to IGRIBI farm and the National Research Centre for Agro Forestry. In the concluding session, Dr. S. G. Kaushal, ex-Director of Agriculture of MP state and a member of the Standing Committee on Organic Farming presented, with supporting statistics, the reason why Green Revolution failed to produced sustainable yields and why Organic Farming is the need of the hour to redeem the situation.

An interactive session among organic farmers at the Jhansi conference.
OFAI Workshop on Use Of Beneficial Microbes for Organic Farming

Dates: 10-11 January, 2008, Bhubaneshwar

A workshop was held at the Orissa University of Agriculture & Technology [OUAT], Siripur Chowk, Bhubaneshwar on 10 and 11th January, 2008, in association with National Research Centre for Grasslands [ICAR]. It was inaugurated by the workshop by Prof. Radhamohan (Sambhav), Chief Information Commissioner and Organic Farming Pioneer in Orissa.

Manohar Parchure’s talk on “Theory of Microbial Production” started the technical session followed by Dr. Claude Alvares’ presentation on “The Living Soil”. After lunch S. Krishnan showed organic farming videos while Dr. K. Natarajan demonstrated Panchagavyam preparation thereafter. Subhash Sharma spoke on “Crop mix for better organic production”. More Organic Farming Videos were shown after dinner.

On 11th January 2008, S.R. Sundaraman demonstrated the preparation of microbials while N. Gopalkrishnan gave a lecture-demonstration on earthworms and microbes. After lunch and videos on organic farming, Dr Jayant Barve spoke on Amrut Pani and other organic inputs and Dr Bharatendu Prakash shared his reflections on Organic Farming. The “Local organizer” was Debjeet Sarangi of Living Farms, Tankapani Road, Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Email: ofaiorissa@gmail.com

OFAI: Growing organically across India.

15 January, 2008, NSC Meeting, Hyderabad

A little over a year has passed since the 8th NSC Meeting held at Wardha, Sewagram-Gujarat on 5th November 2006 under the chairmanship of Mr. D.D. Bharagamoudra, President of the OFAI, and the addition of new members from Tamil Nadu to the Steering Committee. Organic farmer membership of OFAI, which was about 600 then is now well over 4000 [with 1200 farmers joining from TN alone] and OFAI is now the largest farmer-based association of organic farmers in the country. There are 700 organic farmers in 63 groups spread over 4 states under the OFAI. In addition to this, if we consider the membership of other organizations who have also become OFAI members, the number of organic farmers linked to OFAI is enormous.

The Central Secretariat has been working now for more than two years and it has Reshma Salgankar as its permanent employee. Gautham Sarang, Rejitha and Binoy Thomas have moved while Vishnu Ootawnekar, Miguel Braganza and Gracy have joined to assist the Dr. Claude Alvares, Director. Three more issues of the OFAI newsletter, The Living Field, have been published and this is the seventh in the series. Four issues of the Hindi edition, Shunya Shyamala, have also seen the light of day.

On the agenda for the 9th Meeting of the National Steering Committee of OFAI held on 11th January, 2008, at Pastapur, Hyderabad, A.P., were various items of interest to farmers in India. The venue and programme for the Annual Convention of organic farmers on October 17th and 18th, 2008 with the theme “Organic Seeds” was finalized as Trichy, Tamil Nadu. Responsibilities for making the annual convention a success were voluntarily accepted by the NSC members. A detailed report of Central Secretariat activities including training workshops scheduled and report of past workshops was presented and discussed at the meeting. Latest information on membership was also shared.

Status reports on OLS-TPS system and on PGS system for organic farms were presented. The green logo of OLS will now be used for organically grown farm products. The Organic Seed catalogue is a natural sequel to the “Organic Seed Producers Workshop” which was jointly organized by Green Foundation, Bangalore and Organic Farming Association of India, Goa, from 30 – 31st August, 2007 at Fireflies, Bangalore, with an objective of producing organic seeds mainly in food grains, vegetables and exchange of organic seeds among the seed production network partners.

OFAI-INFACT Workshop on ‘Beneficial Microbes for Organic Farming’

03 March, 2008, Angamally-Ernakulam, Kerala

A well attended workshop was held at the Sevashram in Angamally, Ernakulam district, Kerala on 03 March, 2008. It was inaugurated by Fr. K. Mampilly, President of Sevashram, a farmers’ collective. Roy Joseph, President of INFACT and OFAI State Steering Committee member, welcomed the delegates from all over Kerala. Miguel Braganza explained the structure and the role of OFAI in promoting Organic Farming as well as the “Participatory Guarantee System” [PGS] for ‘organic’ labeling of agricultural product.

Jayant Barve made a presentation on “Theory of Microbial Production” while Dr. K Natarajan demonstrated Panchagavya. In the afternoon session, N. Gopalkrishnan gave a lecture-demonstration on earthworms as also fish and egg based microbial formulations.

This was followed by a spirited ‘Question & Answer’ session to clarify doubts and obtain additional information.

OFAI-RADIO National Seminar-cum-Workshop on ‘Vermi culture and Fish-based Microbial formulations for Organic Farming’

18 & 19 April, 2008, Tiruchippally, Tamil Nadu

A two-day National Workshop was organized at Tiruchirapalli town and adjoining farming villages in Tamil Nadu on 18 and 19 April, 2008. The programme was coordinated by Mr. N. Gopalkrishnan of the Rural Agricultural Development Integrative Organisation [RADIO] on behalf of OFAI. Delegates from all over Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra attended.

The programme consisted of presentations by experts, field visits, laboratory visits, actual method demonstrations and result demonstrations in the farmers’ fields. The preparation and use of vermi compost in masonry tanks, covered structures and in coconut plantations under open conditions was seen during field visits. Fertigation by traditional injection system and a simple, modified system by pumping into the inlet of the sand filter in drip system was demonstrated. Fertigation in open channel irrigation and simple metering by calibrating the shunt route via a tank containing microbial solution were operationally demonstrated.

Dr. Sultan Ahmed Ismail and Mr. N. Gopalkrishnan presented on vermi composting theory and practices. It was emphasized that chemicals have not helped us reach a situation wherein famines became history and did not recur in this world. The time is ripe for ‘Global Warming’ if energy guzzling fertilizer use was to be reduced to control ‘Global Warming’. The right time to spray microbial formulations was early morning or late in the evening when the stomata are open.

Microbial formulation containing leaf extracts of plants not eaten by goats can serve as an insect repellent and anti-feedant. The goat is a good judge of what is good to eat. According to Dr. Sultan Ismail, the Government need

(…pg 8)
Jayant Vaman Barve is a post graduate in Physics from Bombay University. He was a researcher in Physical Chemistry at the prestigious National Chemical Laboratory [NCL] and a lecturer in a degree college, who went back to his native town to be with his parents as he was the only son. From manufacturing Para-Nitro Aniline, a chemical dye intermediate, to selling chemical fertilizers and pesticides to becoming an organic farmer producing and marketing both, organic inputs like manure and food products like grapes and cereals, Jayant Barve has come a long way. He is now an ardent apostle of organic farming and his mission is to convert the whole of India to organic farming through the Organic Farming Association of India [OFAI] and its associates in every state. OFAI Director Claude Alvares spoke to this soft-spoken man with a mission. Excerpts.

Claude Alvares: You have been doing organic farming for 20 years. Could you tell us something about your background?

Jayant Barve: I am the only son of my parents. After completing studies up to M. Sc. in Physics, I worked at the National Chemical Laboratory [NCL], Pune, doing research in Physical Chemistry. Later, while I was a lecturer in a reputed college in Pune for five years, my father asked me to come back to my native place to look after our property as I was the only son. There was no choice but to go back to the village. With some research of my own, we started a unit for manufacturing textile dye intermediates. The name of the product that we were manufacturing was Para Nitro Aniline [PNA]. This was manufactured by a different process. We brought this product into the market and the small factory that we established was doing well up to the Orwellian year, 1984.

A crisis developed in 1984: the new policy of the Indian government made the price of the same product we manufactured cheaper when imported. So we had to unfortunately close down the factory. I was rendered without any enterprise to sustain the family so I started with the business of marketing chemicals, pesticides and fertilizers. We had a small laboratory in our office. We used it to test farmers’ samples and give suggestions to them as to what chemical is to be sprayed for which insect pest or disease. In this way our business started growing up very well. In Sangli district of Maharashtra state, we have a good reputation because we were the only consultants in 1984-1988 who gave proper pesticide for the particular disease after identifying the problem. Products of NOCIL were marketed by us then. So the business was growing very nicely. Alvares: So you were dealing with “conventional” farming then. How did you turn to organic farming?

Jayant Barve: former physicist turned organic farmer. His lab is now the soil on organic farming. I met Dr. Bhawalkar and Dr. Jambekar in Pune and with their help I planted a grape plot of about one acre [4,000 sq. m.]. We thought that we should not use chemical fertilizer. So we started with vermiculture. Our mind was set with laboratory and science behind it. We analyzed the soil before planting of grapes and also after another six months planting. We observed how nutrient and organic carbon levels of soil were increasing and also the potash content. It was a pleasant surprise. After a year of experimenting and analysis, we came to the conclusion that this is the way by which we should produce grapes or adopt any farming system. Vermiculture became our input system for farming. We started producing vermicompost for sale to other farmers.

Alvares: From where did you get the raw materials to produce so much vermicompost? Barve: The raw material or organic biomass was not available with us on the farm in the required quantities. We approached the Vita Municipal Council [VMC] and started buying vegetable market wastes continuously for three years for our farm’s vermiculture project. We would convert it into vermicompost. We would even bury dead dogs and dead birds in the compost. We got very good results with vermicompost. Our grapes were best in quality. At that time we were exporting grapes from our particular group – the Vita village farmers group – and it continued till 1994. But at that time it struck me that organic farming with vermiculture had its own limitations. What I read at that time was if you supply organic carbon to the soil, then the worms will grow automatically. So you need not do composting or build a shed, putting water on it for surface variety of worms, but only give organic carbon to the soil. The soil will improve automatically and the microbes will develop. So with that concept I began thinking that vermiculture is not the only solution.

We thought of some concentrated organic material and minerals. We collected a number of these materials – like oil cakes, phosphates and silicon oxide, bentonite and rock dust. At that time I read in some literature that in fact composting is not recommended in any of the ancient agricultural systems. Some of this literature came from Dr. Rahulkar from Pune and Mr. Ashok Joshi, son of Mr. Mahadev Shastri Joshi who has translated ancient agricultural literature series and published these. In ancient times, nobody was doing composting work. At that time they would collect the dung, keep it in some shelter, powder it and sprinkle on the farm. That gave better results because it was not composted and it provided raw food to the soil, and the soil microbes.

This concept stuck in my mind and I thought of giving raw food to the soil. We have to give organic carbon. If we compost it in some pit, then all the degradation will happen in that pit. Microbes in the soil will not get food. So we thought of putting direct organic microbes in the soil. So we mixed all organic carbon materials together and we obtained good results. Again all lab work we had to do continuously two years.

By this time my son, Jaydev, completed his B.Sc. in microbiology. We started a unit for making organic manure at our place and that unit is coming up very nicely. We have a product called “Samvardhan”. We are marketing it all over India, but mainly in Maharashtra, and also exporting it to some extent. We also have another product called “Green Harvest”. We are marketing this in our two districts only.

This manure is now formulated to replace the chemical fertilizers totally.
The second aspect was that the soil was improving but we wanted to get rid of the pesticides. In 1992, I closed down the business of manufacturing and selling cows now. I do not take my buffaloes to the market but the purchaser comes to me to fix the price. Everybody says that my cattle are healthier than what they buy elsewhere. Albert Howard has mentioned in his *Agricultural Testament* that the organic farmer is to be tested by the health of his farm cattle and the health of the plant. Even my labour staying on the farm has no problem. I give them only homeopathic medicine. They are also healthy. They are not required to spray poisonous chemicals. The water is good now. Everything has changed over the last 15 years.

Alvares: The only problem we are finding is about the other farmers. They see that you are saving money. They see that your production is also increasing and they see you do not have to purchase chemicals and fertilizers, that you do not have to spray. They see it and they know that. In every village everybody knows what everybody else is doing. Is there still a mental block to adopting organic farming? What is the reason?

Barve: The mental block is in two ways. Before independence we were almost slaves and our minds are set like that. Whenever villagers want to consult for something, they go to an allopathic medical doctor or the shopkeeper. They will not consult a nearby man. The farmers in my area are coming to my farm, they are seeing that the things are going on in a particular way, but they are not ready to accept what is good because they cannot understand things even though we start teaching them. Their minds are set that way.

Alvares: What has been the success rate thus far?

Barve: Through promotion, canvassing and seminars, we have been trying for the last 15 years but still we are not able to get that much success. I have been working in that area for the past 15 years and have travelled a lot at my own expense and have been going to farmers and telling them. But I have seen that I am not able to convert two farmers per year to organic farming. Hardly one farmer per year is my success after meeting 1000 farmers in a year.

NSCOF has got a scheme for training 1500 farmers. They have given the scheme to my organization also and we contacted 1500 farmers. We went to them in their villages in the night because farmers are free only at that time and had 3-5 meetings with them. But where ever we go, their minds are set. They ask us whether we are going to give them some subsidies. Secondly, only the ladies in the villages are attending these programmes. The men are not coming for the meetings. Whenever we talk to the ladies about the hazardous pesticides, the effect on our health and the effect of the poisoned food, the ladies pay attention and they think of doing something about it but there are no results as yet to see. Perhaps, all this will change soon.

The only problem we are finding is about the other farmers. They see that you are saving money. They see that your production is also increasing and they see you do not have to purchase chemicals and fertilizers, that you do not have to spray. They see it and they know that. In every village everybody knows what everybody else is doing. Is there still a mental block to adopting organic farming? What is the reason?

Barve: The mental block is in two ways. Before independence we were almost slaves and our minds are set like that. Whenever villagers want to consult for something, they go to an allopathic medical doctor or the shopkeeper. They will not consult a nearby man. The farmers in my area are coming to my farm, they are seeing that the things are going on in a particular way, but they are not ready to accept what is good because they cannot understand things even though we start teaching them. Their minds are set that way.

Alvares: What has been the success rate thus far?

Barve: Through promotion, canvassing and seminars, we have been trying for the last 15 years but still we are not able to get that much success. I have been working in that area for the past 15 years and have travelled a lot at my own expense and have been going to farmers and telling them. But I have seen that I am not able to convert two farmers per year to organic farming. Hardly one farmer per year is my success after meeting 1000 farmers in a year.

NSCOF has got a scheme for training 1500 farmers. They have given the scheme to my organization also and we contacted 1500 farmers. We went to them in their villages in the night because farmers are free only at that time and had 3-5 meetings with them. But where ever we go, their minds are set. They ask us whether we are going to give them some subsidies. Secondly, only the ladies in the villages are attending these programmes. The men are not coming for the meetings. Whenever we talk to the ladies about the hazardous pesticides, the effect on our health and the effect of the poisoned food, the ladies pay attention and they think of doing something about it but there are no results as yet to see. Perhaps, all this will change soon.

The only problem we are finding is about the other farmers. They see that you are saving money. They see that your production is also increasing and they see you do not have to purchase chemicals and fertilizers, that you do not have to spray. They see it and they know that. In every village everybody knows what everybody else is doing. Is there still a mental block to adopting organic farming? What is the reason?

Barve: The mental block is in two ways. Before independence we were almost slaves and our minds are set like that. Whenever villagers want to consult for something, they go to an allopathic medical doctor or the shopkeeper. They will not consult a nearby man. The farmers in my area are coming to my farm, they are seeing that the things are going on in a particular way, but they are not ready to accept what is good because they cannot understand things even though we start teaching them. Their minds are set that way.

Alvares: What has been the success rate thus far?

Barve: Through promotion, canvassing and seminars, we have been trying for the last 15 years but still we are not able to get that much success. I have been working in that area for the past 15 years and have travelled a lot at my own expense and have been going to farmers and telling them. But I have seen that I am not able to convert two farmers per year to organic farming. Hardly one farmer per year is my success after meeting 1000 farmers in a year.

NSCOF has got a scheme for training 1500 farmers. They have given the scheme to my organization also and we contacted 1500 farmers. We went to them in their villages in the night because farmers are free only at that time and had 3-5 meetings with them. But where ever we go, their minds are set. They ask us whether we are going to give them some subsidies. Secondly, only the ladies in the villages are attending these programmes. The men are not coming for the meetings. Whenever we talk to the ladies about the hazardous pesticides, the effect on our health and the effect of the poisoned food, the ladies pay attention and they think of doing something about it but there are no results as yet to see. Perhaps, all this will change soon.

The only problem we are finding is about the other farmers. They see that you are saving money. They see that your production is also increasing and they see you do not have to purchase chemicals and fertilizers, that you do not have to spray. They see it and they know that. In every village everybody knows what everybody else is doing. Is there still a mental block to adopting organic farming? What is the reason?

Barve: The mental block is in two ways. Before independence we were almost slaves and our minds are set like that. Whenever villagers want to consult for something, they go to an allopathic medical doctor or the shopkeeper. They will not consult a nearby man. The farmers in my area are coming to my farm, they are seeing that the things are going on in a particular way, but they are not ready to accept what is good because they cannot understand things even though we start teaching them. Their minds are set that way.

Alvares: What has been the success rate thus far?

Barve: Through promotion, canvassing and seminars, we have been trying for the last 15 years but still we are not able to get that much success. I have been working in that area for the past 15 years and have travelled a lot at my own expense and have been going to farmers and telling them. But I have seen that I am not able to convert two farmers per year to organic farming. Hardly one farmer per year is my success after meeting 1000 farmers in a year.

NSCOF has got a scheme for training 1500 farmers. They have given the scheme to my organization also and we contacted 1500 farmers. We went to them in their villages in the night because farmers are free only at that time and had 3-5 meetings with them. But where ever we go, their minds are set. They ask us whether we are going to give them some subsidies. Secondly, only the ladies in the villages are attending these programmes. The men are not coming for the meetings. Whenever we talk to the ladies about the hazardous pesticides, the effect on our health and the effect of the poisoned food, the ladies pay attention and they think of doing something about it but there are no results as yet to see. Perhaps, all this will change soon.
not subsidize the low cost organic farming systems. It will be enough if it stops subsidizing chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The delegates also visited a bio-control laboratory where Trichogramma wasps are multiplied to control insect pests.

**Organic Farming Association of India [OFAI] presents**

its second Biennial Organic Farmers’ Convention and, the maiden

**Organic Seeds Exposition & Exchange**

TMSSS Grounds, Near Bus stand and Railway Station
Tiruchirapally (Trichy)
Tamil Nadu

On 18 and 19 October, 2008
From 10 A.M. to 8 p.m.

In association with

OFAI-State Secretariats

Tamilnadu Organic Farmers’ Trust [TOFT], Nagapattinam-T.N. revathima@gmail.com; 09443343336

Information for Action [INFACT], Kottayam-Kerala ktm_ifact@sancharnet.in ; 09442835255

Deccan Development Society [DDS], Hyderabad-A.P. Hyd_ddshyd@sancharnet.in ; 09440266012

Maharashtra Organic Farmers’ Federation [MOFF], Pune- M.S. moffpune@gmail.com; 020-5659090; 9881497092

Sahajiv Krishi Vidyapeet [SKV], Banda-U.P. vsk_73@sancharnet.in ; 09452508251

ICRA, Bengaluru-Karnataka icra@vsnl.net; 080-25283370

Kheti Virasat Mission, Jaitu, Faridkot, Punjab 01635-503415; 9782682161

Jatan, Gujarat jatantrust@gmail.com; 0265-2371429

Living Farms, Orissa 0674-2430776; 9938582616

in collaboration with

Rural Agriculture Development Integrative Organisation [RADIO] Trust, Trichy.

Annadan, India

GREEN Foundation, Bengaluru-Karnataka

And the Organic Farmers of India

To whose dedicated and selfless work we owe the rich biodiversity and the organic farming practices we boast of today.

Participation in the Annual Convention will be by registration in advance. All registration will close by 10 October, 2008. This is a convention for members of the Organic Farming Association of India, so members of the association will get priority in registration and in booking of stalls available at the venue. Please quote your permanent membership number. Register through your secretariat or through central secretariat. Book your tickets to arrive in the morning of 18th and depart on 19th evening, unless you are participating in visits to organic farms and around Trichy. You can also take time out to visit famous temples and other tourism related interests, but please inform the organisers in advance so that accommodation is maintained for you, if possible.

For details and updates, write to us at the address below or visit us at www.ofai.org. Or write to myofai@gmail.com or call 0832-2255913.

At the venue, call 09443343336 [Ms. Revathi] or 09443148224 [Mr. Gopalkrishnan]

---

**Editorial information about The Living Field**

The Living Field also comes out in Hindi for the Northern Hindi-speaking belt. Editor of the Hindi edition is well-known environmental activist and scientific researcher, Dr Bharatendu Prakash. Those who wish to receive a copy of the Hindi edition in place of the English edition are requested to get in touch with either Dr Prakash or OFAI, Goa. The Living Field is published by:

Central Secretariat,
OFAI, G-8 St Britto’s Apartments, Feira Alta, Mapusa 403507 Goa, India
Editor: Claude Alvares

**Panchagavya**

By Dr. K. Natarajan

The Organic Farming Association is delighted to publish this landmark book that has transformed organic farming all over the country.

Pp. 58 (2008) Rs.30

---

**Seminar-cum-Workshop on ‘Agro-techniques for Organic Food Production’**


A two day seminar cum workshop on ‘Agro-techniques for Organic Food Production’ was held at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra of ICAR at Karmali, near Old Goa. About thirty farmers, representatives of Self-Help Groups and extension officers attended. The IFoAM standards for certifying a product as ‘Organic’, the modalities of certification under different systems and the costs involved, and other aspects were presented by the Resource persons and then discussed by the participants.

A demonstration was done of the operation of tractor mounted, pto-driven shredder for farm waste, including woody material like coconut leaves and husk. Neem based pesticides and processed organic products were on display at the venue.

**New revised and updated edition!**

**Panchagavya**

By Dr. K. Natarajan

Pp. 58 (2008) Rs.30