

The Living Field

OFAI Newsletter

July 2009 Issue Nine

(For private circulation)

Update on Participatory Guarantee Scheme [PGS]

The PGS Organic India Council decided on 01 June, 2009, to register itself as a separate legal person in the form of a 'Society' under Societies Registration Act, 1860 Central Act 21 of 1860] in the state of Andhra Pradesh, for convenience.



One representative of each of the ten different PGS Facilitation Councils in India present at the meeting would be its "Founder Members". These ten PGS-FCs present were IIRD, OFAI, Keystone Foundation, DDS, Chetana Vikas, CCD, Timbaktu Collective, Grassroots, Thanal and GREEN Foundation. The Executive Committee consisting of Joy Daniel, Miguel Braganza and Mathew John as President, Secretary and Treasurer were unanimously elected.

The PGSOIC decided that the EC members would decide who would represent it at the IFOAM Committee on PGS. Mathew John was designated to provide continuity as he was already a part of the IFOAM Task Force. Miguel Braganza would be the alternate member, if Mathew John was unable to attend the meetings. All members would be briefed on return from such meetings.

Institute for Integrated Rural Development [IIRD]-Aurangabad, Maharashtra; Organic Farming Association of India [OFAI]-Goa; Timbaktu Collective [TC]-Anantpur District, Andhra Pradesh; Deccan Development Society [DDS]-Medak District, Andhra Pradesh; Keystone Foundation-Nilgiri District, Tamil Nadu, Chetana Vikas [Alternative Agriculture Resource Centre]-Wardha, Maharashtra; Covenant Centre for Development [CCD]-Madurai, Tamilnadu, Thanal-Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation [PHGDF]-Ranikhet, Uttarakhand and GREEN Foundation-Bangalore, Karnataka are the ten PG-

Regional Secretariat Launched OFAI – North India

A Regional Secretariat has been set up earlier this year for the Organic Farming Association of India [OFAI] in North India as per the decisions at the fifth and sixth meetings of the Managing Committee of OFAI on 15 September and 19 October, 2008, both held at Tiruchirapalli-Tamil Nadu. Banda- UP based Dr. Bharatendu Prakash is the Director of OFAI-North India Regional Secretariat.

Organic farming had long remained in the domain of the small farmers and tribal communities to the South of the Vindhya Hills Range: across the Deccan plateau, the Nilgiris, the Eastern and Western Ghats across Peninsular India. The states that led the Organic Agriculture movement from the front were Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu [in alphabetical order]. To the North, the movement had also started in Gujarat, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal but not gained momentum. Some states have adopted Organic Farming Policies while others have drawn up strategies to promote Organic farming. Mizoram has enacted a law to declare itself an "Organic State". Only the

state of Karnataka has a separate budget to promote organic farming to date. OFAI set up a Regional Secretariat for North India in the last quarter of 2008 to take the process forward and to accelerate it. It has begun to show results.

Dr. Bharatendu Prakash [standing] conducting an awareness session for OFAI in a new area

Dr. Bharatendu Prakash, the Director of OFAI-North India Regional Secretariat, has traveled to Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand between January and June, 2009, to establish Sate Organic Farming Associations and affiliate them to OFAI. [Reports on page 4]. Mr. Umendra Dutt of Kheti Virasat Mission helped to extend the message of OFAI across Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh and organized a workshop for farmers in conversion to Organic Agriculture from these states on 4 & 5 May, 2009, in association with the Central Secretariat of OFAI. An "Organic Bazaar" and a farmers group has been established with DISHA in Kurseong-West Bengal while "Grassroots" or PHGDF is helping to mobilize organic farmers into PGS "Local Groups" in Uttarakhand. There is no turning back.



OFAI's North India coordinator Dr. Bharatendu Prakash addressing an organic farmers workshop at Patna.

SOIC's PGS Facilitation Councils [formerly known as "Regional Councils"].

The implementation of the PGS scheme begins with the Farm Appraisal Summaries of each "Local Group" being lodged with the Central Secretariat of OFAI and the sanction being issued by IIRD to use the new logo of PGSOIC [approved at the PGSOIC meeting in Bidkin- Aurangabad on 18 September, 2008] on the products. [Visit www.pgsorganic.in to see the new PGS logo and details.] So far the process has been completed by the Regional Council Deccan Development Society, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh which launched the PGSOIC logo on 07 March, 2008. [Visit www.ddsindia.com for details]. It has 41 [AP C20 001 to 041] Local Groups with 205 members, mostly rural women, in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh.

Keystone Foundation, with 13 [TN A10 001 to 013] Local Groups has branded "Last Forest" products like honey and coffee have PGS label. Timbaktu Collective in Anantpur District of Andhra Pradesh has 17 [AP C10 001 to 017] Local Groups. Its "Timbaktu Organic" brand uses the PGS logo. OFAI affiliate, INFAC-T-Pala, uses "Farm Gate" boards with the PGS logo to proclaim its adherence to the farmer-managed "Organic" label. IIRD organizes fixed point "Organic Bazzars" in different localities in Aurangabad District while Thanal has both fixed point and mobile outlets in Kerala which will use the PGS label in future.

Forty- Four [MH A01 001 to 048] Local Groups under MOFF in Maharashtra, two [UP A01 001 & 002] under KVK in Uttar Pradesh [KVK], one [KL A01 001] Local Group under INFAC-T in Kerala operate with OFAI as the PGS-Facilitating Council [earlier known as 'Regional Council']. Chetana Vikas -Wardha has sixteen Local Groups under PGSOIC. CCD has formed 03 [OR A20 001 to 003] Local Groups in Orissa. GREEN

Foundation, Grassroots/PHGDF and Thanal are in the process of getting PGS Local Groups registered for use of the PGS logo.



www.pgsorganic.in

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PRODUCT LAUNCHES

- Deccan Development Society (DDS) was the first off the block with the PGS certificates for their organic farmer groups in Andhra Pradesh. The PGS logo was launched in Pastapur on the 27th of March, 2008 and then at a Press Meet on 9th March, 2008, in Hyderabad, to mark the Telugu New Year.
- Keystone Foundation launched its 'Coffee' from the Last Forest Natural Products range with the PGS Organic Label in November 2008.
- Timbaktu Collective has also recently launched its 'Timbaktu Organic' range - groundnut oil, pulses, grains and millets with the PGS Organic Label.

Organic Bazaars
An Appropriate Tool for Recognizing Small Organic Farmers

Experiences from the Marathwada region of central India show that appropriate guarantee systems and marketing methods can be established for the small and marginal organic farmers to access organic markets. Asrabai, a traditional farmer from Marathwada, shows how a small woman farmer could sell her produce as organic in a nearby city. She hails from Dhanuon village which is 30 kilometers from Aurangabad city and owns a 2 acre farm where she mostly grows millets and some vegetables. Until a few years ago, she used to sell her farm produce to a local middle man who in turn sold it for a higher profit in Aurangabad city. With the facilitation of development practitioners from Institute for Integrated Rural Development (IIRD), the farmers agreed on certain standards to be followed for organic farming and procedures for peer appraisal and documentation to guarantee the organic produce. She, along with some other farmers of the group, decided to jointly market her produce in Aurangabad city without a middleman. IIRD helped them to identify a venue for the market and continues to provide technical guidance for branding and promotion. Thus, the organic bazaar was established at Aurangabad in mid-1999. In the organic bazaar, Asrabai interacts with the consumers and educates them about organic farming practices. The relationship and trust between Asrabai and her consumers improved through her regular interaction and participation in consumer-farmer workshops. Now, Asrabai and the other farmers who participate in this organic bazaar have increased their profits by about 40 percent. Currently, the organic bazaar is operational in 14 different locations providing better livelihoods to about 5500 farmers and healthy foods to many more.

Inside...

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- 2 PGS Worldwide
- 3 PGS Membership Process
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- 6 Status Report on PGS

ORGANIC NEWS

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Obituary



Mr. Jose Joseph Vellukunnel, the convener of OFAI Kerala Chapter passed away on the morning of 17/03/09 after recurring ailment. He was admitted in Apollo Hospital Chennai with liver complaints. The funeral was held the next day.

Mr. Jose Joseph was practicing as the Farm Appraiser Team member of Organic Farming Association of India, Farm Planning Team member of INFAC-T, Coordinator of Eco Friends Farmers Forum and member of PGS Local Group. He was also a member of Organic Spices Growers Forum and was also associating with networks like INAG and FIMARC. .

He was one of the best Organic Farmers and promoted biodiversity, having more than 36 varieties of Fruit trees and nearly 20 varieties of Bamboos in his farm.

He was a Resource Person at workshops and seminars where he has delivered diverse classes to different farmers groups and a lot of persons, Organizations, institutions and groups of students visited his farm. After all he was a close associate and well-wisher of INFAC-T-Pala, an organization that misses his presence ever since. Jose Joseph's deep and real

Events calendar

EVENTS HELD

14 January to 13 February, 2009 Mobile Biodiversity exhibition of DDS, Hyderabad

29-30 March, 2009 : Workshop on Organic Spice Production & Processing at Ponnampet, Kodagu-Karnataka

01-02 June, 2009 Meeting of PGS Organic India Council at Fire Flies, Bangalore

UPCOMING EVENTS

25 July, 2009 Meeting of OFAI National Steering Committee at Shahapur, Bhopal-M.P.

10 & 11 September, 2009 : OFAI-IISA-UAS-NCOF South Asia Conference on "Outstanding Organic Agriculture Techniques at UAS Bangalore-Karnataka.

10th NSC Meeting

The 10th meeting of the National Steering Committee [NSC] of the OFAI will be held on 25 July, 2009, at BHOPAL, Madhya Pradesh.

Those attending the meeting include: Dr. Claude Alvares, Secretary OFAI & Director -CS, Goa,. Mr. Jayant Barve, Treasurer of OFAI, Sangli, Maharashtra,. Dr. Govindaswamy Nammalwar, Tamil Nadu , Ms. Niranjana Maru, Chetana Vikas, Wardha-M.S.. Mr. Rony Joseph, INFAC-T, Kerala,. Mr. Kapil Shah, JATAN Trust, Gujarat,. Mr. P. Babu, ICRA, Bangalore,. Mr. Ardhendu Chatterjee, West Bengal, Ms. Sangita Sharma, Annadana, Bangalore, Mr. N. Gopalkrishnan, EnGKay Farm, Trichy and others. Dr. Bharatendu Prakash, Director of OFAI-North India, Banda-U.P. is the organizer and host of the meeting. The NSC meets at a different venue each time to retain its all India flavour. The last meeting

was at Pastapur near Zaheerabad in Andhra Pradesh.

1. The meeting will take stock of the South Asia Conference and review its arrangements.
2. The agenda will include, besides routine matters, issues like the OFAI campaign against genetically engineered crops.
3. The meeting will also approve further training schools, farmer tours.
4. The arrangements (including venue) of the 2010 biennial OFAI convention will be discussed and responsibilities allocated.
5. The meeting will also discuss organic farming policies and proposals relating to carbon credits due to organic farmers because of their practices.

Organic Farming Association of India [OFAI]
& Third World Network [TWN], Malaysia
in association with the
National Centre of Organic Farming [NCOF]

Announces
the first TWN-OFAI-NCOF (Regional)
South Asia Conference on

“Outstanding Organic Agriculture Techniques”

*to be inaugurated by
Shri Jairam Ramesh
Hon'ble Union Minister
for Environment & Forests*

The conference is for the benefit of organic farmers and OA promoters from South Asian countries only including India, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Afganistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

The conference is a skill- or knowledge-sharing event. The speakers will mainly be pioneer organic farmers who have done organic farming for about a decade. They will be speaking from considerable field experience.

Dates: September 10 & 11, 2009.
GKVK campus [new BIAL Airport Road/NH-7]
University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore [Bengaluru]

Important dates for OFAI members:

15th August '09: Registration of delegates [other than Resource Persons] by post/phone/email

9th-10th (morning) September '09: Arrival of delegates in Bengaluru [Bangalore]

10th & 11th Sept: SAC on “Outstanding Organic Agriculture Techniques” at GKVK

12th September: Organic Food Festival at Lalbagh [Optional, not part of SAC]

For Information
and registration

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Ms Chee Yoke Ling / Third World Network (email: yokeling@myjaring.net)

Further details about:

South Asia Conference on “Outstanding Organic Agriculture Techniques”

Speakers

Dr. G. Namalwar

ORGANIC BOOKS:

Exhibition and sale

There will be an exhibition and sale of books, CDs, DVDs exclusively on organic farming at the South Asia Conference (SAC) on “Outstanding Organic Agriculture Techniques” at GKVK campus, Bangalore.

Any book, pamphlet, report, research paper or CD on organic farming, in any language which other farmers may like to see, browse through and purchase, may be brought along when you attend the meeting or sent with a superscription on the parcel: “SAC Bookshop” to reach between 15th to 31st August to:

Shri. Krishna Prasad, Sahaja Samrudha, ‘Nandana’, No. 7, 2nd cross, 7th Main, Sulthanpalya, Bangalore 560 032.

Ph.: 080-22715744, Cell: 9880862058

email: sahasamrudha@gmail.com

website: sahasamrudha.org

Please bring/enclose a simple invoice which carries your name, address, phone/cell number (if available) on it, with the number of copies and the price clearly marked.

The conference will deduct 25% of the sale price of your book or CD and then return the balance.

Literature for free distribution can also be placed in the hall.

For queries and dispatch information please contact:

Nyla Coelho: Ph.:0832-2255913, email:ofsbook@gmail.com

PROGRAMME

Day One:

09.30 – 10.00 Arrival and registration of participants

10.00 – 11.15 Welcome and inauguration

11.30 – 13.00 Living Farms: Overview of the Best of Organic Practice

in India/An OFAI Presentation

13.00 – 14.00 Organic Lunch

14.00 – 15.15 Living Soils: Techniques for restoring soil health

15.15 – 15.30 Organic Coffee/Tea Break

15.30 – 17.00 Living Soils: Techniques for protecting soil health

18.00 – 20.00 Cultural programme by Karnataka artistes

Day Two:

09.30 – 11.00 Living Fields: Insect-Plant Interactions and Harmonies

11.00 – 11.15 Organic Coffee/Tea Break

11.15 – 13.00 Healthy Fields: Managing Plant Health

13.00 – 14.00 Organic Lunch

14.00 – 15.00 Water management on organic farms

15.00 – 15.15 Organic Coffee/Tea Break

15.15 – 16.30 Organic Seeds

16.30 – 17.00 Summing up: Elder/Older farmers advise

17.00 – 17.50 Valedictory

Organic Seeds Mela

A special exhibition hall for native and organic seeds will be set up at the conference venue.

You can exchange, distribute or sell these seeds on your own terms at the venue.

Conference organisers will not take responsibility for either management or sale of the seeds you bring to the meeting.

For details, please contact:

Nyla Coelho: Ph.:0832-2255913, email:ofsbook@gmail.com

Exhibition Of Achievements And Work Of Organic Farmers

Farmers who are convinced they have something to share with others are advised to bring 15-20 photographs of their work.

These can be simply mounted or pasted on ordinary white chart paper and put up in the exhibition hall.

Those who wish to set up their photographs after arrival at the venue can also do so. The organisers will supply them with adequate chart paper and pens for mounting their exhibits.

Farmers may be required to be in the exhibit hall, if they are to answer queries from people who visit the exhibition.

FAQs: Frequently asked questions about SAC on OOAT

Q.1. What is SAC on OOAT?

A. South Asia (Regional) Conference on “Outstanding Organic Agriculture Techniques”. The conference will build on the available knowledge and skills of the organic farming communities as well as expose and promote innovations that can be replicated across the South Asia region and even beyond.

Q.2. Who is organizing it?

A. The Organic Farming Association of India [OFAI] and the Third World Network [TWN], Malaysia are organizing the SAC on OAT in association with the National Centre of Organic Farming [NCOF] at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, in tandem with a International Seminar organized by the International Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture [ICCOA], Bangalore.

Q.3. What is TWN?

A. TWN or The Third World Network is a major international network of organisations from the Global South working on issues of critical interest to countries in Asia, Africa and South America.

Q. 4. What is NCOF?

A. The National Centre of Organic Farming [NCOF] on the outskirts of Delhi at Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, is a centre under the Government of India's Ministry of Agriculture

& Cooperation. It promotes organic agriculture through research, publications, collaborations, etc.

Q.5. Is OFAI collaborating with ICCOA for the conference?

A. Not really. OFAI and ICCOA have agreed to have a common inaugural session to deliver a strong combined message to the country and the world. However, after the inaugural, the two conferences will move to separate halls and proceed as parallel conferences.

Q. 6 Who can attend the SAC?

A. Organic farmers and organic agriculture promoters from South Asian countries including India, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar, who have some OA techniques based on their personal experience in the field can attend to share them with others and to learn from them. This is NOT a training workshop for beginners. OFAI members get priority.

Q.6. Who will be the Resource Persons or Faculty?

A. Experienced OA farmers from India and the neighbouring countries will be the main speakers. Representatives of Voluntary Organizations/NGOs may share the status of organic farming in each of the countries/states they represent.

Q. 7. What will be the language of SAC on OAT?

A. This is an interaction among farmers, not academics. Presentations will be mostly via photographs presented in powerpoint. Speakers are being asked to avoid the use of text. The photo presentations must tell the stories on their own as far as possible.

Q. 8. Will there be any assistance for travel, accommodation and food?

A. OFAI will assist foreign delegates with arrangements to visit good organic farms in any part of the country after the conference.

For delegates within India, OFAI will make arrangements of simple, decent accommodation at nominal cost during the days of the Conference. Food will be common for all at the Conference. The conference will serve only organically grown food. Menu will be 100% vegetarian.

Q. 9. Will there be books on sale at the SAC on OAT?

A. The conference will host a special hall of literature on organic farming in all languages of India and south Asia.

Q. 10. What other events can we expect?

A. The conference will also host a seed mela for exchange of seeds. It will also allow all organic farmers to display photographs of their farms and techniques.

GM is not everything

Fully allergen-free larger grain borer resistant maize [or corn], salt-resistant wheat and Vitamin A enriched sweet potato are now possible without Genetic Modification or GM. These are the conventional solutions of the year 2007 that the GM promoters would like us to forget. There is no media hype as the one that has been launched to promote Bt Brinjal in India. The multi-crore, multi-national biotechnology industry and the public relations infrastructure that it has employed is keen to keep it that way. The uncertainties over environmental and health hazards that surround GM crops, specially the food crops, rarely receive media attention. No authority wants to tell us on record that animal trials on mice and goats fed on Bt proteins, even ones not extracted from Bt food crop but from the bacteria directly, have also thrown up some negative indicators on human health.

The FAO's has been working quietly and its initiatives to promote Organic Agriculture to feed the world do not significant coverage by the world media. Drought-prone and poor, the African country of Zambia achieved improvements in its maize harvests, its main staple crop, through innovations such as mixed farming and conservation farming since 2001. Zambia rejected GM maize and encouraged the growing of non-GM maize, resulting in bumper harvests for the next few years. Ironically, when the Zambian government rejected

GM maize in 2002, there were calls from the US Ambassador to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization for its leaders to be tried “for the highest crimes against humanity in the highest courts of the world”.

In UK crop scientists are doing research aimed at delivering benefits for farmers and consumers by identifying genes in broccoli that will extend its shelf life and maintain its nutritional value longer through conventional plant breeding



Not far from the International Rice Research Institute [IRRI], Dr Antonio Mercado at the University of Philippines, Los Banos, has developed a new non-GM maize variety that was able to survive a drought for 29 days. The conventional plant breeders at CIMMYT (International Maize and Wheat Improve-

ment Centre) in Kenya have identified a non-GM African maize variety that withstands the onslaught of one of the most damaging pests, larger grain borer. CIMMYT researchers found resistance to the borer in the Centre's germplasm bank, in maize seed originally from the Caribbean region of America. The seed bank holds 25 000 native maize races

In India, Navdanaya, together with farmers from nine Indian states, has developed a register of over 2 000 indigenous rice varieties. The Tehri Beej Bachao Andolan, and other organizations also help farmers to maintain native land races of rice, millets and other crops. Several indigenous rice strains adopted by the Indian farmers can withstand extremes of climatic conditions, survive submergence for a fortnight and even withstand salinity with great success.

There is hope for farmers from Punjab and Haryana, where fields are now affected by salinity. Scientists at Australia's Molecular Plant Breeding CRC are using marker assisted breeding to identify salt-tolerant wheat varieties which are tolerant to salinity. Two thirds of the dryland cropping area in Australia is affected by salinity, resulting in meagre yields as in India.

Source:

GM Watch: www.gmwatch.org and Science in Society #37

Organic Farming News: India

OFAI strikes root in Indo-Gangetic region

From its base in Uttar Pradesh, OFAI-North India reached out to Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttarakhand, a state carved out of the hilly sub-Himalayan region of UP about two decades ago.

RAJASTHAN

At a well attended meeting in Jodhpur on 09 January, 2009, the Rajasthan Organic Farming Association or ROFA was formally launched. Dr. Arun K. Sharma, an experienced SRI practitioner and Resource Person for training, is the Convener of the association. He has also made his services available to train the inmates of Sabarmati Jail in organic farming practices in July, 2009.

UTTARAKHAND

Dr. Bharatendu Prakash, the Director of OFAI-North India Regional Secretariat participated in a farmers' meeting of Grassroots where he introduced basics of organic farming to the farmers of this region, who are mostly traditional farmers not very much habituated to using chemicals as fertilizers or pesticides. The unpredictable rains have upset local agriculture here. Last year they also faced drought condition, a thing that Dr. Bharatendu is all too familiar in Bundelkhand area of UP and MP. In these circumstances organic farming has to be very well planned. Through the interaction, the farmers realized this need and were ready to adopt comprehensively the organic way of farming. They have realized that future belongs to such organic farming and that seems the only way to bring home the new generation from urban areas and cities like Haldwani, Dehradun and Delhi where they are migrating for the want of employment, even as casual labour.

The Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation, abbreviated as PHGDF and simply known as "Grassroots", has been operating in this area even before the state was created. Grassroots Director Shri Kalyan Paul along with Ajay Rastogi, Anita and already have more than 150 farmers in different groups that have opted to form PGS Local Groups instead of subjecting themselves to Third Party Certification. They have set up biogas units that deliver methane as a cooking gas rather than be released into the atmosphere as a greenhouse gas thirty seven times more potent than Carbon dioxide that is formed by its burning. The biogas slurry is used along with other farm wastes for making Vermi-composts.

Grassroots is already a well established organization in this area and can lead the process. In fact, Grassroots has been designated as a PGS Facilitation Council after a powerful presentation by Mr. Kalyan Paul at the PGSOIC meeting held in Bangalore on 01 & 02 June, 2009.

MADHYA PRADESH

Since February 2009 the Chhatarpur area of Northern Madhya Pradesh has been the site of Organic Farm Schools [OFS] covering the aspects of storage, organic pest management, seed production, seed-treatment, processing, packing, formation of PGS "Local Groups" and marketing with organic label. Dr. G.S. Kaushal, ex-Director of Agriculture MP and head of MP Organic Farming Association was a key Resource person along with Dr. Bharatendu Prakash. This phase ended with a program on World Environment Day (5th June) which was attended by large number of residents of Chhatarpur including Chairman of Chhatarpur Municipal Council, Sardar Pyara Singh. Organic farming was presented as an important step of environmental conservation. The program concluded with participants voluntarily taking a pledge 1. to produce for oneself as well as market organically grown food, 2. to turn the farm- as well as domestic wastes to composts, and 3. to conserve water which is slowly turning a deficient resource.

PUNJAB & HARYANA

The farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh, led by Kheti Virasat Mission, met at Jyani Nature Farm in Fazilka area bordering Rajasthan during the first week of May, 2009, to discuss organic farming and formation of PGS Local Groups. The discussions were facilitated by Mr. Umendra Dutt and Ashish Ahuja with inputs from Miguel Braganza of the OFAI Central Secretariat. The difficulties in converting large farm holdings that are canal irrigated and on flat Indo-Gangetic plains with diverse crops like rice, wheat, sesamum, Kinnow and Malta oranges were discussed. The farmers also evinced keen interest in cultivating millets like Pearl, Fox-tail and Finger Millet [Jowar, Bajra and Ragi] that were once traditionally cultivated in the then undivided Punjab state. They

were also interested in mixed, relay and multi-level cropping with green manure, mulching, vermin-culture, Panchagavya and Effective Microorganisms. "Local Groups" were formed in each district represented to work towards full organic conversion en route to becoming eligible for PGS label.

The PGS has been very simply defined by IFOAM thus, "Participatory Guarantee Systems are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange. In India, PGS is promoted by the PGS Organic India Council [visit www.pgsorganic.com] through its PGS Facilitation Councils across India. The PGSOIC National Council has its regular meetings once every semester and meets more often, if needed for any specific reason. The members interact by email and phone. OFAI shares the responsibility with IIRD to manage its central secretariat. The OFAI-PGS book on PGS is available in many Indian languages and its Hindi version prepared by Dr. Bharatendu is a standard text used across the Indo-Gangetic Plains and the Pan-Himalayan region of India.

BIHAR

A four-days workshop was held at Patna in May, 2009. It ended in the creation of Bihar Organic Farming Association or BOFA., led by a young IIM-Ahmedabad graduate named Siddharth Jaiswal. Another alumnus of IIM has set up a chain of vegetable push-carts and stalls with backward linkages to organic farmers.



An interactive session among organic farmers from North India with Dr. Bharatendu Prakash

Young One ...Going great guns

Now an Assistant Programme Co-ordinator at BAIF-MITTRA, Jawhar, dist :Thane (Maharashtra), this young man was born in small village called Vadakashivale in Karveer taluka of Kolhapur district in Maharashtra. He completed his primary and secondary education in my village and then proceeded to complete his B.Sc in chemistry from Shivaji University, Kolhapur and then B.Tech in Chemical Technology from University Institute of Chemical Technology (UICT), Mumbai in May 2001. He did a short stint as a scientist in Pondicherry, processing of cotton using Natural treatments. An accident changed all that. Cure by naturopathy and a one and half years in bed changed his mindset and he decided to work and sustainable agricultural.

He joined Janabharati Nyas, a small NGO working in Kolhapur district of Maharashtra on promotion of sustainable agriculture systems without any of incentives and moved to Maharashtra Organic Farming Federation (MOFF) before joining MITTRA (Maharashtra Institute of Technology Transfer for Rural Areas) in 2005. A part of BAIF Development & Research Foundation, Pune, it is working for sustainable development of tribal families in India. and started my work from Jawhar, Tribal block in Thane District of Maharashtra.

The 'Green & Applied Technologies Resources Centre' is set up for experimentation, demonstration and replication of Low cost sustainable agriculture practices including introduction and evaluation of new crops/Varieties and cultivation practices and collection of people's knowledge [IK] of local crops as well as conservation of germplasm. Techniques like Vermi-wash, Natural Pest Repellent, Natural Growth Promoters, Green manuring, Soil microbial activity enhancer, Biodynamic composting etc is experimented, demonstrated and accepted by farmers.

While working with tribal communities and in interior blocks, Sanjay realized that only adoption of low cost sustainable techniques will not solve the problem. Access to seed is a soul of agriculture and community resource, but now it is getting captured by multinationals. A 'male sterile' seed crop has no seed in the next generation. No seed means no crop and no crop means no food. Thousands of landraces are now rare and close to extinction except in tribal blocks in Maharashtra which have a rich crop genetic diversity which is now under threat. The need is to conserve and multiply these crop varieties as best as possible.

Upto April 2008, documentation and survey had been completed in interior blocks of 7 talukas in thane district and samples of about 175 landraces(paddy-95,other crops-80) collected. In May 2008, the focus was on paddy crop-morphological and agronomic characterization. Sixty farmers were selected for variety performance testing and five farmers were selected for in situ germplasm trials. About 95 paddy varieties multiplied and at each stage

of experimentation the local community was involved in the process. It has been found that farmers are willing to maintain crop genetic diversity and their selection criteria's for variety are food security, nutritional security, medicinal properties, straw and grain yield, cultural value.

To make this conservation efforts sustainable and for seed security purpose, community seed banking concept initiated in two villages so that there will be exchange of seeds, and not sale of seeds.

Vegetables and other crop varieties conserved through kitchen gardening in three villages with the help of self help groups [SHGs] and low cost shade net structures have erected at three places for seedling preparation of rare crop varieties. School students are trained in demonstrations of organic farming as well as collection and exhibition of germplasm so as to spread awareness to the next generation.

Sanjay can be contacted at:

Maharashtra Institute of Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (MITTRA)

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Email: ofaiorissa@gmail.com

The Organic Farming Association of India

(A society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860)

Registered address:
G-8, St Britto's Apartments, Feira Alta, Mapusa 403 507 Goa, India
Tel.: 91-832-2255913. Tel./fax: 91-832-2263305
Email: admin@ofai.org Web: www.ofai.org

Membership form of the Association

I,, aged

male/female, desire to become a member of the Organic Farming Association of India. My membership fee is enclosed herewith.

My complete and correct address (with phone and email data, if available) is provided below:

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I would qualify to be a member of the Association under one of the following categories (please underline the chosen category):

- a) Organic Farmer
- b) Company/Society/Trust involved in organic food production
- c) Green Shop (applicable only to shops marketing organic produce)
- d) Green Trader (also includes suppliers of organic farming inputs)
- e) Organic Farming Promoter
- f) Organic Consumer

I am willing to assist the Association in the furtherance of its objectives as and when I have the time or when called upon to do so. I can assist in the following ways:

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Name and signature of applicant

Details for applicants:

Membership fees as per bye-laws of the association:

Individuals: Rs.100 per year. Non-profit organizations: Rs.1,000 per year. Companies and partnerships: Rs.5,000 per year. This amount can be sent by dd or MO or deposited directly into UTI/AXIS bank branch anywhere in the country in account No:180010100029917 Mapusa branch.

All members are entitled to free issues of The Living Field or Shyashaya Shamala newsletters.

(Please note: Since OFAI state secretariats are managed by NGOs, membership may be required to be paid in the name of the NGO concerned and not OFAI. Receipt may also be given by the concerned organization. However, the applicant will get a membership certificate from OFAI, after the fee is transmitted to the central secretariat of the organization by the state secretariat concerned.)

Karnataka

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