

A 70 year old couple becomes owner of a Fruit orchard:

He is 70 years old, suffering from rheumatic pain and could not walk properly. She is 60 years old and suffering from cardiac problems. At this age, generally one expects them to take rest and spend time with their grand children. But this couple Mr.Mareenna and Mrs Lakshamma of Kadarakunta village are still bravely fighting the challenges in the gamble of rainfed agriculture. They have proved that Fruit crops can be grown in rainfed lands. This couple represents the common farmer of Anantapur District who relentlessly fights the continuous droughts to make both ends meet.



Kadarakunta is a small village in Kalyanadurg mandal which receives less than the normal rainfall of Anantapur Dist. In this village even a farmer with 20 acres of rainfed land is unable to make enough money for living expenses. The soils in this village have become infertile due to continuous erosion by rain and direct exposure to sun.

Mr.Mareenna belongs to backward community. He has 4 acre rainfed land and was growing groundnut like all other farmers and was leading life with meager income. He has no support as his two sons have left the village in search of livelihood.

In 2008, AF encouraged the old farmer couple to follow Integrated Farming System (IFS) in his 2 acres of rainfed land. IFS model was designed by AF for drought proofing in rainfed lands. AF supplied 44 Mango, 50 Sapota, 24 Amla and 40 Custard apple seedlings to them. Also the organization gave them technical design and support in planting the seedlings. The planting was done in mother womb method. The outer bund of the plot was planted with Agave suckers and Pongamia seedlings. All the seedlings were supplied free of cost and labour cost was reimbursed for pitting and planting the seedlings. Sufficient amount of Farmyard manure was applied in the pits during planting.

As the land was only rainfed, the water needed for initial establishment of plants for first 3 years had to be procured from outside water source like common water body or private well owner. So, AF supplied a 500 Lt's capacity water tank to store water at the field site to ensure regular watering to the plants. Financial assistance @ Rs 5 per plant was given every month as labour costs for pot watering the plants. AF also offered the couple a pair of milch animals as to integrate livestock in farming. But they have not accepted the benefit as they are unable to take care of animals because of old age. Mareenna & Lakshamma have followed sustainable agriculture methods. The plants have grown up very well and within 3 years time all the Mango, Sapota and Amla plants have started yielding. At present, 160 fruit plants and 250 Biomass plants exist in the plot.

The old couple worked hard to protect fruit trees by pot watering and managed to survive a long gestation period. So, today they are enjoying the fruits of hard work and long wait. Now Mr. Mareenna & his wife are happy and confident that these fruit trees will take care of them in this old age. Though this is the first yield they have got Rs 5,000 from selling the fruits. The old couple became a role model to other farmers by securing sustained income from tree crops even during the drought years. With investment of about Rs 20,000 from AF and hard work from farmer, a good model of diversified cropping has come up in 3 years time. This has inspired no of farmers nearby to take up this kind of Integrated Farming System.