

Food and nutrition security ensured with millets and pulses crops

I am Obulesu living in Gotkur village of Kuderu Mandal of Anantapuram Dist. My family consists of my wife Arunamma and 2 daughters Bharathi and Nirmala. The Government has assigned me 3.8 Acre of Rain fed land under land distribution scheme some 10 years ago as I belong to Schedule caste. Since then I had been cultivating the land and growing Groundnut crop like any other farmer in my village. The returns from Groundnut crops were always negative as the investments were increasing every year and crops are failing more often due to drought. So, all my family worked as wage labour under MGNREGS to make both ends meet.

In 2011, AF EC staff explained to me about Sustainable Agriculture and motivated me to join the Rainfed Sasyamitra group (SMG). I learnt about SA practices from the trainings and meetings. I have also purchased a local cow with AF's support.

In the first year, I followed SA practices on my Groundnut crop. The crop has failed as usual due to prolonged dry spell, but I realized the cost of cultivation has reduced and so the loss was less than usual. In GSS meetings, I understood that the risk is greater when a single crop is grown like all eggs in one basket. AF suggested me to go for inter crop and crop rotation with millets and pulses. So, this year, I have taken up 'Korra and Red Gram' demonstration model in one acre of land. I followed the ratio as 7:1 (Korra: Red gram). As per the crop design suggested, I have sown Green gram and few types of vegetables as mixed crop along with Castor and Bajra as border crop.

I took my father's help in sowing Korra as my generation has literally no guess about the sowing techniques of minor millets. My father Laleppa is quite happy to see millets crop again. I used 3 cart loads of FYM (Farm Yard Manure) for this acre plot. Seeds were sown after treating with Bheejamritam and 200kg of Ghana jeevamrutham is applied as basal dose. I sprayed Jeevamrutham once a month and sprayed Neem solution once. I had noted everything in my farmer diary. My korra crop gave good yields and this has triggered discussion among the villagers. I never had the experience of growing vegetables earlier in Rainfed land. But to my surprise, I could get fresh and organic vegetables {Gongura, cluster bean, Ladies finger, Ridge gourd} enough for my household consumption for 4 months. I could reap Bajra -30kg (good quality), Cow pea – 15 kg, Green gram – 15 kg and a little Redgram. I had visited my land frequently to collect the vegetables and observed lots of birds have flocked to feed on Bajra crop and also ate lot of hazardous pests.

I had sent 250 kgs of Korra to Anantapur Mill for de-husking and got korra rice of 162 kg which my family has consumed along with paddy rice for 5 about months. It is a nice experience that we consumed millets and pulses grown in our own land. I have some food stock at home. My wife is feeling very happy now. She says, "I am happy that together with the rice we buy in PDS shop, our family will have nutrition food for the whole year."

Remaining 2.0 acre Ground nut crop left me with a net loss of Rs 3000/-. Now my wife insists that we go for Korra in entire 3.8 acre in SA method. I had shared this experience in a Field Day in my village. I am happy that 1 acre of my land has given me high nutrition food for 5 months and I will continue this practice every year.