

Savouring sweet success with sugarcane cultivation



R. Kannan has motivated other farmers in his village who had faced losses in their paddy crops to take up sugarcane cultivation.

SUGARCANE CULTIVATION can be a profitable enterprise for farmers of Tamil Nadu. The main reason for a number of farmers entering sugarcane cultivation is that the cost and water requirement for cultivating sugarcane is less compared to paddy crops.

Stable price

Sugarcane farmers get an assured price for their harvest, unlike other crops, which have a fluctuating price and lack of marketing feasibility. Mr. R. Kannan, a progressive sugarcane farmer of Kaveripakkam Village, Vellore District, Tamil Nadu has been successfully growing sugarcane in his two-hectare farm for the past 10 years. He has motivated other farmers in his village who had faced losses in their paddy crops to take up sugarcane cultivation.

Good sugar recovery

He is at present growing the CO-86032 variety in his farm. This variety can be harvested four times in three years (1+3 ratoons) and has a good sugar recovery rate of 10-11.5 per cent. "About nine tonnes of sugarcane buds (planting material) are required for planting in a hectare," he said. Before planting, the buds were immersed in a solution of 5 kg of urea and 250 gms of carbendazim diluted in 250 lt. of water to prevent any infestations, according to him. About 12 tonnes of farmyard manure and 350 kg of super phosphate were applied to the fields and ploughed into furrows.

Planting technique

The buds were planted on the sides of the furrows and the field beds irrigated, according to Mr. Kannan. "After the fifth day of planting about 2.5 kg of Atrazine weedicide diluted in about 200 lt. of water was sprayed in the field to control weed growth," he said. Spraying weedicide should be preferably done in the early mornings, he explained.

The buds germinate in 15-30 days. Forty days after planting a fertilizer dose comprising 250 kg of DAP (Di-ammonium-phosphate), 100kg of urea and 12 kg of sevidol was applied to the crops as a side dressing, according to Mr. Kannan.

"Immediately after fertilizer application the soil around the base of the clumps was packed tightly," he said.

A second application of 250 kg each of complex, urea, potash and neem cake was made 90 days after planting.

The crop has to be irrigated at frequent intervals to obtain more yield, according to him. "During the summer, irrigation was done once in ten days," he said.

Pest attacks

Detailing on pest attacks on his crops he said, "woolly aphid infestation was prevalent in my crops especially during the monsoon. "Spraying a solution of 600 gm. of acephate diluted in 80 lt. of water once over the sugarcane clumps was found effective." A third application of about 375 kg of urea alone was made as a side dressing to the crops on the seventh month after planting, according to him. "In about eight months after planting I had harvested my first sugarcane clumps and sold them at Rs.1,075 per tonne to farmers as seed buds," he said.

"The second ratoon harvest was done in 10-12 months and subsequent ratoons were harvested in the same time interval," he said.

Yield data

"I got an average yield of about 150 tonnes of sugarcane," he said. Mr. Kannan had spent Rs. 1,10,000 for cultivating the crop. His gross income by selling his produce to the sugar mill at the rate of 1,075 per tonne was about Rs.1,80,000. His net profit after deducting the expenses was about Rs. 75,000.

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