

Integrated farming ideal for small scale ryots



Chitra of Putheri village of Kanchipuram district, Tamil Nadu with her catch of catfish.

Integrated farming system has been proved to be beneficial to farmers because even if the main crop fails due to adverse weather conditions or price fluctuations in market, the loss can be supplemented by selling the produce of other intercrops or animal products. Experienced farmers have always been growing other crop varieties and livestock along with their main crops as a means of subsidiary income.

Effective recycling

The animal wastes can be effectively recycled as fertiliser for their crops thereby reducing huge expenses for purchase of chemical fertilisers and the harvested produce from the fields can be used as a feed for the animals.

Mrs. P. Chitra is one such progressive farmer of Putheri village in Kanchipuram district of Tamil Nadu who is growing CO-3 grass slips in her 2-hectare field and rears both cattle and fresh water fish in her backyard.

Dairy unit

She has a dairy unit of about 20 animals comprising both buffaloes and cows and also rears catfish (known as *Theliin* Tamil) variety in her backyard. They have taken a dilapidated pond in their village on lease for rearing the fishes.

"I bought the catfish fingerlings from a private agency at the cost of Rs.1.30 per fingerling and released about 10,000 fingerlings in the pond," she said. The pond is recharged with water during the monsoon and during the summer, water is pumped into the pond from bore wells in the fields. The fish attains maturity in about three months and Chitra employs manual labour at the rate of Rs.100 to catch the fishes. "The fishes are sold at the rate of Rs.30-40 per kilo," she said. About 150 kgs of fish are sold in a week, according to her.

Fish feed

Giving details on the feeding diet for the fishes she said, "the fishes are quite hardy in nature and can survive on algae and plankton in the pond. But I feed my fishes with chicken wastes which help them to gain weight," she said.

She buys chicken wastes from the local market for Rs.450 every week. The pond was repaired at the cost of Rs.15,000 for raising the sides and deepening, according to her. The grass grown is used as a green fodder for feeding her animals.

Organic manure

The dung and urine of the cattle have been diverted into the fields, which serves as an effective organic manure for their grass crops. The animals are milked twice a day and she gets about 60 litres of milk from her dairy unit. Cow's milk is sold at Rs.10 per litre and buffaloes milk is sold at Rs.14 per litre," she said. Regarding feed for cattle being a costly factor for farmers rearing cattle, she said, "I do not face much problems regarding the feed as I feed the animals with the green fodder harvested from my field." In addition she feeds her animals with rice husk and vegetable wastes. At present she is maintaining about six Murrah breed buffaloes and 17 Holstein Fresian (HF) breed cows. A thatched shed was also built at a cost of about Rs. 12,000 for housing the animals. The grass slips after her personal use is sold to farmers at the cost of Rs.10-15 per bunch.

Gross income

Her gross income is about Rs.50,000 from the sale of the fishes and milk in a year. After deducting the expenses for labour and fish feed she is able to realise a profit of about Rs.39,000.

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