

Livestock based agriculture, a lifeline in times of distress



Mr. Sreejith John of Kozhikode, Kerala with an ornamental poultry bird in his farm

Livestock based agricultural activity has always been viewed as a lifeline for farmers. If the main crop fails, the farmer can see through the difficult times by selling the animals or birds in his farm. In fact it is comparable to a credit card which helps the farmers when they are in urgent need of money. Also, this type of farming protects the farmers as they need not take loans at high interest rates from private money lenders.

Technical backup

Mr. Sreejith John of Koorachund village, Kozhikode, Kerala has about six acres of land in which 200 coconut palms are grown, providing for an annual income of Rs. 50,000. Fodder grass and banana are also raised as intercrops. The fodder is used for feeding a small dairy unit consisting of two cows and two calves. The banana cultivation provides an additional income of Rs. 5,000 per year. He approached the KVK to both improve his farm productivity, and increase his income. Accordingly, he started an ornamental poultry farm in 2007 after undergoing a training programme and started rearing ornamental birds such as Golden Silky, Cochin Bandom, White Silky, Phoseline, Japanese Bandom, Blue Cochin, Golden Milliflour, Silver Milliflour and Silver Lace, which are in good demand.

Housing the birds

He constructed three sheds at a cost of about Rs.60,000 to house the birds. The birds were fed with layer chick mash, and the total feed cost including medicines was about Rs. 150 per day, depending upon the number of birds. The birds were sold locally at Rs. 400-600 per pair and the eggs were sold at Rs.30 - 40 per egg. "On an average, 80 birds and 30 eggs were sold in a month. I have earned a net income of Rs. 1,94,000 last year through the sale of birds and eggs. The farmer has also devised a low cost incubator with a capacity for hatching 150 eggs in a batch. The incubator is priced at about Rs.7,500.

“He has also started rearing layer chickens and we assisted him in procuring one-day-old chicks of improved breeds such as Kalinga brown and Gramasree from the Kerala Government Poultry farm at Chattamangalam, Kozhikode and Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur,” said Dr. T.K. Jacob, Principal Scientist of the Institute. The chicks are reared for 50 days after which they are immunized and sold.

Biogas plant

Grown up chicks are sold at Rs.50 per bird and the total expenditure on a bird is Rs. 29. He has already sold 1,500 birds in five batches, earning a net profit of Rs. 31,500. He has also established a biogas plant using the chicken waste and cow dung.

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