

## Self-reliance and diversification may bring in profits

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Farming requires patience and consistence. The development of civilisation and the plough are directly linked.

“Whatever be the development in any sphere, without agriculture it cannot be sustained.

“But the sad fact is, in our country it is the farmers who are being neglected and suffer for no fault of theirs,” says farmer Sadananda from Tapasihalli village, Doddaballapura taluk, Karnataka.

Mr. Sadananda has been conferred several State and national awards in recognition of his work on integrated farming.

The most important features of Mr. Sadananda’s farming are, use of own manure, least dependence on external input, and use of family labour.

### **Income gap**

“An IT professional may earn Rs.50,000 in just six months of joining a company whereas a farmer who is growing crops in 10 acres, is not able to afford even Rs. 10,000 to meet some expenditure.

“Even big farmers find it difficult to get their daughters married as they don’t have the cash on hand. They need to pledge their lands to raise the money. What to say of small farmers then?” he queries.

“Though today this might not be true for several farmers in the country, I want to differ on this. Look at my area, just 2 acres and some cents, and my annual income is between Rs. 7 lakh and Rs. 8 lakh in a year,” he says.

“Earning money is not a difficult job for farmers.” The secret lies in making use of the available land area and making best use of available resources and technologies according to him.

Mr. Sadananda started cultivating vegetables initially and realized a reasonable income. But he says “the income and marketing did not prove satisfactory”.

He planned the cropping pattern in such a way that it included a combination of perennial, annual, and seasonal crops as well as livestock rearing.

### **Different crops**

Accordingly, he planted 50 coconut trees, most of them around the field borders, and also planted Chikku, Jack (bearing round the year), Agase (fodder trees), Teak, Silver Oak, Pongamia and other trees. In about 20 cents he planted arecanut and adopted organic mulching.

“Till 2003-04, I planned my own cropping pattern including dairy, sheep, and biogas, obtaining a net income of around Rs. 3 lakh. During 2005-06 I came into contact with the Rural Bioresource Complex Project (RBRC) project staff from the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, and acted on their advice to shift the cropping pattern from more of vegetables to floriculture, nursery raising, adding

improved breeds of sheep, vermicomposting, backyard poultry, and azolla production,” he explains.

#### **And also animals**

The farmer started rearing poultry birds in the arecanut plantation by using shade net as fencing material and planted rose in one acre and twenty cents of land. Subsequently, he started raising a vegetable nursery in an area of 10 cents based on the local demand. Two cross-bred cows generate 6,000 litres of milk annually.

A water storage tank dug at the entrance to the field is used for fish rearing and also for irrigating the crops.

“Since I got free cow dung I set up a bio gas plant and also erected drip irrigation to use water judiciously. Since labour is a problem, I modified my old scooter into a power sprayer for spraying, and fertigation for my crops,” he adds.

According to him, money generation serves as a big energy booster for a farmer. “What farmers in our country need today is finance. Practically all other inputs are available for them. Whatever be the technology, they must be able to deliver results — be practical and feasible. Merely talking cannot solve the problem,” is his conviction.

#### **Useless information**

He further adds, “If you look at some of the available government and international websites, they give details of the area of sowing, the seasons, cropping, and other information.

“But in reality this information does not help grassroots farmers. Of what use are these data for farmers when they are suffering?” he asks.

There is absolutely no basis for expecting the impossible. Careful study, interacting with other experienced farmers, and experts alone will help, according to him.

“A field should be like a kirana store (provision store),” he says. “One can get almost any edible item from the shop. Similarly a farmer must start growing different crops along with fish, poultry, and cattle.

“Crops are like long term deposits and animals are for the short term, that mature in some months. Even if one fails, the others will bail him out,” he explains.

For more details readers can contact Mr. Mr. Sadananda at Tapasihalli village, Doddaballapura taluk, Bangalore rural district, phone: 808-7659151 and mobile No.9342022146.

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