

## Zero Budget Farming a Success



For A.C. Joshykumar of Muttukad in Bison Valley grama panchayat employing zero budget natural farming methods in his seven-acre multi-crops land has proved successful with considerable increase in yield. Joshykumar is one of around 45 farmers in the district who have already shifted to zero budget farming, devised by Subhash Palekar of Amaravathy in Maharashtra. Mr. Joshykumar said he could easily shift to zero budget farming since he had always practised organic farming methods. He said that full dedication and keen efforts were needed to shift to zero budget farming .

Zero budget farming proposes that only a single cow is needed to cultivate 30 acres of land. It employs scientific methods to rejuvenate the micro organisms in the soil with the help of earth worms. Fertilizers or pesticides are not used in the method. The focus of the cultivation is through the activation of micro organisms in the soil. Mr. Joshykumar said that his main cultivation, pepper, is completely resisting pest attack even though he was not using any pesticides and production has increased considerably. He bought an indigenous variety of cow-Jaboo - from Kasargod when he shifted to the farming method.

Cow dung is the main component used for revitalising soil with the help of dried plants, which is used to cover the ground around the cultivated plants.

Besides pepper, he also cultivates vegetables, nutmeg and clove. he said an exporting agent from Marayur who market organic produce bought clove from me at Rs.400 a kg when the market price was Rs.310. Another farmer, Sunny Kudankavil of Panamkuttu said he got an yield of 400 kg from 5 kg of ginger rizhome since he shifted to zero budget farming. If you follow the guidelines suggested by Mr. Palekar, you will get the result, Mr. Kudankavil, who had attended a three-day workshop organised by Mr. Palekar said.

Though the Kerala Agriculture Development Society procures organic produce at 10 to 30 percent higher price, lack of a regular procurement scheme for organic produce is one problem faced by farmers, he said. Jose Ammencheri, a cardamom farmer in Vandanmedu, said yield had not fallen when he shifted his 14-acre plantation to the new farming method. "There will not be a sudden increase in yield, but it sustains. Also, organic pest control methods are used, he said. Cardamom plantation is known high use of pesticides. V.C. Devasia said his cocoa plants and rubber plantation have shown higher yield since he shifted to zero budget farming three years

ago.

Shaji Thundathil, who is co-ordinating the farmers engaged in zero budget farming, said that thousands of farmers were keen to shift to the farming method. He said that 300 acres of fallow grass land in Muttukadu would be cultivated using zero budget farming methods jointly by farmers, who have found success employing the method.

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