

November 3, 2011

Natural inputs, multicropping advised for Vidharbha region

Such measures may have prevented a few of the suicides in the region



Guiding force: Mahajan showing his simple four-chamber system using brick and mortar to store cowdung.

The names Vidharbha or Wardha immediately evoke memories of farmers' suicides. "Several reasons such as growing only one crop, total dependence on monsoon, lack of infrastructure and irrigation facilities, small land holdings, poor marketing, and insensitive government policies towards farmers are attributed to this. Visiting the region drives home one point, that not all of Vidharbha is a graveyard of dead farmers," says Mr. Praful Bansod, Scientist MSSRF village Resource Centre, Yavatmal.

National shame

"Termed as a national shame due to the gross indifference of the Government, it is true that the region recorded the highest suicide rates among farmers.

"In fact the Prime Minister reacted late by visiting the region but responded immediately on television channels to the share market slump during the period. This only proves how far the government is pro-farmer in its attitude," he adds.

“But still a sizeable number of ryots continue to farm their lands and are able to overcome the crises by using natural inputs and trying different crops and cultivation techniques,” says Mr. Bansod.

Take the case of the husband and wife farmers in the region.

Popularly referred to as Mahajans, both Mr. Purushottam Jagannath Mahajan and his wife Mrs. Sunita are practising agriculture in this region for a long time and today are a guiding force for many others who wish to build a new life.

“Chemical fertilizers are perennially in short supply in the region. Even if they are available, the cost burns a hole in our pocket.

“We explored other alternatives for using as inputs and learnt to make our own liquid manure from compost. I constructed a simple four chamber system using brick and mortar to store cowdung.”

Water is mixed with the dung in one of the chambers and the slurry is released in the subsequent chambers. After some days the mixture is released along with flowing water into the fields.

Black liquid manure

“Since the slurry is black in colour and helps the crops to grow well, we named it as black liquid manure,” explains Mr. Mahajan.

He also advocates the use of Sanjeevak or Jeevamrut, fermented liquid manures, made from cow dung and urine.

“Amrutpani, a soil tonic can also be used instead of Jeevamrut. About 200 litres of any one of them can be mixed with irrigating water to be applied to the field. A minimum of three applications are necessary,” he says.

First immediately after sowing, a second application after 25-30 days (after first weeding), and the third application at 50-60 days after sowing (after second weeding).

For better crop growth, diluted Jeevamrut can also be sprayed on the crops at an interval of 20 days after sowing.

Main reason

“One of the main reasons for the crop failure and accumulating debts from the farmers' side is going in for monocropping using chemicals.,” explains Mr. Mahajan.

Many farmers cultivated only cotton. Be it two or five acres, the lure of big money in a short time attracted many to grow cotton.

They did not bother to enquire about the crop suitability for their area, whether water is available or not etc.

When the crops died so did many farmers. The main reason being accumulated debts from private moneylenders fleecing them with exorbitant interest rates.

“In fact, several farmers thought that they could get back their money by growing cotton again in the second cycle and again failed. I thought about this and introduced several combinations of multicrops,” says Mr. Mahajan.

Different crops

The farmer grows maize, cowpea or sorghum in one row, red gram in two rows and cotton in four rows in one acre.

The field is mulched using a thick layer of crop residue, immediately after sowing.

The Mahajans also grow different vegetables, pulses, fruits, spices, and medicinal plants.

Though during initial stages they faced many hurdles ultimately it turned out to be a very satisfying and profitable venture for them.

“Today they are a standing example for others on how to become successful farmers in the region,” says Mr. Bansod.

For more information contact Mr. Praful Bansod, Scientist MSSRF, Village Resource Center Yavatmal, email: prafulbansod@gmail.com, mobile: 9420960830 and Mr. Mahajan at Karanji Bhoge, Deoli taluk, Wardha, mobile: 9552955897 and 9922354663.

Source: web.thehindu@thehindu.co.in Copyright © 2012, The Hindu
