

Water conservation methods come to a small farmer's rescue

October 15, 2014



Even during the annual monsoon season the region did not get adequate rains. -

A well recharge pit was also dug for harvesting the rains

Appiyampatti, a small hamlet in Dindugal district of Tamil Nadu, is one among the several villages in the state which has been facing a severe drought for the past over five years.

Even during such a critical phase when several farmers left farming and started moving out in search of alternative work Mr. V.Chellamutu remained anchored in the village to continue with agriculture in his six acres since there was no other choice for him.

Even during the annual monsoon season the region did not get adequate rains leading to acute water scarcity.

Deliberate

It was practically a losing battle and he was deliberating to sell off his lands when he happened to interact with the experts at the Centre for Improved Rural Health and Environmental Protection (CIRHEP) at Nilakottai.

“When I explained my predicament to them they assured me of better times and visited my farm and designed it in such a way that when it rains during the monsoon not a drop goes waste,” he says.

“The problem was not something unique to the farmer. In fact the entire region was facing such a situation.

“We thought of guiding the farmer and we were hopeful that others in the region would adopt the same measures,” says Mr. M. Mohan, Chief Functionary, CIRHEP.

For a start the institute studied the rainfall pattern in the region and found that during monsoon, sudden heavy downpours were common in the area. Such sudden and heavy rains tend to wash off the fertile top soil.

This adversely affected land fertility and the moisture holding capacity of the soil. Due to runoff, moisture in the soil was only available for a limited period which was not enough for the crops to grow.

Trench bunds

The institute took up the responsibility of constructing trench bunds in the farmer’s field with the support of village watershed committee.

“The trench helps in harvesting the rainwater and conserves moisture for a longer period. Soil erosion is also arrested when there is a heavy downpour,” explains Mr. Mohan.

A well recharge pit was also dug for harvesting the rains and recharging the ground water. Recharge pits were known to retain the soil moisture for two months even during summer, according to Mr. Mohan.

Grass

In addition, field bunds were also constructed around the field. These bunds helped in conserving the rain water and preventing soil run to the nearby stream.

It is advisable to grow grass on these bunds since the roots of the grass help to hold the soil tightly and prevent it from being washed away when it rains heavily.

The farmer was advised to take up mixed farming where food crops and fodder crops are cultivated on the same farm land.

This ensures the harvest of at least a single crop even during drought years and ensures green fodder for his four milch cows.

The dung from the animals is used as organic manure for the soil and also for generating gas for the two bio gas units installed under the project.

“My position today is better than what it was some years back. I am able to get some income from my crops and milk.

Past memories

“I remember how I had to sink a borewell to nearly 1,200 feet in search of water and was unsuccessful but all this changed from 2013 when our region received copious rain and all these water conservation techniques have made my life a little greener,” smiles the farmer.

Interested farmers can contact

Mr. V. Chellamuthu, Valasu village, Appiyampatty panchayat, Thirumalai goundan valasu post, Oddanchatram taluk, Dindigul dist, mobile: 9942759454 and

Mr. M. Mohan, mail: cirhepn@gmail.com, Mobile: 09443805118