



## Farmers, Scientists Brainstorm together on Traditional Agricultural Practices.

**C**IKS hosted a one-day meeting on 22nd June at the CIKS Training Hall at Agani village near Sirkazhi, for an interdisciplinary group discussion on the topic of "Rapid Assessment of Traditional Agricultural Practices (RATAP)". The objective of the meeting was to get together a diverse group including practicing farmers, scientists and researchers as well as representatives of some NGOs for a brainstorming session on this topic. Initially, the group started with making a free listing of the problems that are faced by farmers. Following this, the farmers identified a set of criteria that were used for prioritizing and selection of specific problems. The criteria listed were - common occurrences, frequency of occurrence, economic loss, prior experience with management using traditional practices, inability to manage with modern chemical practices etc. Based on this the farmers identified four major problems namely damage due to - Stem borer, Earhead bug, Rats and Bacterial leaf blight. Following this the farmers reviewed a set of practices that had been selected by CIKS by making a survey of literature pertaining to traditional farmers practices.



*The objective of the meeting was to get together a diverse group to brainstorm on the assessment of traditional agricultural practices*

The meeting was attended by Dr. Arivudainambi and Dr. Annamalai Anandan from the Department of Entomology and Department of Agricultural Botany, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, group of 21 farmers from in and around Sirkazhi town and six technical staff of CIKS. Finally a working group of farmers and scientists was formed who will go on to design a method and test the short listed practices.

## Training Programme on Free and Open-Source Software (FOSS)

**A** training programme entitled 'NGO-in-a-box', covering the adoption of free and open-source software solutions for NGOs, was held at Srirangapatna, Karnataka, between the 25th and 29th of June. The programme was supported by HIVOS, and conducted by Mahiti InfoTech, Bangalore. Mr. Anand Ramachandran, our communications consultant, attended the programme. Participants

were introduced to range of open source applications, and also discussed ethical, economical and practical issues regarding migration to FOSS. Anand conducted two sessions on 'Creative aspects of Blogging' and 'Videogames for education and social change'. Based on the learnings gained from attending this programme, CIKS is evolving a long-term strategy for migration to open-source platforms.



## PROJECT WATCH *A round-up of our activities*

### Enhancing Livelihood and Food Security Through Capacity Building for Organic Farming and Natural Resource Management - Phase II

CIKS is implementing the second phase of the above-mentioned project with support from the Ford Foundation. Under this project a total of 313.54 acres of land has been selected from Tiruvallur, Tiruvannamalai, Kancheepuram and Nagapattinam districts, out of which 112.58 acres are cultivated organically in this season. Dr. Ganesan Balachander, India Representative, Ford Foundation visited the CIKS farm and some field locations on 7th April. He also had a meeting with representatives of the Farmers' Sangams at our Sukkankollai farm. We had an opportunity to appraise him regarding the progress of the CIKS programme in the current Ford supported project and possibilities of strengthening our work in collaboration with Universities and research institutions. On 23rd April, a training was conducted in Allivilagam village for the farmers enrolled under organic certification about the importance of ICS and organic certification. On 22nd May, a meeting was held in Mazaiyur village of Thiruvannamalai district to discuss about the registration of organic farmers producer society. A General body meeting and the Management committee meeting of the Kancheepuram organic farmers producer society was held on 26th May.

On 5th and 20th May, two trainings were conducted on the maintenance of ICS records for the farmers of Murugamangalam and Elyankudi villages. A total of 36 farmers participated in this training programme. On 14th and 15th June, two trainings were conducted on the importance of organic farming and organic farming technologies for the beneficiaries of Thiruvallur and Nagapattinam districts respectively. As a part of this project, under the capacity

building of NGOs training programmes were conducted for the farmers working with NGOs namely Tribal Health Initiative at Dharmapuri. NARDEP at Kanyakumari and CAST at Tirunelveli from 16th - 19th May, 4th - 9th June and 11th - 16th June respectively. The participants were trained on topics like importance of organic farming, alternative for chemical farming and technologies followed by CIKS.

### Capacity Building on Organic Farming

This project, supported by CAPART, New Delhi is being implemented in 10 villages in the Kancheepuram district. Sangam meetings were conducted regularly and experience sharing took place. Paddy has been cultivated organically in Edaiyur, Narapakkam and Korapattu villages. Three farmers are involved in the conservation of 18 traditional paddy varieties. On 24th May, a training on organic farming was conducted for the farmers of Valathodu village. The participants were trained on topics like organic farming technologies, pest and disease management, preparation of biopesticides, *Azolla* and vermicompost production. Farmers of Senthankulam, Kolathancherry and Korapattu villages were taken for an exposure visit to organic fields in our project villages. Four training programmes were conducted on 11th, 12th, 16th and 26th June, for the beneficiaries of Vinayaganallur, Edaiyur, Kollathancherry and Narapakkam villages respectively. A total of 147 farmers participated in this training programme. Participants were trained on topics such as pests and diseases of paddy, organic methods of pest and disease management, Internal Control Systems etc.

### Paddy Organic Chain - Seed to Harvest

CIKS is implementing a pilot project on "Paddy organic chain - Seed to harvest" in Tamil Nadu with support from HIVOS,

Bangalore. Monthly Sangam meetings took place in all the villages. An annual work report has been prepared. Soil and water samples from the project area were collected for testing. A report on yield estimation under organic cultivation is being prepared.

### Vrkshayurveda for Vegetables

This project is being implemented with support from DST. As a part of this project, in Agani an experiment is being conducted on Bhendi to manage sucking pests under field conditions using RBD. Brinjal has been cultivated in Agani under field conditions to standardize the organic package of practices. An experiment was conducted in Bhendi under the shade house conditions to test the efficacy of different concentrations of buffalo panchagavyam. Fumigation trials on Brinjal seeds using *Sweet flag* powder were undertaken. Organic vegetable cultivation is on in several farmers' fields to standardize the organic packages. As a part of this project, an experiment on "Management of major pests in Brinjal through foliar spray of biopesticides" has been initiated. A training programme on organic vegetable cultivation was conducted for the NGO staff on 20th June. Nearly 13 participants from 8 different NGOs participated in this training programme.

### DST Project on Storage Forms of Biopesticides

A DST supported project on storage forms of biopesticides is being implemented in Sirkazhi from September 2005. Bioassays conducted on Aphids and *Spodoptera litura* shows that 4% Neem oil soap solution has a strong antifeedancy effect on Aphids and extract of *Sida acuta* shows 98.34% of antifeedancy on *Spodoptera*. Efforts have begun for rearing of *Epilachna* beetles under shade house conditions. *Ksharam* was prepared using *Calotropis*

and stored for future research. On 20th June Dr. S. Arivudainambi from the Entomology Department, Annamalai University visited our insect rearing lab and had a discussion with our staff regarding the results of the bioassays conducted on Aphids.

### Technology Resource Centre Activities

The Technology Resource Centre activities of CIKS commenced from October 2005. As a part of this programme, organic farming technologies have been implemented in Thiruvallur, Thiruvannamalai and Kancheepuram districts. The Technology Resource Center was inaugurated on 20th April and the trainings will be conducted regularly from here. An evaluation of the technologies that have been undertaken in the farmers fields for demonstration were evaluated. The results were satisfactory and we found that in most cases farmers have also contributed additionally and expanded the scope. Demonstrations of different composting technologies, biopesticide preparations, organic crop cultivation is also being undertaken in the Sukkankollai farm close to the TRC. Nearly 20 farmers are involved in the implementation of organic farming technologies. Several training modules were prepared. A trainers' training programme on organic farming will be conducted for the NGOs in Tamil Nadu from 9th to 13th July at our TRC.

### Work in Progress at Sukkankollai

In our experimental farm at Sukkankollai, seven different traditional paddy varieties have been cultivated in the field. Nine different indigenous paddy varieties cultivated during the previous season were harvested. Greens were sown in the shade house. Banana suckers have been planted. Fumigation trial on tomato seedlings to control damping-off disease has been conducted. An experiment on yield estimation of different composting methods shown that *Trichoderma viride* enhances the composting process. Experiments on "Testing the effect of organic manure in Paddy and Groundnut" are being conducted in the field. An experiment has been initiated in Tomato to control Fruit borer (*Helicoverpa armigera*) through foliar spray of biopesticides.

# NEWSROOM

## Happenings and more.

### COMPAS IMM Meeting

A.V. Balasubramanian travelled to the Netherlands between 22nd and 28th April, to attend the International Management Meeting (IMM) of the COMPAS programme. The objective of the meeting was to review the inception and operationalisation of the COMPAS programme during the new phase. The meeting was attended by the regional coordinators from Asia, Africa and Latin America as well as members of the International Management team.

### Visit to NOVI

On 23rd April, A.V. Balasubramanian visited the International Headquarters of NOVI at Den Haag in the Netherlands. He had a meeting with Ms. Nienke Smidman of NOVI to discuss possible ways in which there could be collaboration between COMPAS Indian partners and the various NOVI programmes.

### Visit to Wageningen Agricultural University

On 25th April, A.V. Balasubramanian visited the Centre for Genetic Resources at the Wageningen Agriculture University. He had a meeting with the Director, Dr. Bert Visser about the activities of our Centre and possible collaboration in the field programmes in Asia. He also visited the Cold Storage facility and the Seed Bank Collection.

### Talk on Traditional Agriculture

At the invitation of the National Folklore Support Centre, A. V. Balasubramanian delivered a talk on - "Building on Traditional Agricultural Knowledge and Wisdom for Sustainable Agriculture today" on 15th May 2007. The talk was attended by the faculty and researchers from the Centre as well as a group of invitees.

### Visit to Delhi

On 30th May, A. V. Balasubramanian had visited Delhi and had a meeting with Dr. T. P. Rajendran, Assistant Director General (Plant Protection) ICAR, New Delhi. He discussed about possible ways of collaboration. On 31st May, he visited the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR), IARI, New

Delhi. He met Dr. S. K. Sharma, Director as well as Dr. A. K. Singh, Head and Dr. Kalyani Srinivasan, Senior Scientist of the Conservation Division. Various possibilities were discussed regarding collaboration for *in-situ* conservation of traditional seed varieties.

### Visit to Bangalore

On 1st June, A. V. Balasubramanian visited Bangalore for a series of meetings. In the morning he attended the COMPAS Asian network programme along with FRLHT representatives. Later on he met Dr. Ganeshiah and Prof. Kulkarni from the Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore. In the afternoon he had a meeting with Shri Bishwadeep Ghose and Dr. Murali of HIVOS and discussed about the modalities for utilization of a grant for assisting farmer's organization for marketing efforts. In the evening he had a meeting with Dr. M. S. Hegde, Professor, Solid State and Structural Chemistry Unit (SSCU) of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. It was decided that he could provide assistance for chemical characterization and analysis of biopesticides in the form of Ksharam.

### Trip to Pondicherry

A. V. Balasubramanian and K. Vijayalakshmi made a three-day trip to Pondicherry between 9th and 11th June. They had meetings with Shri Vijay Poddar, Member Executive, Shri Aurobindo Society and Dr. Sampath, Research Coordinator. They discussed the possible ways in which CIKS could collaborate with Aurobindo Society.

### Focus Group Discussion on Organic Produce

On 20th June, CIKS hosted a "Focus Group Discussion" regarding organic food produce. The meeting was coordinated by Mr. Kishore of genus a.b., Bangalore and attended by about ten consumers enrolled in the Arogyam programme of CIKS. The objective of the discussion was to get inputs and feedback regarding the current status of the Arogyam programme and the expectations of the consumers.

## BOOKSTORE

New publications and audiovisuals

### *Iyarkai Sagupadi Thozhilnutpangal – Thakkali, Vendai, Nilakkadalai and nel (in Tamil)*



This set of four pamphlets were compiled by CIKS and brought out by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations under the Technical Cooperation Project. These pamphlets give detailed information about organic cultivation practices like land selection, manuring, pest and disease management and post harvest practices.

For Copies contact "Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems" at the address below. Please add postal charges.

### Package of Organic Practices from Tamil Nadu for Rice, Groundnut, Tomato and Okra



These packages were compiled by CIKS for the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations under the Technical Cooperation Project. This book gives detailed information about organic cultivation practices from land selection to storage. It also discusses about seed selection, manuring, management of pests and diseases etc.

Copies can be downloaded from  
<http://www.fao.org.in/report>

## VISITOR'S BOOK

Who's been dropping in at CIKS

- On 18th April, Ms. Harini, Ms. Sujatha and Mr. Saagar from Rural Technology Business Incubator (RTBI), Chennai visited our Sirkazhi office.
- On 22nd April, Mr. Sreedevan and Mr. Rajesh Chandran from ARC group Mayiladuthurai visited our Sirkazhi office to get to know about the CIKS activities.
- On 5th May, Mr. Mani Jayaprakashvel, Research Scholar, Centre for Advanced Studies in Botany, Madras University visited us to discuss about collaboration with CIKS to test traditional paddy varieties for resistance against sheath blight.
- On 1st June, Ms. Catherine Harvey from Australia along with a group of three persons visited our Sukkankollai farm to get to know about various organic farming technologies.
- On 1st June, a group of 30 farmers from CAST, Tirunelveli visited our Sukkankollai farm.
- On 9th June, Mr. M.S. Shanmugam, Programme Officer, DHAN Foundation visited our Sukkankollai farm.
- On 13th June, Professor C. N. Krishnan, Director, Anna University K. B. Chandrasekhar Centre for Internet and Telecom Technologies visited us.
- On 13th June, Mr. Krishnan of Organic Harvest, a firm involved in marketing of organic produce in Chennai visited us.
- On 18th June, Swamy Divya Sukhananda and Swamy Yetiraj Chaitanya from the Ramakrishna Mission, Vivekanandapuram, Kolkata visited us.
- On 29th June, Mr. Nagendran and a team of five other persons from Sri Lanka representing the programme – "Operation Days Work" visited us.

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