



Newsletter

GOOD FARMING – GOOD FOOD

Issue : 03

March 2021

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Good Farming - Good Food

Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security and Transforming Smallholders' Livelihood

Solidaridad Asia



Solidaridad





GOOD FARMING - GOOD FOOD



Ground Activities Harvesting and Storage Trainings

Harvesting and storage is one of the most essential part of farming today. The reserves and backup generated through this activity is often responsible for the surplus needed for the nation. Under the programme Good Farming – Good Food, hundreds of farmers acquire the improved knowledge of harvesting their crop sown and grown with great deal of hardship and commitment. The farmers from the five districts of Madhya Pradesh took keen interest in learning the new and improved methods of harvesting and storage.

A large number of farmers had sown Wheat during the Rabi season. The farmers were suggested to cut the wheat soon after its maturity. The plant turns golden yellow and becomes brittle during its time



of maturity. Any delay in the same would have resulted in damage from the avifauna and rodents. Many times, the seed falls from its kernels if left to grow in the field for too long after its maturity. Ideally, one would wait for the moisture to reach the level of 25 to 30 percent to begin harvesting.

The use of harvester for cutting and gathering the crop is not only modern but also effective. Simple and old methods like use of sickle is also advised in case of unavailability of modern harvesting equipment. Regardless of the method and machinery, the crop should be bundled in a

stack post its cutting.

Moisture in the grains is often responsible for the growth of microorganisms. With the increasing growth of micro-

FROM THE PEN OF PROGRAMME MANAGER

Dear Esteemed Readers,

This newsletter represents a collective effort of all the people who are directly and indirectly associated to the programme Good Farming – Good Food. Each month, we all collectively strive to build a robust farming community with an objective of improving their livelihood and nutritional standards. We see the month of March as an opportunity to bring to you not just the highlights of good farming practices but also our progress towards our nutritional goals. The spotlight during the month of March, by all means, falls on Women's day and its prelude Women's Week celebration.

Good Farming – Good Food takes great pride in organising activities and session for the women farmers of Madhya Pradesh. We celebrated the achievements of women in farming; along with addressing topics like- women as entrepreneurs, microfinancing, health and nutrition for the rural community, rights of women, Government schemes for the women in rural communities, women-friendly agricultural technologies, the importance of gender equality, etc. Under the field trainings, we have covered an essential farming activity for Wheat crop; its harvesting and storage. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the editorial and review team, for contributing to this third issue of our newsletter. I hope you all enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed the activities throughout the month.

Regards,

Suresh Motwani
General Manager
Solidaridad





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Harvesting and Storage Trainings

organisms, the grains would start decaying. To arrest the growth of microbes in the harvested crop, farmers were advised to dry the grains for 3 to 4 days.

Precautions like stopping the irrigation before harvesting, and saving the crop from falling on to the ground are also part the briefing for the participating farmers.

It is also necessary to check the growth of insects in the area of storage. Insects like Weevils, Cabinet Beetle are most destructive to the grains. A thorough examination of grains was advised to the farmers. Efforts to eliminate them and control their growth should be a priority for each of the farmer. They were advised to use fumigants like aluminium phosphide in the prescribed proportion.



Good quality polyethene bags are often used to make the process effective. In case of storage in a bin or a container, the farmers were shown how to fumigate the same with dried leaves of neem.

Farmers were advised to use new gunny bags and use polyethene to restrict the entry of moisture in the stored grains.

Harvesting and storage might be the last in the practices of agriculture, but it remains to be the most crucial stage where the grains finally

find its protection. A number of budding and experienced farmers were trained from the five target districts of Madhya Pradesh. With a strong harvesting and storage facilities in the newly building FPOs.

Sector Development

Medicinal Plants Sector Stakeholder's Conference and I-MAP

The curative and regenerative characteristics of certain plant species have made a commendable progress in the source and development of many traditional therapeutics. But the trend had changed for a brief period of time when this traditional knowledge shrank from existence with the passage of time due to the unavailability of practicing professionals and relatively low income in the practice. However, as seen in the current times, the medicinal plants have reclaimed a wide acceptance due to an escalating trust in herbal remedies in view of the current pandemic and in search for a natural and alternative medicines for boosting immunity. It also has decreased side effects compared to modern medicine and can also furnish the growing requirements of medicine.

On March 16th, Solidaridad and Regional-Cum-Facilitation Centre (RCFC) - Central Region - National Medicinal Plants Board, Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India; jointly organised Medicinal Plants Sector Stakeholders' Conference Cum Buyer-Sellers Meet in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh. The conference successfully promoted sustainable pro-

duction, collection, and conservation of medicinal and aromatic plants to create synergies between stakeholders and introduce innovative value-chain while facilitating access to profitable domestic and global markets.

Therefore, one of the key objectives was to throw light on the potential of medicinal plants, its resources, and to understand the challenges and opportunities with the medicinal plants sector. While suggesting recommendations based on the present state of knowledge in the sector, it also aimed at establishing a well machined functionality of the medicinal plants sector along with improving the living standards of the underprivileged communities.

As a "One Stop Solution", I-MAP would encourage sharing and exchanging best practices to foster sustainable production, collection, and conservation of medicinal and aromatic plants. The innovative digital solutions would assure provenance, quality, and sustainability to explore and meet the growing domestic and global demand for MAP products.

The MAP sector can be improved if the multiple private





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Medicinal Plants Sector Stakeholder's Conference and I-MAP

and public agencies would step forward to strengthen the medicinal plants cultivators, and if research and educational institutions would motivate the plant growers by fostering a flow of essential knowledge about its improved farming practices.

Supportive public policies, awareness amongst the farmers, assurance in the markets, profitability, access to new and improved farming techniques, and availability of guidance are some of the key factors for the success of MAP sector. For strengthening the sector, there is a need for a res-

olute guidance, cultivation, storage, processing, manufacturing, marketing and distribution that the One Stop

Solution I - MAP is capable of providing. It is an envisioned theme of growth for not just the farmers but also for the people who benefits the most out of Ayurveda/herbal medicines. I – MAP would thus provide a platform, wide as the world for the local farming community and interested sellers of me-



dicinal and aromatic plants.



Nutrition Bulletin

NutriSakhi Workshop

Nutri Sakhis are crucial factor behind dissemination of nutritional information in the rural setup. In efforts to further strengthen their grasp on the subject, the nutrition department, especially appointed for Good Farming – Good Food programme, organises periodical training workshops. Through “Train the Trainer” approach, the workshops provide a firm base of knowledge to the Nutri Sakhis so that they are capable of sharing the message of Nutrition effectively. Health benefits of including Soy and green vegetables in one’s diet along with promoting Poshan Vatika and balanced diet are few principal themes of workshops. A total of 10 Nutri Sakhis participated in the workshop.

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Nutrition Bulletin

Prescribed Soy Recipe for the Month

Soybean Pakoda

“ Soybean is a good source of Isoflavones and immensely beneficial for women and growing children. ”



Ingredients

- 1 cup (125 grams) soybean okara (pulp)
- 1 cup (125 grams) gram flour
- 2 green chilies- finely chopped
- Onion – finely chopped
- Oil for deep fry
- Ginger garlic paste
- Coriander leaves – finely chopped
- Carom seeds (as per one's taste)
- Salt (as per one's taste)

Method

- Create a batter of soybean okara and gram flour.
- Add onion, green chilies, ginger garlic paste, carom seeds, salt, and coriander leaves to the batter and mix well.
- Heat the oil in a pan and deep fry finger sized pakodas until golden brown.
- Serve the pakodas with ketchup or chutney

Ingredients	Grams	Protein	Iron (mg)
Soybean Okara	125	54	13
Gram Flour	125	26	6.6
Onion	120	2.16	1.44
In total	310	82.16	21.04



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Women's Week Celebrations Women in Leadership

Indian women remain underrepresented in the farming profession and have been subject to mounting labour demands. The rural life of a woman can easily be described as one that shuffles between inside and outside the house. Her work within the household is restricted to the traditionally set responsibilities of housekeeping and childcare. Her efforts outside the home, ranging from agricultural assistance to fodder and husbandry responsibilities, remains under a veil. At many times, fulfilling the basic needs of household members for food, water, and fuel takes them far beyond the house's geographical perimeter, into the village and surrounding countryside. Their challenging existence not only supports their families but also farming in a rural economy. Thus, their silent and salient contribution is brought to the limelight on days like International Women's Day.

Good Farming – Good Food, along with Solidaridad and its stakeholders' support, celebrates Women's Day every year. The celebration is stretched throughout the first week of March, where women from the farming community of Madhya Pradesh, through the workshops, exhibitions, and training, receive an opportunity to grow and improve professionally.

During the 2021 Women's Week celebration, the activities and sessions highlighted the importance of "Women in Leadership". Themed accordingly, the activities and session planned for the farming community of Madhya Pradesh brought in light the achievements of women in farming; along with addressing topics like- women as entrepreneurs, micro-financing, health and nutrition for the

rural community, Government schemes for the women in rural communities, women-friendly agricultural technologies, etc.

Similar activities were carried out throughout the five districts of Madhya Pradesh – Agar Malwa, Ujjain, Bhopal, Sehore and Dewas

These activities also allow the marginalised group of young women to participate in IWD and to receive a chance to learn, express and resolute to equal standing in society. Another perceived benefit that accompanies the celebration is that women get to move from their usual settings and mix with other women from all walks of life.

Apart from learning the technical aspects of farming, participants also improved their nutritional awareness. The educative sessions held under the guidance of a well-trained and qualified Nutrition Department of Good Farming – Good Food programme, touched in detail the essential topics like- dietary efficacy through soybean, preparation of nutritious dishes with beneficial vegetables, the importance of a healthy dietary regime, etc. The participants were also told about various processed and semi-processed items that are prepared by using soy.

This week-long celebration provided the participants with a positive experience involving greater social confidence and opportunities for indulging in a leadership role by becoming entrepreneurs. Experts from the Indian Institute of Soybean Research and ICAR accompanied the training to tell the women participants about preparing processed and semi-processed items prepared from Soybeans. Prod-





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Women's Week Celebrations

ucts like Soy milk, Soya Chunks, and Soy Paneer (Tofu) are a perfect protein source and in high demand throughout the markets.

As an outcome of this event, many participating women have agreed to work and improve their leadership role by actively engaging in entrepreneurial activities even within rural society's structural and social constraints.

As Good Farming – Good Food sought to use an innovative approach to circumvent these pitfalls, it respectfully acknowledges everyone's contribution in rural society. Therefore, some of the training also gave information about how Farmer Producer Organisations can help unlock smallholders' efforts and facilitate growth in their community. A Farmer Producer Organisation, made by and for the women farmers with the help and support from Solidaridad, also celebrated IWD with great enthusiasm. Rakshika FPO aims to build and strengthen women's role in agriculture by bringing them together as one. The event was a success, both in terms of its modest aims and, most importantly, as evaluated by the participants themselves. Those interviewed expressed greater feelings of optimism and belonging to the farming profession.

It is safe to say that, overall, the project provided participants with a nurturing and enriching experience, creating the potential for a lasting change that matters.

Diversity in Diet

A woman's dietary intake and nutritional status can profoundly affect her working capabilities, health and well-being. The forthcoming evidence on dietary habits suggests a complex interaction of psychological, sociocultural, and biological factors.

Inherited vulnerabilities, cultural pressures and adverse individual and family experiences contribute to altered eating behaviour and subsequent health complications.

The treatment of dietary disorders is complex and requires well defined nutritional interventions.

During the Women's Week Celebrations, Solidaridad and partners under the collective guidance of Good Farming – Good Food's nutrition departments organised activities and introductory sessions for the women farmers of Madhya Pradesh. Nutritional experts facilitated the participants with information on dietary recipes based on Soybeans and vegetables. The recipes would help them gain the best nutritional benefits from the Soy while maintaining a steady consumption of the same by bringing diversity to the flavour and taste.

Products made from soybeans like- Tofu, Chunks and Soy-milk are equally beneficial for one's health. Such products can easily be seen as a replacement for dairy products and provide the necessary nutrients to the targeted households. Women's week celebrations bring an exceptional opportunity to convey nutritional information to our farming community. The energy and spirit of participants in attending the activities were undoubtedly commendable. Appreciating the noble efforts, they have promised to adopt a nutritional lifestyle based on the sessions.

Entrepreneurial Activities

Women play a direct role in farming as well as in non-farm activities like dairy, poultry and other artisanal activities. However, their involvement is never seen as one that of a frontline runner. Not only is the versatile role played by women in agro-economic negated, but they are also often relegated to the marginal areas of economic activity. These workers are the most vulnerable sections with uncertain employment status and subsistence wages.

To bring an element of self-dependency into the lives of rural women of Madhya Pradesh, Good Farming – Good





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Women's Week Celebrations

Food organises transformative training sessions on entrepreneurial opportunities. During the Women's Week celebration, many women took part in the training exercises based on soy processing. Soybean based processed products like soy chunks, soy milk, and tofu can easily be prepared with little or no investments, and they are also in good demand. Such products and their high prospective of sales in the market presents a window of opportunity for the women from the farming community. The training becomes a welcoming gesture to come forward and explore a new livelihood option.

The lack of mobility restricts women's employment or even choice of employment even within the same region. Exploring livelihood options and the relative training for the same becomes challenging for many of the willing entrepreneurs. Good Farming – Good Food provides a platform of growth and development for the persevering farming community of Madhya Pradesh.

Women Friendly Agricultural Tools and Practices

Good farming – Good Food aims to improve productivity

and raise farmers' income by providing farmers access to information about agricultural practices, prices, and markets, along with the promotion of more diverse sets of crops and improved cultivation methods.

Women have traditionally played a crucial role in sustaining agricultural societies. Their requirements in the field activities often differ from men. Women have different technological needs from men due to their differing ergonomic features. Certain tools and practices are designed specifically for women so that they may work efficiently. During the women's week celebration, many women farmers from Madhya Pradesh's community participated in training sessions on Women Friendly Farming and tools. Taking ahead the gathered knowledge from practical demonstrations and sessions, the participants can now farm efficiently without risking any injuries. Good agriculture practices form the core of good farming, and women-friendly agricultural practices become a vital part of an all-inclusive agrarian programme.



Meet the Achievers

Rekha Chauhan

Farming is a challenging profession and there quite a few people who accept this challenge gallantly. In the state of Madhy Pradesh, district Agar, many farmer like Rekha have braved their way through the impending difficulties arising in agriculkture and have set an example for the rest of

Kachnariya is a small village that comes under the district of Agar Malwa. Like the other rural sectors across the district, people in Kachnariya are also predominantly dependent on agriculture as their primary means of livelihood.

Rekha Chauhan is one of the many women from the community who is involved in the family farming equation. Farming is a challenging profession. Low output, declining rainfall and poor agricultural inputs have often tormented the farmers for years. The problems faced Rekha are common to the community as well. But what makes Rekha and her fellow farmers special is their persistence to bring positive changes that matters the most in farm-

ing profession.

Rekha associated herself with Solidaridad when she and her fellow women farmers were overwhelmed by agriculture-related challenges. Under the programme Good Farming – Good Food, Rekha and her friends learned and applied sustainable cultivation methods for productive and profitable crops like soy.

The holistic nature of training under the programme proved to be a boon for Rekha. To improve the productivity of her crops, Rekha started investing in compost for her fields. In agriculture, the soil is the mother who gives, and to her, we must give back. By strictly following the guide-



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Rekha Chauhan

lines provided in the training sessions for biodegradable compost and the practical demonstrations of preparing the same, Rekha began to make the compost of her own and reduced the synthetic inputs like fertilisers. Fruit scraps, left and rotten vegetables, cow dung, stubs from the harvest, and other biodegradable components were used to make the compost organically effective. Also, as per the suggestions by experts from Solidaridad and partnering public educational bodies in the agriculture sector, she used waste decomposer efficiently to speed up the breakdown of organic material into a final product.

The ready compost was then used on her farm, and the results were equally gratifying. There was a substantial increase in the final yield. By improving her land inputs, Rekha was able to expand her operations. She grew other crops like Wheat, Gram, Onion and Vegetables along with Soybean as an intercropping measure.

Rekha has used the same compost to grow quality vegetables for her family in her kitchen garden. Under the training for Kitchen Gardening in Good Farming – Good Food, the farmers are collectively shown the correct way of utilising small space behind their houses to grow nutritious vegetables. These vegetable gardens can provide a yearlong supply of chemical-free and organically grown fresh vegetables for the family. The overall idea behind Nutrition Gardens is to uplift the nutritional status of the farming community, which would reduce the cases of anaemia in women and children.

Most of the farming communities are unaware of the dietary benefits associated with their farm produce especially Soy. For them, what grew in the farms is meant to be sold and not consumed. Many of them have thought of soybean as a crop that is only grown for extracting oil; unaware of its dietary values and

various ways of its consumption. After consistent endeavours under the nutrition aspect of the programme, Rekha and her friends are also following the recommended nutritious diets derived out of vegetables and soybeans. A similar trend can also be seen slowly adopted in their small village community.

Rekha is undoubtedly a leader in farming. Through the efforts and direction of MPSRLM, Rekha also started a Self-Help Group along with the women farmers from her community. MPSRLM is an industrious government body industriously working to provide livelihood opportunities to the rural areas. It is also an active public partner of Good Farming – Good Food. Through her newly formed SCG, the community secured funds to develop critical agricultural inputs like wells, further strengthening the agricultural foundations of her community.

Rekha is a role model, not just for her community but also for other struggling farmers of her farming

community. The support from the Good Farming – Good Food programme is meant to transform women and farmers' lives, like in the case of Rekha.



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