

# THANAL NEWSLETTER

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Agronaari: Celebrating the womanhood in agroecology

Mother Earth day Mandatory: planting for future

Meenangadi gears up for 'Mannorukkam'

2025



## Agronaari: Celebrating womanhood in Agroecology.

This International Women's Day, on March 8th, Thanal and PAN Asia Pacific (PANAP) proudly celebrated the invaluable contributions of women in agriculture with the release of two significant publications highlighting their resilience and innovation in promoting agroecology. In an event held at the Manivayal ward of Meenangadi, Mr. Vinayan, President of Meenangadi Panchayath, officially launched "Agronaari - Celebrating Women Farmers and Agroecology." This inspiring book, a testament to the dedication and expertise of women farmers in Kerala, showcases their remarkable success stories in embracing sustainable agricultural practices.

The release ceremony was made even more special as Mr. Vinayan handed over the first copy to the women farmers of the Sauparnika medicinal plant unit. Their story, featured in "Agronaari," exemplifies the powerful combination of traditional knowledge and conservation of nature. These women are not only cultivating medicinal plants organically, thereby conserving natural biodiversity, but are also transforming the traditional knowledge passed on from ancestors into medicines. The event was graced by Meenangadi Agriculture Officer Smt. Shanthi Sunil and Choothupara ward member Mr Geneve.





Simultaneously in Thiruvananthapuram, Thanal CEO Smt. Manju M Nair echoed this celebration by releasing "Agronaari" and presenting copies to a few of the women farmers whose success stories are recorded in the book.

"Agronaari" features the narratives of 27 women farmers, with 16 of them hailing from Wayanad. Their stories highlight the different ways in which women are leading in sustainable agriculture: from successful women's collectives to individual farmers dedicated to conserving traditional crop varieties and implementing organic farming methods and also of women who are leveraging new technologies to enhance their income and productivity in an environmentally responsible manner.

Adding to this global recognition of women's agricultural leadership, PANAP simultaneously launched another significant book in Malaysia titled "Women in Agroecology: Towards Pesticide-Free Communities." This publication shares the experiences of 19 women farmers from across the Asia Pacific region, further stressing the commitment of women in growing ecological and healthy food systems.

The success stories highlighted in "Agronaari" and "Women in Agroecology" demonstrate how women, through their dedication to sustainable farming, are not only ensuring food security and environmental health but are also becoming agents of change, inspiring others and building more resilient and equitable societies.

Their stories, now captured in these important publications, serve as a powerful reminder of their invaluable contributions and a call to further support and empower them in their work.

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## EARTH DAY MANDATORY: PLANTING FOR FUTURE

International Mother Earth Day on April 22nd, 2025 serves as a powerful reminder of our collective responsibility to protect and nurture the Earth. The challenges posed by climate change to Earth are increasingly evident, impacting our landscapes, our livelihoods and our future.

On April 22, 2025, Thanal did a collaborative initiative with the vibrant RWDI team at Trivandrum and planted 100 fruit trees in the land owned by Mr. Manoj Kumar, our certified organic farmer. RWDI, a global engineering consultant firm focusing on climate and environmental engineering, supported this initiative to inculcate eco awareness among their team members. This vital eco-restoration effort not only contributes to greening the landscape of our farmer who is an avid environmentalist, but also underscores the importance of revitalising degraded lands and promoting.



Furthermore, this initiative actively involves and inspires youngsters of a corporate Organisation, fostering a deep understanding of ecological restoration and their role in safeguarding our environment. While engaging the youth in hands-on activities like tree planting, they are made aware about the very basic elements of composting and natural farming. We aim to cultivate a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship.

On this Mother Earth Day, we also exhort you to be eco aware. Every conscious choice, every sustainable practice, and every voice raised for environmental protection contributes to a healthier planet. Let us work together, hand in hand, to create a thriving future where both humanity and nature flourish.



## Meenangadi Gears Up for "Mannorukkam" - A Step Towards Carbon Neutrality



An exciting initiative, "Mannorukkam," will be launched on May 9th at the Meenangadi Community Hall, marking a significant step towards making Meenangadi Panchayath a Carbon Neutral zone. This innovative program is a collaborative effort between Thanal, the Meenangadi Panchayat, Meenangadi Krishi Bhavan, and The Agro Ecology Fund, designed as a crucial climate change intervention.

"Mannorukkam" aims to improve the soil health and farming environment within the panchayath. The program will be officially inaugurated by Sri Shamsad Marikar, District Panchayat President.

The core focus of "Mannorukkam" includes enhancing soil carbon content, reducing methane emissions from agricultural practices, and overall improvement of soil health. To achieve these goals, approximately 500 farmers have been selected to receive comprehensive training in natural farming techniques. Furthermore, participating farmers will receive an organic kit containing a book on organic farming, organic tubers which are near extinct, organic saplings, manures, organic solutions, specifically formulated to boost beneficial soil microbial activity. In connection with this, A Soil Health Laboratory will be established in Meenangadi, providing advanced soil testing facilities. Regular soil tests will be conducted on selected farms at specific intervals, with instant soil reports and recommendations issued through Soil Health Cards.



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## Women-Led Livelihood Initiatives at Tribal Hamlets of Kulathupuzha inaugurated.

On April 9, inauguration of the Two women-led livelihood initiatives as part of KIMS Health CSR Initiative, implemented by Thanal, to promote sustainable income generation and women's empowerment in marginal communities will be held at Kulathupuzha Panchayath, Kollam.

A flour mill unit for the members of the Karshakasree Self-Help Group (SHG), comprising eight women, at Villumala and a food processing unit for eleven women from the indigenous Kaani community to make traditional snacks and value-added products using local ingredients will be inaugurated by Mrs. Reshmi Aysha, Director, KIMS Health Nagercoil, CEO of KIMS Health Cancer Center, and head of CSR and ESG initiatives.

Thanal is able to help realise their dreams with the support of KIMS Health, which extended financial assistance and guidance as part of its commitment to sustainable livelihoods and community empowerment.



Abhirami  
Project officer  
Thanal

## PALEKAR NATURAL FARMING SEMINAR: MY TAKE AWAYS

I joined Thanal in January and has been introduced to organic farming and Agroecology methods of cultivation. Being a newbie in this field, I was eager to attend the seminar on 'Palekar Natural Farming' organised by the Kerala State Palekhar Krishi Samiti on March 1st, 2025, at the KPS Menon Hall in Kottayam. My colleagues, Athira Krishnan and Bharath, also joined me for this event. The primary goal was to understand the significance, potential, and scientific basis of the Palekar natural farming methods currently being successfully implemented in Andhra Pradesh. There were around 100 attendees, predominantly farmers, along with representatives from different organisations and Agriculture officers.. The seminar was presided by Sri M. Kurian, President of Gandhi Smaraka Gramaseva Kendram, and was officially inaugurated by Sri C. Abraham Itticheriya, President of Kottayam Public Library. Sri Vijayananthan IAS, the retired Chief Secretary of Kerala, spoke on the occasion and emphasized the critical importance of embracing natural farming and highlighted the detrimental impact of chemical inputs on our precious soil and the broader environment.

The keynote address was delivered by T. Vijayakumar IAS, the retired Chief Secretary and currently the Director of the natural farming board in Andhra Pradesh. He spoke about the scientific principles of natural farming. He also explained the specific practices we need to adopt to ensure the long-term health of our soil and the production of food free from harmful toxins. There were experience-sharing sessions led by Sri P.K Kumaran and Sri Gopalakrishnan, two farmers from Wayanad who have successfully integrated natural farming into their practices. Their firsthand accounts of the challenges and rewards of this approach were incredibly valuable. The interactive Q&A session that followed allowed farmers to voice their concerns and share their own past experiences with natural farming.

A stark reminder for me was how conventional agricultural practices, along with global warming and climate change, are negatively impacting the survival of all living organisms. The success story of Andhra Pradesh showed that adopting Palekar natural farming offers a sustainable solution to this problem. Under the Andhra Pradesh Community-Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) program, the largest of its kind in the country, around 1.2 million farmers, predominantly women, are using these methods effectively.

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Launched in 2015 and still going strong, the APCNF program serves as a powerful example of what can be achieved. It's important to note that the transition to natural farming typically takes 3 to 5 years, a period during which farmers receive no direct cash incentives or guaranteed market premiums. This highlights the commitment and long-term vision required for this shift.

I also gained a deeper appreciation for the central role of the cow in Palekar natural farming. Unlike traditional farming where livestock is primarily for manure, here, the cow is instrumental in creating the vital cultures that significantly boost microbial growth in the soil. Furthermore, I learned that the biological inputs used in natural farming aren't about directly supplying nutrients. Instead, they focus on stimulating the soil microbiome, empowering it to make existing nutrients readily available to the plants. The contrast with chemical fertilizers and manures, which can harm beneficial microbial life, disrupt soil structure, and hinder photosynthesis, was striking. Palekar natural farming emphasizes the natural nutrient exchange between plants and soil microbes, a process where root exudates attract smaller microbes, which are then consumed by larger ones, whose waste products become readily absorbable nutrients for the plants. This natural system leads to more efficient nutrient absorption, improved soil porosity, greater water retention, and enhanced soil carbon sequestration compared to conventional methods.

The seminar clearly outlined the four fundamental pillars of Palekar natural farming: microbial seed coating with Beejamrutham, enhancing soil microbes with the solid biostimulant Ghanajeevamrutham and the liquid biostimulant Dravajeevamrutham, and managing pests through biostimulants and mechanical means.

After attending the seminar, I am now even more convinced that promoting natural farming is crucial. It helps to reduce cultivation costs for farmers, enhance soil health, improve crop health and ultimately contribute to their economic empowerment and dignity. Moreover, the potential for improved biodiversity through natural farming reinforces its importance as a significant step towards nature and soil conservation. The insights I gained from this seminar will undoubtedly strengthen my efforts in advocating for and supporting the adoption of Palekar natural farming in our farms and among our certified farmers.

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## WOMEN OF VELLAYANI ARE UPSKILLED FOR LIVELIHOOD

Thanal organised a 3 day training for our beneficiaries at Kulathupuzha on agricultural machines at the research, training and testing centre, Vellayani Thiruvananthapuram. Thanal's execution of NABARD's Integrated tribal development project at Kulathupuzha entails several initiatives like supply of animal husbandry and skill development training to build sustainable livelihood. Thanal hopes that machine usage training will help them earn a sustainable income as now there is high demand for workers who have these skills. Thus, a 3 day and night theory and practical training for 26 beneficiaries for various machines like coconut climber, chainsaw machines, tractors, brush cutter, garden tiller, mini tiller, rice transplanter etc.

They began training with explaining safety measures and further went on to explain engines and their mechanisms, relevance in agriculture and things to look out for before buying machines. They ensured that everyone got rid of fear and thoroughly learnt how to ride tractors and chainsaws with accuracy. Measurements and angles for cutting and pruning trees were taught along with logbook keeping and how to safeguard machines from rusting and damage. The training also emphasised on the economic aspects of owning machines.



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## **TRAINING ON ORGANIC FARMING, COMPOST MAKING and BOOK KEEPING**

A 2 day comprehensive training program was conducted on 26th and 27 th March 2025 at Kovalam field and Thiruvananthapuram Thanal office for beneficiaries of all hamlets of ITDP Kulathupuzha. The training on the first day focused on organic cultivation of crops and vegetables and the second day on making organic compost at home and commercial level. Beneficiaries visited the field of Kovalam on day 1 and compost park at Thanal on day 2. During the class discussions were done on how to cope up with pests and disease attacks and climate changes. Doubts on applications of fertilizers and their dosage were addressed. Steps to create organic compost at home itself was taught in an easy manner. Different types of compost units and their preparations were introduced to them.





Thanal is on a mission to champion sustainability circular economy practices reducing carbon emissions organic farming and environmental conservation with a special commitment to uplifting marginalised communities. We invite you to be a catalyst in this mission.

Your donation will help provide resources, education and sustainable livelihoods to communities often overlooked ensuring they actively contribute to and benefit from environmental initiatives. Your contribution will support projects that promote organic farming practices preserving biodiversity ensuring healthier and safer food systems and reducing carbon emissions and preserving our planet's vitality.



**Every contribution, big or small, counts.**

All donations are eligible for tax exemption under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act.

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