



UPDATES

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March brought together continued field engagement and visible progress across Thanal's initiatives. From expanding green cover through the Smrithivanam initiative in Meenangadi to strengthening farmer learning and livelihood practices across Kulathupuzha, the month reflected steady movement from planning to practice.

Across projects, the focus remained on deepening ongoing work. Farmers engaged more closely with soil health and agroecological methods, students explored climate action through local contexts, and livelihood programmes translated training into on-ground implementation. Documentation efforts and community exchanges further supported learning and visibility across these initiatives.

CARBON NEUTRAL MEENANGADI (CNM)

Smrithivanam Phase 2 at Manikavu Temple



On 15 March, the second phase of the Sugathakumari Smrithivanam Memorial Forest was inaugurated at Sree Manikavu Swayambhoo Mahasiva Kshethram, Meenangadi. The programme brought together over 55 participants including panchayat representatives, Devaswom trustees, and local residents. The inauguration was conducted by the President of Meenangadi Grama Panchayat, with a member of the Malabar Devaswom Board as chief guest. Ten saplings of native tree species and puja flowers were planted at the site. The memorial forest is being developed across 1.25 acres in the Madathamkandi and Karimam areas, as a collaborative effort between Thanal and Manikavu Devaswom.

Later in the month, on 25 and 26 March, garden setup and plantation work continued at the Purakkadi Temple premises as part of the same initiative. A total of 115 saplings were planted, including flowering species identified for temple ritual use.

Students Engage with Carbon Neutrality



On 25 March, a Carbon Neutral Meenangadi awareness session was held at Government Commercial Institute, Meenangadi, with 57 students participating. The session covered the major sources of greenhouse gas emissions across energy, transportation, agriculture, land use, and waste sectors, alongside carbon sequestration methods through forests, plantations, and soil. Community-level initiatives such as tree banking, waste management through Haritha Karma Sena, and solar energy adoption were also discussed. Students engaged actively, sharing their existing practices and connecting the concepts to their daily lives. Many expressed interest in waste segregation, tree planting, and energy conservation as steps they could take immediately.

MANNORUKKAM

Farmer Interactions and Documentation Across Meenangadi

March fieldwork under the Mannorukkam project focused on close engagement with 24 master farmers across Meenangadi Panchayat. The visits involved detailed discussions on crop-specific challenges, interest in improved varieties, and the use of bio-inputs and green manures. Farms were at varying stages, from land preparation to



harvest, and observations covered nutrient deficiencies, pest and disease incidence, and the state of on-farm organic manure production. Soil samples were collected from all 24 plots and tested for pH, electrical conductivity, organic carbon, and a range of nutrients including potassium, zinc, iron, and sulphur. Harvesting videos were recorded from several farms and shared within the group to encourage peer learning among farmers.

Visit to Thanal Agroecology Centre, Panavally



The Mannorukkam team visited Thanal Agroecology Centre at Panavally for a field exposure session. The centre holds over 250 indigenous rice varieties alongside a diverse seed bank of spices, tubers, and vegetables. Crops were assessed and yield performance compared between 2025 and 2026. Issues identified included poor drainage and untimely manure application, which were found to affect root health and increase pest vulnerability.

Practical recommendations discussed during the visit were detailed and crop-specific. For perennial crops, timely manuring, pruning, and application of Vesicular Arbuscular Mycorrhiza followed by mulching were suggested to improve nutrient uptake and moisture retention. Tomato seeds were selected through fermentation for better germination. Radish and garlic were recommended for high-quality basal manure under cool-season conditions. For arecanut and coffee, VAM and mulching were advised to support yield. Pepper cultivation received particular attention, with disease-resistant varieties like Kumbukkal and high-yielding Panniyur-1 and Panniyur-2 recommended, along with root treatments

using *Pseudomonas* and *Trichoderma* to manage quick wilt and nematode attacks. Eco-friendly pest management techniques including light traps, *Paecilomyces lilacinus*, and a traditional rice water and soap nut solution were also demonstrated. For water and soil management, drip irrigation using Venturi injectors, cover crops, and mulching were discussed alongside the traditional use of crushed sea shells for turmeric and ginger cultivation to manage pH and rhizome health. The session also explored value addition of farm produce such as star fruit, hibiscus, tomato, and butterfly pea into pickles, juices, and preserves, and the use of swine-repellent rope systems to manage wild boar damage.

INTEGRATED TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (ITDP), KULATHUPUZHA

Livelihood Training and Resource Support



Skill development and livelihood support activities continued across the hamlets during March. Training sessions were organised in goat rearing, apiculture, and poultry management, with technical guidance from agricultural and veterinary experts.

The Malabari goat rearing session, led by Dr. Hisham, Veterinary Surgeon at Kulathupuzha

Veterinary Hospital, covered scientific rearing practices, disease prevention, feeding, housing, and record keeping. Apiculture training was conducted by professional apiculturist Mr. Vijayan with active involvement from master farmers, focusing on safe hive handling, protective equipment use, and hygienic honey extraction. Hives distributed to earlier participants were monitored in parallel, covering colony health, feeding, disease prevention, and seasonal care, with honey harvesting from existing hives ongoing.

Following the training, livelihood resources were distributed to eligible beneficiaries. Malabari goats were handed over only to farmers who had completed the rearing programme. On 25 March, 450 Gramasree chickens and 25 hi-tech cages were distributed to 25 beneficiaries across project hamlets, with each farmer receiving 18 birds. Delivery was carried out at the beneficiaries' doorsteps, overseen by Village Planning Committee members, and all birds had been vaccinated and assessed by a veterinarian prior to distribution.

Umbrella Making Training and Women's Day Celebration



Umbrella-making training was conducted for women in Kadamancode and Kuzhaviyodu hamlets during March, led by Ms. Deepa B. Chandran, Director of Janamithra, Pathanamthitta. Participants learned cutting, stitching, and assembling, with each woman crafting an umbrella herself during the sessions.

The training found a fitting conclusion on Women's Day, when a celebration was held at Kadamancode community hamlet. Rakhi Mol J, District Development Manager (DDM), NABARD, hamlet chiefs, ward member Vidya Vijayan, Sreemati Arya, Manager of Kerala Gramin Bank Kulathupuzha, and Manju M. Nair, CEO of Thanal, attended the event. An entrepreneurship session led by Nisam Muhammad, Assistant Development Officer (ADIO), encouraged women to explore self-reliant income opportunities. Cloth bags were distributed by the NABARD DDM, while participants presented the umbrellas they had crafted themselves to the guests, a moment that reflected both the skill and confidence built through the training.

Tailoring Machines Distributed



On 10 March, tailoring machines were distributed to the Kadamancode and Kuzhaviyodu units, inaugurated by NABARD DDM Rakhi Mol J. The machines were provided exclusively to women who had completed the tailoring training programme under trainer Deepa Chandran. Installation and demonstration of the machines are in progress.

Pond Renovations Near Completion

Pond renovation works advanced steadily across Peruvazhikala, Kadamancode, and Kuzhaviyodu hamlets during March. Of the 18 planned pond renovations, 16 have been fully completed. Motor pumping systems are now operational across all ponds, and beneficiaries are already drawing water for agriculture, particularly useful during the current dry season. Renovation work included concrete ring strengthening, masonry, plastering, and curing, with larger ponds reinforced using rectangular belt concrete structures and smaller ones renovated with pre-cast concrete rings.

ZERO WASTE

Barter Shop and Single-Use Plastic Alternatives Exhibition at Organic Bazaar



On 28 March, the Organic Bazaar hosted a Barter Shop where participants brought plastic items from their homes and exchanged them for free eco-friendly alternatives. Over 17 kg of plastic was collected through the exchange, with everyday items that had quietly accumulated in households finding their way out. Alongside the barter, a display of single-use plastic alternatives and a poster exhibition opened up conversations about everyday consumption habits and the options available to replace them. The discussions that followed, questions about alternatives, reflections on what we use without thinking, and interest in making the switch, indicated an engagement that went beyond the exchange itself.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Thanal at the Rebuilding Bridges Roundtable

On 30 March, Thanal Executive Director Jayakumar C participated as a speaker in the roundtable discussion titled Rebuilding Bridges: From Food Waste to Food Sovereignty, organised by GAIA and Zero Waste Europe in collaboration with the Waste Wise Cities campaign. The session brought together voices from across the zero waste and agroecology movements, including representatives from GAIA Africa, the Agroecology Coalition, the Municipality of Guimarães, and UN-Habitat. The discussion explored the connections between food waste, food sovereignty, and community-centred approaches to sustainable systems.

Harvest Documentation with Wayanad Vision

During March, harvest activities from master farmers' fields under the Mannorukkam project were documented in collaboration with Wayanad Vision. The documentation captured field-level practices, crop outcomes, and farmer experiences from across Meenangadi, translating ongoing agroecological work into visual form. This supports peer learning among farmers and brings wider visibility to community-led ecological practices in the region.

Participation in International Conference on Social Philosophy and Yoga



Dr Usha Soolapani, founding member of Thanal and an agricultural scientist and climate activist, participated in a joint international conference held at North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, from 25 to 27 March 2026.

The conference brought together the 18th International Congress of Social Philosophy and the 12th International Congress of Yoga and Spiritual Science under the theme "Philosophy and Yoga for National Integration and Global Peace."

She presented a paper titled "Agro-ecology and Energy Efficiency: A Philosophical and Practical Approach to Build Resilience," highlighting the connections between ecological farming practices, energy use, and resilience, and linking field-based approaches with broader perspectives on sustainability.

Recognition for Project Documentation under NABARD ITDP



Thanal was recognised for its documentation of the Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP) implemented with the support of NABARD. The recognition was presented as a token of appreciation during a project review platform, acknowledging the organisation's efforts in systematically documenting field processes, outcomes, and community-level interventions.

As part of the session, the Thanal team was invited to share its approach to project documentation with other participating organisations. The discussion highlighted methods of capturing field-level insights, maintaining structured records, and using documentation as a tool for learning and programme strengthening.

Sarvam Jaivam Released at Kulathupuzha



Sarvam Jaivam, a Malayalam resource book on organic farming published by Thanal with support from Saavitri Foundation, was released at an event in Kulathupuzha. The book draws from the experiences and practices of farmers working on the ground, and brings those learnings together in an accessible form for those practising organic farming, those beginning the shift, and those learning alongside. QR-

linked videos woven through the book connect readers directly to the farmers and fields behind the content, carrying the knowledge beyond the page.

The release brought together six groups under the ITDP NABARD project in Kulathupuzha, making it a fitting occasion to share a resource that belongs as much to the farming community as it does to the organisation that helped give it form.



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