

# **A Status Report**

## **Save our Rice Campaign**

### **December 2004 – June 2006**



#### **Back ground**

Rice is the lifeline of Asia and has special significance in the Indian sub-continent. It touches every sphere of activity in this region. Rice, Paddy ecology and Rice farmers are being threatened all over the continent and the threat has huge consequences in India, especially in the Rice growing regions of South India, East and North-east India.

#### **Save our Rice Campaign**

A campaign to sustain rice - Save Our Rice - was started in the rice growing states in the International Year of Rice 2004. The campaign is an attempt to bring in and network everyone interested in sustaining rice cultivation – farmers, consumers, NGO's, traders, millers, students, children, teachers, leaders, policymakers, media, academicians, scientists and in a broader sense, the general public – to explore the chances of sustaining rice and rice culture. It is recognised that rice and rice culture is not just an agriculture concern, but is closely linked to the whole society, its culture, ecology and identity. So it is necessary that all of us come together, talk, experiment, support each other and find ways to save rice from being pushed into oblivion. This campaign in India is being facilitated by Thanal, a voluntary research organisation (based in Kerala) and the Pesticide Action Network-Asia Pacific (PANAP).

#### **Indian Workshop on Rice, 2004 and the Kumbalangi Declaration**

In December, 2004, Thanal along with Self Employed Womens Association-Kerala (SEWA) and Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific (PANAP), supported by HIVOS, organised an "Indian Workshop on Rice" at Kumbalangi in Kochi, Kerala. Around 120 people representing 57 organisations from 10 rice growing states participated in this workshop. There were organic farmers and farmer organisations, farmer plant breeders, consumer organisations, environmental organisations, activists and scientists in this gathering and they deliberated on various issues threatening the existence of rice and also about the new ways and experiments by which they were trying to protect rice. Rice as a basis for food security in the country, food safety issues, community heritage and protection of traditional knowledge and seeds were also discussed. Much deliberation was also done on the traditional practices, the problems of modern cultivation and the various initiatives to sustain rice by the farmers and farmer based research organisations. This workshop came out with the Kumbalangi Declaration to sustain rice. The main emphasis of the Declaration was in traditional, sustainable and ecological ways of farming, which everybody knew could feed the country and deliver on the food security and safety. It also emphasised on farmer seed conservation.

The Declaration recognised the impacts of Green revolution, genetically modified organisms and international trade agreements. Many organisations showed keen interest in taking the campaign forward in their own respective regions. A documentary based on the Indian workshop on rice was also produced and sent to the organisations in the network and is being used for advocacy work. It was also widely distributed to many organisations in the Asian region during the regional get-togethers. The proceedings of the workshop was also produced and shared among the participants. It was also given to the media and other interested groups.

### **First Phase of the Campaign**

In June 2005, Thanal along with the Institute for Integrated Rural Development ( IIRD, Aurangabad) and supported by the EED, launched the first phase of the campaign. This focussed on producing materials for advocacy and outreach – especially through the Kumbalangi Declaration in regional languages. Then 6 regional meetings were planned in the major rice areas. A pro-active intervention into policy and advocating on the issues along with farmer groups in all these regions were the objective. At the end of the phase a National Consultation is to be organised to share the findings, concerns and strategise on the future of the campaign on a broader platform.

### **Regional Meetings**

Six regional meetings were organised collaboratively with regional organisations. The details are as below

1. **Wyanad, Kerala** – A two-day meeting was organised jointly with the Nelvayal Koottaima - a Forum for Saving Rice in Wyanad - at Sultan Bathery from 22-23rd of October 2005. It was organised as a regional meeting and as a “Skill share on organic rice production”. 50 farmers and 10 representatives of various organizations and tribal chiefs participated in the two day meeting. Sri. Nammalvar and Smt. Revathi (President and Executive Director of Tamilnadu Organic Farmers Movement), and Sri Jacob Nellithanam (Richharia Campaign, Chattisgarh) were the key resource persons. From Thanal, S. Usha spoke of the larger context of the Save our Rice Campaign. C.Jayakumar, Director and S.Raju, Coordinator of the Common Birds Monitoring Programme, led sessions on different topics related to rice. Sabu Antony (Organic Bazaar, Trivandrum) spoke about alternate marketing approach to organic produce. There was an experience sharing session with the farmers and tribal chiefs. The workshop was very productive in the sense that it came out with a set of declarations and suggestions to sustain rice in Wyanad. The declarations / suggestions is attached with this report in appendix. A committee was also formed under the auspices of the Wyanad Nelvayal Koottaima with farmer representation from 15 panchayaths to take these suggestions forward.
2. **Nagercoil, Tamilnadu** - A regional meeting was organised at Nagercoil, Tamilnadu along with FEDCOT( Federation of Consumers’ Organisation of Tamilnadu and Pondicherry) and Kanyakumari District Consumer Protection Council on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2006. This meeting was attended by about 144 people with farmers, self-help groups, traders, consumer activists, research scholars (historians, experts), district government officers, students and representatives from womens’ organisations. Kanyakumari

district used to be the rice bowl for the erstwhile Travancore Kingdom with well-developed traditional tank irrigation systems. Most of the deliberations were in Tamil, and a report of the same is attached. A declaration and demand charter was also prepared and passed in the meeting (attached in appendix). Some of the local issues were raised in the charter. Subsequent to this workshop the Thazhakudy Panchayath in Nagercoil has started on a campaign to move the rice cultivation to organic. A training programme on Organic Farming and organic manure/medicine preparations was organised with expertise from Sri Nammalvar as a follow up activity.

3. **Mangalore, Karnataka** – A two-day regional meeting was organised at Mangalore on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February 2006. It was organised along with the Nagarika Seva Trust, (Guruvayankere), Krishikara Vedike-Karnataka, Karavali Mahila Jagruthi Vedike and D.K Parisarasaktara Okoota. About 140 farmers, academicians, scientists, women group leaders attended the two day meeting. An exhibition of traditional rice varieties and posters were also organised. Representatives from the districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udipi, Uttara Kannada, Shimoga, Chikkamagalur, Kodagu and Kasaragod District(Kerala) participated in the meeting. Deliberations were done on Rice Cultivation traditional practices, new inventions and successes, Government policies and programmes, globalisation etc. A resolution was approved and declared on the concluding session.
4. **Thiruvavarur (Old Tanjavur Dist), Tamilnadu** - The erstwhile Tanjavur District – the rice bowl of Tamilnadu - presently constitutes of the three districts of Thiruvavarur, Tanjavur and Nagapattinam. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2006, a regional meeting was organised along with FEDCOT, Tamilnadu Organic Uzhavar Movement and CREATE Trust, for the farmers and farmer leaders of the region. 138 agriculturists participated in the meeting besides people of other avocations and the response from the meeting was overwhelming. Many resource persons spoke in the meeting and the discussion was led by Sri Nammalvar, the organic farmer scientist. In the following day on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, a farmers meeting was also organized to introduce the rice campaign to the farmers of Thiruthuraiipoondi, where CREATE Trust has its farm and farmers groups.
5. **North 24 Parganas, West Bengal** - Two regional meetings were held in the village of Atgarah, in the Baduria Taluk of the North 24 Parganas District. It was held on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2006. Both meetings were organized along with the Society for Equitable Voluntary Actions (SEVA) and Human Network-India. It was organized in their rural centre-Vikas Kendra. On 21<sup>st</sup>, 82 panchayath members from 7 gram panchayaths participated in the meeting. The meeting was presided over by the Hon'ble Minsiter for Agriculture and Marketing – Dr Mortaza Hossain and two MLA's of the region. On 22<sup>nd</sup>, 115 farmers from 10 villages in 4 blocks attended the meeting. On both days there were technical sessions and discussions. The main focus of this workshop was the emerging threat of Genetically Modified organisms and the need to return to Organic ways of cultivation.

Summary of each of the Regional meetings and the declarations are attached as appendix in this report.

## **Documentation**

In order to support the rice campaign, the following are being documented.

1. Genetic Modification in Rice
2. Women in Rice
3. Rice and Pesticides
4. Traditional Practices in Rice Cultivation
5. Rice and Water
6. Rice and Policy in India

## **Publications and Advocacy Materials**

In order to support the campaign, a few campaign materials have been / are being brought out. They are

1. Documentary on the Indian Workshop on Rice, December 2004 – Video CD
2. Proceedings of the Indian Workshop on Rice, December 2004 – CD
3. Proceedings of the Indian Workshop on Rice - Report
4. Campaign Poster – Save our Rice
5. Kumbalangi Declaration – English, Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada, Bengali ( Hindi and Oriya is pending to be printed)
6. Poster for WTO Hong Kong Campaign– “Rice is life, Life is not for Sale. Keep Agriculture out of WTO”
7. Poster set – Save our Rice
8. Concept Notes on the Save our Rice Campaign
9. Rice and Water ( to be released in July)
10. Rice and Pesticides ( to be released in July)
11. Rice for Children ( to be released in July)

Kumbalangi declaration, which summarises the position taken by the traditional progressive farmers and all who believes in sustaining rice and ensuring food security for the nation, was translated into the local languages and made into posters. It was distributed and discussed in the regional meetings and it was also sent to elected members of the parliament, political activists, organisations etc.

## **Outreach activities**

We have been able to reach out to various other organisations and have taken the campaign to other regions also. In Kerala, our interactions with the farmers of Palakkad and Wyanad have been fruitful, and there are plans to start activities for revival of paddy. We participated in the meeting organised by National Farmers’ Protection Forum at Palakkad with a focus on paddy on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2006. There were scientists from Kerala Agriculture University, retired agriculture scientists who work with the farmers helping them with developing good seeds, conventional and organic farmers. Rice campaign was presented in the meeting with focus on policy change and food security. There were group discussions and the meeting came out with a charter of demands to sustain paddy in the district which would be discussed in detail further and submitted to the government.

Following this and also to study the impact of the WTO induced policies on Rice – an interaction and study was done on the Fall of the Rice Mills in Palakkad. This study has been completed.

In Wyanad, following interactions with various organisations, the Nelvayal Koottaima has been formed. After the regional meeting, the farmers organisations have been interacting with the panchayaths and a block level meetings are being planned.

In Thrissur and Trivandrum districts the focus of the meetings were developing Green Village with focus on food crops. There were farmers, activists, panchayath members and students who actively participated in the discussions. Most of them showed concern about the paddy land destruction in their area. Some of the farmers pointed out the lack of governmental support to paddy farmers. They said that what they need is not subsidy but a support for marketing paddy looking at the cost of production, which changes every year. They warned that unless there is some real support to the farmers, the farmers will be forced to stop cultivating paddy. These meetings were on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006 respectively.

The Karnataka Rajya Raithya Sangh (KRRS) organised an International symposium and Seed Carnival on the issues of Genetically Modified Crops at Mysore, to which we were invited. This was organized by Amritha Bhoomi Trust and the KRRS of Karnataka from 17 to 19<sup>th</sup> April 2006. The symposium came out with a strong declaration of the farmers.

The Rice Campaign organized a stall in the Organic Kerala, 2006 exhibition from 18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Four people from the campaign participated in the exhibition held in Kochi. The posters and campaign materials were displayed and visitors were briefed about the campaign. Usha spoke on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2006 at the meeting on Pesticides and on the farming sector issues.

Interactions also continued with other groups from Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Chattisgarh, Orissa, Mizoram, Andhra Pradesh and the rice campaign gained much and also contributed much to their work.

### **Responding to the impacts of WTO**

In December 2005, the Rice Campaign team decided to participate in the Rice festival in Hongkong during WTO inter-ministerial meeting. This was organised by PANAP. We wanted to carry the message that Asian Rice is life for the continent and not just a tradable and compromisable commodity in the international trade regime dictated by the WTO - Agreement on Agriculture. Posters were printed for the same, and our presence was felt in Hongkong. In January 2006, we organised a public lecture on WTO, where Dr Devinder Sharma talked on the “A decade of WTO-What have we gained ? What have we lost ?” The Rice Campaign could be reached out to the agriculture college students in Trivandrum, with interactions with some of their leaders during the meeting with Dr Devinder Sharma, which they had organised on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

Following this a WTO Working Group consisting of members from Trivandrum and Nagercoil was started to respond to the immediate issue of the deadlines of April 30<sup>th</sup> and July 31<sup>st</sup> 2006 for the Doha Development Agenda Rounds of finalising the sensitive list, tariffs and the modalities. As part of this we could attend two of the stakeholder consultations organised by UNCTAD at Kochi on 17<sup>th</sup> February on WTO Sensitive List and

on 22<sup>nd</sup> February on the Indo-ASEAN Sensitive List. We could also prepare the charter of demands that was sent to the Prime Minister and Commerce Minister. This charter was widely circulated in all the rice campaign groups as well as other civil society and farmers organisations and petitions were sent to the PM and CM. A few Members of the Parliament were also briefed about the sensitive and special products issue under WTO. We also had discussions with Independent Farmers Movement (INFAM) on the WTO. A paper was prepared for the WTO stake-holder consultations at New Delhi organised by Ministry of Commerce and UNCTAD on 13<sup>th</sup> March. We raised the inadequacy of these consultations without representation from the Farmers organisations, state government etc.

### **Responding to the issue of the release of GM Crops**

The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) under the MoEF is planning to permit the release of Bt-Brinjal for large scale seed production and field trials. This is being done even as the debate on the GM is still unconvincing, and the dangers of the release to the farmers, cattle, human health and environment is large, and has not been convincingly studied and disproved. On the list following Brinjal is Mustard, Rice etc. So, the campaign participated and joined with the coalition for a GM-Free India to respond to the issue. Letters were sent to the GEAC and respective ministers and the campaign partners were all fully involved in the campaign. We have taken a position that we will not allow any GM crops in our country, as it would be highly detrimental in maintaining the diversity, which has been the basis of our food security. There is a lot of work that needs to be done together in this matter.

### **The Next Phase**

The regional organisations with which Thanal partnered to organise the regional meetings were groups working among the farmers, farm workers, traders, consumers and different other stake holders. But the interactions revealed fundamental lacunae in the understanding of the issues -pertaining to rice farming, especially in the context of the growing problems faced by the farmers in the changing national and global scenario. The gatherings also pointed out the ignorance of various stakeholders about WTO policies and new and modern corporate-profit driven technologies, although these gatherings deliberated on many local issues and solutions. The major areas that need to be addressed and have been commonly raised in all these meetings were about capacity building and sharing knowledge and skills in organic farming, traditional farming and seed conservation methods. The need to develop and strengthen a local market system, which is just and supports the farmers, at the same time delivering to the consumer, was also raised. Minimum Support price, direct and indirect support to the food producer, labour shortage, youth moving away from farming, loss of women's role in modern farming, water availability and irrigation issues, land being reclaimed and converted to feed urban developing, housing and industrial sectors were seriously discussed. The main thrust therefore in the years to come should be to address these concerns. It is also important in the larger context, the impacts that the small, marginal and medium scale farmers would feel with the onset of the opening of the markets to the global traders. The need to strengthen the movement through a better understanding of the issues and developing local and regional responses to it was also felt. The campaign has to be taken to newer frontiers by strengthening the network that has developed through the earlier

work. Only such a local / regional efforts would be able to influence policy changes and better support for the farmer.

The main thrust of the next phase must hence be to support local research needs that connect the work on the ground to the larger policy so that the policy actually represents the farmers perspective. Outreach programmes especially into the villages, are also needed to bring the farmer into the main stream of policy making. Outreach must also be organised among the traders, politicians , consumers and students especially in the local and regional level. It is proposed that we focus on the three South Indian states – Karnataka , Tamilnadu and Kerala , and West Bengal and Orissa. In West Bengal SEVA has expressed willingness to coordinate campaign in East and North-east states. Similarly, in Orissa, Living Farms has taken up the responsibility of the campaign.

Parallely, the campaign among the larger national network will continue through newsletter, policy papers, exchange of information and activities and participating and sharing the experience with groups in other rice growing states.

The National Consultation would discuss these and form specific focuses and local strategies for taking the campaign effectively to the grass roots as well as policy makers.

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## Appendix

### Resolution from the Regional meeting on the “Save our Rice” campaign and Skill share for Organic paddy cultivation / production.

October - 22 - 23, 2005

DIET Centre, Sulthanbattery, Wynad, Kerala

A two-day meeting on the “Save our Rice Campaign” and a Skill share on “Organic Paddy Cultivation” was organised by the Wyanad Paristhithi Samrakshana Samithi jointly with other organisations and supported by Thanal, Thiruvananthapuram and IIRD, Aurangabad on 22 and 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2005. This was the first of the regional meetings of the Campaign.

50 farmers and 10 representatives of various organizations and tribal chiefs participated in the two day meeting. Sri. Nammalvar and Smt. Revathi (President and Executive Director of Tamilnadu Organic Farmers Movement), and Sri. Jacob Nellithanam (Richharia Campaign, Chattisgarh) were the key resource persons. From Thanal, S. Usha spoke of the larger context of the Save our Rice Campaign. C.Jayakumar, Director, Thanal and S.Raju, Coordinator of the Common Birds Monitoring Programme led sessions on different topics related to rice. Sabu Antony (Organic Bazaar, Trivandrum) spoke about alternate marketing approach to organic produce. There was an experience sharing session with the farmers and tribal chiefs.

The participants then had a detailed discussion about the problems faced by the paddy farmers of Wynad and put forwarded a number of observations and suggestions. All the persons present in the meeting unanimously agreed to work together to protect paddy fields and to create a sustainable system based on paddy. Following are the observations and suggestions that evolved / came out from the discussions in these two days. In order to implement these suggestions, it has also been decided that these should be shared with District Panchayat administration, department of agriculture, farmer organisations, consumers and students. A committee under the banner “Wyanad Nelvayal Koottaima” (meaning Wyanad Paddy Forum) has also been formed with farmer representation from 15 panchayaths to take these suggestions forward.

#### Realisations

- ★ The existence of paddy fields is essential for the survival, ecological restoration and agricultural development of Wynad.
- ★ The destruction / loss of paddy fields has been a reason for the intensification of the worsening drought situation in Wynad.
- ★ The biodiversity and agricultural diversity sustained by the paddy fields of Wyanad are its common heritage.
- ★ Paddy cultivation has an important role in sustaining employment, the financial stability and food security of the rural people of Wynad.

- ★ Paddy fields should be protected not only for the survival of human beings but also for other living beings. Like forests, paddy fields are an ecosystem of great ecological importance.
- ★ The traditional paddy seeds are the common property of the people of Wyanad. These seeds, which give both straw and grain, should be protected and conserved in the fields of farmers themselves.
- ★ In paddy lands that have been converted for banana cultivation, farmers continue the dangerous practice of using pesticides. This has caused various kinds of problems. Poisoning of soil and water with deadly chemicals, increasing number of cancer patients, children getting poisoned, farmers not being able to sell the banana, fall in prices and farmers resorting to suicides are some of the problems.
- ★ The tribal communities of Wyanad still sustain and practice traditional methods in paddy cultivation. Their land, knowledge and seeds should be protected from extinction and external exploitations. These are essential for future survival of humankind.

### **The Suggestions agreed upon and put forward by the workshop**

Paddy cultivation, which has such great importance, should be protected by giving it due consideration. The following suggestions should be urgently discussed and programmes formulated for implementing them. We have to start taking action for these in all the Panchayaths.

1. Paddy cultivation should be recognised as a high priority activity that needs to be urgently protected. It forms the basis of the survival of not only the paddy cultivators but also the entire society.
2. A substantial amount should be given as support to the farmers who are presently cultivating paddy. Farmers should be motivated to shift from other crops to paddy. Financial support must be provided for making this shift.
3. The permanent conversion of paddy lands should be banned at the Panchayath level.
4. Limits must be fixed for the extent of banana cultivation in paddy fields and the use of pesticides in it must be restricted.
5. The financial support given to banana and ginger cultivation (especially in the name of crop losses) must be immediately stopped and instead financial support must be provided for paddy cultivation.
6. Awareness must be created among the people about the ecological importance of paddy fields.
7. Efforts need to be taken in all the Panchayaths to protect the water bodies (Head-ponds- Thalakulangal, streams and swamps) and enough water must be made available for cultivation of paddy.
8. farmer associations at panchayat level need to be formed for the protection of paddy cultivation.
9. Awareness classes need to be conducted at Panchayath level on the use and impacts of pesticides.

10. Discussions have to be organised on Seed bill, Plant variety protection and farmers rights Act and public opinion on such policies has to be created.
11. The support of the society and the government to sustain paddy cultivation, which is gradually becoming a financial loss, has to be ensured. Paddy cultivation is a common cultural heritage.
12. Seeds banks have to be started at the Panchayat level under farmer associations in order to conserve traditional seeds of Wynad.
13. The production and sale of pesticides have to be restricted. Pesticides which are highly hazardous have to be banned. Necessary action for this need to be taken by involving the Panchayath, Municipal authorities, RDO and District Collector.
14. Schemes have to be made in order to procure paddy at the Panchayat level. Instead of giving insignificant bonus as of today, price should be fixed in such a way as to make paddy cultivation profitable. Common processing yards and storage facilities should be revived. .
15. Crop insurance should be provided for paddy.
16. In order to prevent the drought that is expanding from the Deccan Plateau towards Wynad, “Green belt” has to be planted in a large scale. This is of immediate concern and has to be done with wider participation from the entire society.
17. Accurate studies should be conducted on the issue of suicide of farmers from Wynad district. Most of the farmers who committed suicide are those who have been cultivating banana, ginger and other cash crops.
18. Studies have to be done with people’s participation on the increasing incidence of diseases like cancer in Wynad.
19. The agricultural labourers are the worst affected due to the ill effects of Pesticide use. Occupational safety must be ensured for them.
20. Motivation should be given and steps should be taken for the production and marketing of organically produced paddy. The Policy for Organic farming should emphasis on crop rotation, mixed cropping and diversity in food crops.
21. To immediately start awareness programmes and other programmes on the importance and need for conserving wild (naturally grown without cultivating) food crops.
22. Create awareness among school students about the ecological, cultural and economic importance of paddy cultivation and paddy fields.
23. A portion of the fund received as drought – flood relief should be used for the protection of paddy fields, as they are natural water reservoirs.
24. Water bodies that are naturally linked to the paddy fields should also be protected using the traditional knowledge and peoples power, ability and expertise.
25. The rice other food items needed needed for the noon-meal scheme of the school children in Wynad should be procured from the farmers of Wynad. Farmers should be provided with awareness, training and support to help them produce these food articles organically.

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Prepared by the Sri M Gangadharan, Pulpally for Wyanad Nelvayal Koottaima, Wyanad and Thanal, Thiruvananthapuram.

**Save our Rice Campaign  
Regional Meeting, Nagercoil  
(Kanyakumari District)**

Jointly organised by  
Federation of Consumer Organisations – Tamilnadu and Pondicherry (FEDCOT)  
Kanyakumari Jilla Consumer Protection Centre  
Thanal, Thiruvanthapuram, Kerala  
IIRD, Aurangabad

**Executive Summary**

Date of the Campaign : 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2006 Time : 9.30 am to 5.30 pm

Venue : Chitra Hotel, Nagercoil

The regional meeting expected about 80 people to participate, and arrangements were made for the same. But the total participants came to more than 140. Participants were mostly from farmers, farmer group leaders, academicians, women group leaders, traders, consumer groups and students. The sessions were well received and participants were active in their interactions. The meeting comprised of the following sessions

1. Objective of the Campaign
2. Inaugural Session
3. Technical and Experience sharing sessions
4. Valedictory Session

**Objective of the Campaign**

Before the Inaugural session the objectives of the campaign was explained by Thiru R Ponnambalam, President of the Kanyakumari Jilla Consumer Protection Centre (KJCPC) and Thirumathi. S Usha, Coordinator of the Save our Rice Campaign, Thanal.

Thiru R Ponnambalam, KJCPC rightly pointed out that the once so called granary district (Kanyakumari District), there was 1 lakh acres covering paddy crops. But within a span of 50 years it has come down to 50,000 acres. Similarly, there were 62 varieties that was commonly cropped, now it has come down to about 10 varieties. Within a period of 50 years, after the Green revolution, we have lost 50% of the area in crop coverage and innumerable number of varieties.

Thirumathi S Usha of Thanal pointed out that the paddy growing areas in Kerala has also come down from 8 lakh ha to 3 lakh ha. Traditional varieties also disappeared from the field after Green revolution. So, it is necessary to save the crop paddy in terms of area as well as in terms of varieties. She also spoke about the larger global context in which we had to start the rice campaign.

**Inaugural Session**

In the Presidential Address the Chairman of FEDCOT Prof S Duraisingam presided over the function. In his Presidential address, the Chairman pointed out that FEDCOT within India is giving greater emphasis on livelihood since 1991. During the last two years the investment

in Agriculture is coming down and it is a threat to the food security system of the country. Therefore, the rights of the rural poor to secure their livelihood and economic security should be safeguarded. He added that FEDCOT has raised its voice against Liberalisation-Privatisation-Globalisation (LPG) policies long before and has been consistently opposing its implementation. He said FEDCOT is working for food security and safety which are one of the consumer rights.

In the Inaugural address the District Rural Officer Thirumathi B Jyothi Nirmala stated that the paddy growing area is coming down and the government was thriving hard to stop further fall and attempts were taken to increase the area. She said that in her capacity as the DRO, she would give all her support to the campaign and would be willing to take measures to stop the reclamation of paddy lands and also to improve the tanks in the district.

Thiru N Krishna Swami Pillai, Retd Joint Director of Agriculture stated that the area of production of paddy has come down to one-third and at the same time, the productivity has increased to double. Therefore the increased productivity has compromised the loss sustained due to fall of area of production. But this should not be a solace as rice cultivation is more than just increasing production.

Mr K A Kumaravelu, the Gen Secy of Agriculture Products Producers and Traders Association (APPTA), a newly formed association which is building one of the biggest private market under a joint association at Nagercoil, listed the name of the traditional varieties and said that none of these varieties is in existence. He was much concerned at the deteriorating state of our paddy and said that serious interventions are needed in this area. He talked much about the Kanyakumari districts importance as a major agriculture trade area especially in paddy.

In his felicitation address, Mr M Nisammuddin, Gen Secy of FEDCOT pointed out how the wetlands were polluted due to chemical industries in Cuddalore districts and how FEDCOT was working against the environmental degradation in the district.

### **Technical and Experience sharing sessions**

Speaker 1 : Mr A Chellappan, Desiya Vyavasaya Sanghom lamented that Kanyakumari District had a very good irrigation management system during the Travancore-Cochin State regime but such system was not followed after the district was joined with TN on account of linguistic state formation. The irrigation system and improper water management caused for change of crop pattern from paddy to other crops in most of the tail end area. He wanted an assured water supply to paddy crops mostly in channel irrigated area. Further he said the change of crop pattern was done because of poor and irrational water management system. He opined that even if the water management authority is assured of giving regular water supply, even then they cannot bring back the area already converted.

Speaker 2 : Prof Kaladharan of FEDCOT explained to the participants the techniques followed in traditional cultivation system and how best the system enhanced the soil health. He added that fruit and vegetables or cereals used to be cultivated without the application of pesticides, but the situation has changed dramatically. No fruit, vegetable or cereals are now available without the residual effect of pesticides. Even breast milk has poisons in it. Therefore time has come that housewives should be more vigilant in selecting food materials and is forced to live in a poison free world. He also pointed out his experience of how the

salt affected area due to Tsunami has been changed into fertile land by traditional methods of cultivation within a short period by Sri Nammalvar in Nagapattinam District.

Speaker 3 : Mr Bhagavathi Appan a progressive farmer suggested that uneconomic market price to paddy was the main reason why farmers were switching to other crops. Therefore he suggested that an orderly marketing system need to be evolved with an assurance of economic price to paddy. The present TN Agriculture Produce Market Act should be amended so as to protect the farmers interest and contract farming should also be covered under the Act.

Speaker 4 : R Jayaraman, Director Agriculture FEDCOT with the help of variety of charts narrated that organic farming was lesser cost by which 50% of the cost could be reduced. He said that FEDCOT was ready to impart organic farming training for paddy in the district if the farmers can come forward for that. He also talked about the SRI system of farming which is gaining popularity among the farmers and is proven to be suitable for organic farming with lesser input and higher productivity.

Speaker 5 : V Pandarampillai, TN Vyavasyigal Sanghom, Nagercoil blamed that the Govt. has failed to vacate the encroachment of water bodies. He further said that any irrigation plan, either State, Central or World Bank could be successfully implemented if only the encroachment on the water bodies were removed. He suggested that the support price of paddy should be immediately increased to Rs. 750 per quintal during the current season.

Speaker 6 : Mr K M Peer Mohammed, Retd GM of District Cooperative Bank in his turn pointed out that there was a feeling that paddy crops were not profitable, when compared to other crops. The cost structure of rice farming was becoming adverse. The credit policy of the district was framed jointly by the Dept of agriculture, statistics and lead banks after considering the guidelines issued by the RBI and the Central Govt. This body should frequently analyse the cost structure of rice farming by taking into account market price and the farmers livelihood, keeping in view the declining profitability of rice crop and food security of the country, the govt may reduce the rate of interest of paddy crop loan to 4%. At the same time, the misuse of credit system also need to be checked.

Speaker 7 : Prof Peer Mohammed, Ex Director (Training), FEDCOT in his turn pointed out that GM rice is a threat to the food safety of the country. Therefore the govt should not allow MNC's to market their GM rice seeds in the country. It is also reported that the such seeds get sold in disguised brand names. This should also be seriously checked.

Speaker 8 : Prof Kasthuri in her session pointed out how the animals were helpful to farmers and housewives. Some 20 years back, each and every house had atleast one cow for their domestic milk needs. Similarly, every farmer had atleast one pair of plowing animals for their farms. Trees were grown for green manure purposes. Lives were connected with nature. People were also healthy. Now the entire system has changed. Now there is no enough animals for milk and other plowing operations. Trees used for green manure have been rooted out for timber purposes. We have been pushed to chemical way of life in the name of scientific development, modern culture etc. What is the result we have gained from the modern life - atleast one of the member of the family is suffering from chronic diseases, diabetics is a common disease – 40% of the people are diabetic affected people. If this way of life continues, more will be affected by diabetics and other killer diseases. Therefore

changing of life to our traditional ways is a must for everyone. The women's role in the changing scenario is inevitable compared to men.

### **Valedictory Session**

In the Valedictory session, the welcome address was given by Prof S Peermohammed. The Chief guest was Dr Velappan, Retd Principal, South Travancore Hindu College Nagercoil, who is also a well known farmer. The session was presided over by P Sathasivam, Asst GM, NABARD, Nagercoil.

Prof Peer Mohammed welcomed the participants and explained how paddy chain was important in the present context. Then Sri Sathasivam explained the Govt schemes and subsidies to the various crops including paddy. He suggested to make value added products from paddy to increase the income for paddy farmers.

Dr Velappan in his deliberation said that the area of production of paddy not only is coming down in Kanyakumari district, but also in every parts of the paddy growing areas in TN. The general trend of the state in paddy area is declining every year compared to the available figures some 40-50 years back. It is for the planning authority, to put plans with a forecast that the production should meet the increasing population. Mere increasing productivity alone cannot meet the need of the increasing population because the marginal utility theory is being applied in paddy production also. When we add more and more inputs, the production will increase but at diminishing rates, therefore by mere increase in productivity alone one cannot meet the demand. Therefore, it is for the planning authority to ensure that land area for paddy should not be reduced at any cost. Further the factors of production should be supported with subsidies and support – land, labour, capital, organization – so as to increase production of paddy even though there is some disadvantages. Land holding act, Tenancy act etc should be according to paddy land conservation. Thanks to Thanal we are now thinking about the need to save rice. With the save rice campaign we also need a “save our tanks” campaign. Only then in Kanyakumari will rice campaign be effective.

Sri R Ponnambalam then read out the resolution for the day. The resolution was unanimously passed by all present in the meeting.

1. As we have realized the qualities and advantages of the traditional method of cultivation and use of traditional seed varieties, awareness need to be spread on this among the people.
2. Before introducing any irrigational development system, either with the help of State or Central Governments or external funding agencies like the World Bank, the Government should vacate all encroachment of water bodies on the basis of the revenue records, otherwise the schemes will not serve its purpose.
3. The minimum support price for paddy should be increased to Rs 750 per quintal in the current season itself.
4. Since paddy cultivation is not as profitable as other cash crops, grants and subsidies should be extended to paddy seeds and special support should be given for labour costs
5. When compared to other commercial crops such as banana, coconut, rubber and tapioca, paddy cultivation does not yield much profits, therefore differential rate of interest should be worked out for paddy loan, which should not exceed 4%.

6. Genetically Modified technology is against the natural processes and is harmful to consumer interest. It also is very exploitative and harmful for the farmers and the environment. Therefore we request the Government to stop all GM food and crop import as well as production in the country.
7. To protect the farmers engaging in contract farming, all these agreements pertaining to contract should be registered under Tamilnadu Agriculture produce Market Act further all the overhead expenses such as commission, brokerage and other incidental charges collected from the farmers should be regulated under the Act.

Sridhar R of Thanal thanked the organisers and all who had attended on behalf of the Campaign team.

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Prepared by Sri R Ponnambalam, KJCPC, Nagercoil.

**Save our Rice Campaign**  
**Regional Meeting, Mangalore, Karnataka**  
(*Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Shimoga,*  
*Chikkamagalur, Kodagu, Kasaragod Districts*)

Jointly organised by  
Nagarika Seva Trust, Guruvayanakere  
Krishikara Vedike – Karnataka  
Karavali Mahila Jagruthi Vedike  
D.K Parisarasaktara Okoota  
Thanal, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala  
IIRD, Aurangabad

at  
NGO Hall, Mangalore  
17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February 2006

**Executive Summary**

The regional meeting held at Mangalore was participated by 148 people, mostly farmers, and associated area leaders of 21 participating organizations in 7 districts. As the meeting was held for two days, detailed sessions were held.

The Inaugural Function was presided over by Smt. Mamatha D.S Gatti, President of the Dakshina Kannad Zilla Panchayath. The meeting was inaugurated by Dr H.V Parshvanath I.A.S, Deputy Commissioner, D.K District, Mangalore. Sri Lakshmeesha Tholpadi, Vice-President of the Bharatheeya Kisan Sangha, Karnataka, Shri Padmayya Naik, Jt Director, Agriculture Department, Mangalore, Shri A Gopal, Lead Dist Manager, D.K District, Shri K Somanath Naik, President, Nagarika Seva Trust and Sridhar R, Campaigner of the Save our Rice Campaign spoke in the Inaugural session.

Following the inaugural session, three subjects were mainly dealt with

- Traditional practices in Rice cultivation
- Rice Cultivation – problems and solutions
- New inventions & success in Rice cultivation

Following a number of presentations in these sessions a group discussion was held and the major outcome was consolidated. Cultural programmes by the participants were held in the evening.

On the second day, three more subjects were dealt with by many speakers. The subjects were

- Rice : What should be Government policies and programmes
- Actions taken by agriculture department to improve rice cultivation
- Threats of Globalisation on rice cultivation.

Usha S of the Save our Rice Campaign delivered her lecture on the campaign and the larger threats of WTO on our food and livelihood security. Group discussions followed these rather long sessions and was followed by a concluding session and passing of the resolution.

The Valedictory Function was presided over by Prof B M Kumaraswamy, Economist and State Convener, Swadeshi Jagarana Manch. The function ended with the adoption of the resolution.

The salient features of the presentations are summarised below

1. With the introduction of modern agriculture – chemical fertilisers – paddy gave good results in the beginning, but slowly the production came down, and pest and disease infestation increased even in traditional varieties like Gandasale which is not known to have diseases. Then pesticide application started increasing finally leading to a total collapse of paddy both economically and ecologically. When farming shifted to organic, productivity was not only restored over time, but crop loss due to diseases and pests could be avoided and slowly production increased more than what was expected in modern agriculture. (A.P Sadashiva, Paddy farmer)
2. Gandhasale is a wonderful rice variety. It is ideal to be used as raw rice only. It is a 6 months crop. It is the best rice for meals, pulav, payasam and other eatables. If 1 kg. rice of ordinary variety is enough for 6 people, 10–12 people can eat 1 kg. of Gandhasale rice. It is such an excellent variety. Farmers get even 12 quintals / acre. (A.P Sadashiva, Paddy farmer)
3. Our farming improvements is being made so as to keep the farmer away from the farms – actually the more he is in the farm better for his/her farm. Sri B K Deva Rao, a farmer conserving atleast 50 varieties in his farm says “An agriculturist must move around his land at least 3 times as he takes food 3 times a day. One need not consider it as work. It is a movement with purpose of understanding the changes taking place in the nature. It helps to learn more.”
4. Modern agriculture induced by the green revolution and HYV seeds also destroyed the diversity of the rice varieties farmed. Says Deva Rao “35 varieties in my godown were reduced to 8 during the time when chemical fertilizers were used. Then I woke up. Now the number of varieties in my stock has grown to 50.”
5. Those who used to cultivate their own species, manure, water and oxen are now depending on the government, scientists and companies for seeds, manure, pesticides, power, tractor, water, harvesting and every thing. To curb this the Diversity of seeds should be protected. Earlier there were lakhs of local species. Today this wealth is in danger because of the advent of mixed and hybrid species. The food supremacy of the farmer's lies in diversity of seeds. A life with self-respect, co-operative outlook, good relationships etc can be ensured if there is diversity of seeds. Otherwise he will have to depend on the agricultural department or private companies and harmony with the neighbours is also lost. There are several advantages such as control of diseases, capacity to make up the loss with another crop in case of unforeseen circumstances, preparation of tasty food, management of more work with less number of labourers (Since crops get ready for harvest on different days) availability of grass, good quality etc. Diversity is required for the longevity of rice, utility and use of pesticides etc. but the small problem lies is the ability to identify the species correctly, keeping them separately, availability of space and taking care that they do not mixup during planting. (B K Parameshwara Rao, Farmer and President, Namana Beeja Nidhi, Belthangady. He presented the use and specialties of various types of traditional paddy )
6. Rice in Asia was never owned by anybody, rather it was a property of all, and the seeds were freely shared and improved, no body patented it, but now one single multi-national corporate Syngenta owns 99% of the genes, because they have patented it. And the MNC's

- Monsanto, Syngenta, Cargill, Wal-Mart with the help of the American Government is trying to completely control India's food production and sales. (Prof. B M Kumaraswamy)
7. Many of the hybrid varieties face pest problems when shifted to organic, while many traditional seeds are inherently pest and disease resistant. Increase in the rate of areca nut during the early 90s has proved disastrous for paddy cultivation. This has affected the traditional catchment area by flow of water. The watershed has changed because of the conversion of traditional paddy fields in to gardens and fields are devoid of water. (B S Dinesh, Paddy farmer)
  8. Organic farming can fully revive the paddy lands by reducing the input cost and improving production. Use of cattle manure and cattle power for activities in the farm is a must. Saving own seeds and using them will also help. ( B.S Nandish, Young and successful organic farmer- he shared his experience with his farm and is a motivating farmer )
  9. Even in the Dakshina Kannad region, there is very great diversity in the paddy cultivation ranging from hill area to the coast and even within that various types. (Mahalingeshwar Bhatt) Such diversity was presented by many in the meeting.
  10. Traditionally grown rice ( especially organic also) should be stored in traditional ways, and these are prone to pest attack. There are many ways of storing paddy with out resorting to chemicals. (Mallikarjuna B.M, "Jeevasudhe" Sales center of organic agro products)
  11. The market for traditional and organic rice and other crops is big and increasing.
  12. While many traditional rice varieties have good yields, for some the yield is less but they are cropped because they are helpful in solving the problem of fodder. No hybrid rice is comparable to any traditional variety in taste. The need of chemical fertilizers never arises. Though they are less white they are highly nutritious. This is 100% true especially in the case of varieties like Kagga Halaga. There should be research on nutrition content, method of planting and organic cultivation. Then the traditional varieties will definitely prove to be profitable for the cultivator. (M.R. Hegde, President, Sneha Kunja)
  13. Paddy and other food crops are losing in area mainly because governments supported by foreign advice is encouraging diversification to other non-food cash crops like flowers etc. This is a disastrous recipe which should not be accepted at any cost. If food crops are grown atleast we will have food, even if governments and agencies ( buyers) fail us. There are many examples from other countries where the hingry people who had gone for diversification had to be fed with external loans, there by indebting a whole nation. (Shivashankar Rao Addoor)
  14. It is told that there were more than a lakh paddy species were in India. There is no doubt that the "Green Revolution" helped India to become self reliant by increasing food production. But the resultant high yielding varieties and irrigation based chemical cultivation has destroyed the roots of our rich agro bio-diversity. It is a big tragedy. As a result it is difficult to get a few thousand paddy species even if searched for. (Dr. T.N.Prakash Kammarady)

One of the papers presented is reproduced here in full, as it summarises the situation in the region and puts forward some practical and immediate solutions which the governments need to take up and farmers need to start demanding.

*"Once upon time paddy used to be cultivated everywhere in the undivided Dakshina Kannada District. But as days passed it has been disappearing. In sullia, Puttur, Belthangady, Bantwal, Karkala, Udupi taluks and some parts of Mangalore taluk people opted commercial crops and paddy cultivation is on the verge of extinction. In Kundapura*

*Taluk the volume of paddy cultivation is comparatively larger. From Thokkottu, Mangalore to the gateway of Udupi or even up to Brahmavara one could see paddy fields on both sides of the national highway. But now we can see big buildings instead of paddy fields.*

*The farmers leave their lands barren or switch over to commercial crops (when there is water) since they could not get good prices for their produces in the market. There is no facility for storage of the produces and hence they have to be sold early, they are not able to get agricultural labourers in time or they cannot afford to cultivate with mechanization and as a result paddy cultivation has reduced.*

*After the beginning of the Green Revolution in our country in 1966, the farmers were involved in that, fertility of the land lessened year by year with the use of chemical fertilizers, production in the land became less, the farmers underwent heavy losses and they had to lessen the quantity of paddy cultivation.*

*Certain policies of the government have hold on our farmers which has led to the reduction of paddy cultivation. We have said goodbye to the traditional species, started growing the hybrid varieties, we did not have any idea of their long term ill effects and it has resulted in lot of problems such as loss, diseases etc.*

#### *Solutions*

- 1. Declaring support price for paddy, fixing it according to the cost of production in each district. Each farmer holding up to 5 acres of land should be paid a support price of Rs.1,200 per quintal and special subsidy per acre (cultivated area) should be (Rs. 1,000 per acre) paid.*
- 2. Small farmers (all farmers within 5 acres) should be paid subsidy for the preparation of natural manure (compost manure, cattle manure) and earthworm manure. The department of agriculture should recognize this and declare subsidy. The subsidy should be 10% of the market rate per quintal.*
- 3. The farmers should be able to sell their products themselves in the market and they should get good price for that.*
- 4. In order to reduce the usage of chemical fertilizers their subsidy should be reduced stage by stage.*
- 5. The farmers who have conserved the local species and those who have grown paddy without the use of chemicals should be identified and encouraged.*
- 6. Opening of A.P.M.C. centers in Taluk or Hobli (Block) level to purchase the paddy grown by farmers and doing away with the problem of middlemen through this.*
- 7. All season godowns should be opened in village level under the auspices of the village Panchayaths to store the agricultural produces.*
- 8. Agricultural assistants should be appointed in the department of agriculture and the farmers should be encouraged to check diseases, the fertility of soil and to follow the traditional organic method of cultivation. In farmers should be made visit various places and learn different methods of cultivation.*
- 9. Encouraging agro based industries Establishment of agricultural universities, encouraging the children of farmers to do agricultural work, extending guarantee of government jobs to paddy cultivators and agricultural laborers. Implement minimum wages by this and men and women should be paid equal wages. Unemployment allowance should be extended to small farmers also if there is less work on paddy fields.*

10. *If the paddy crop is destroyed as a result of any natural calamity. The government should revise the amount of remuneration being paid now and take action to sanction the compensation on the basis of the support price for paddy. The present method should be simplified and crop insurance should be implemented.*
11. *The farmers should be encouraged to grow forest in their Kumki lands for leaves and firewood.*
12. *The agriculturists should be encouraged to adopt the local traditional technical knowledge. High technology should not be adopted. See that the agricultural system that gives employment to hands is followed.*
13. *The small farmers and agricultural laborers should also be entitled for provident fund and pension. The government should issue the identity card that the particular person is an agriculturist. (after 18 years according to the labour act)*
14. *An insurance with simple terms should be implemented for paddy growing farmers. The premium should be shared by the government and the individual on 50% basis.*
15. *The paddy growing farmers should be provided with loans with maximum 6% interests through local cooperative society nationalized banks or self-help groups.*
16. *Instead of concentrating on the development of the cities alone we should pay attention towards development of the villages. Then migration of people from villages to cities will decrease.*
17. *If we strengthen a nonpolitical, well-based organization and see that farmers get all kinds of information, protect the dignity of the occupation of the agriculturists. Support the cultivation of paddy species that are suitable for each region and if the government responds to all needs of farmers then we will be able to protect at least the present places of cultivation.”*

(Policy of the Government towards paddy – by Rajeeva Salian, Director, Nagarika Seva Trust and K. Karunakara Shetty, Vice President, Krishikara Vedike Karnataka)

**The Resolutions passed after the 6 sessions & discussions during the Save Rice regional meeting held on Feb 17th & 18th 2006 at Mangalore under the auspices of Nagarika Seva Trust; Krishikara Vedike Karnataka; Thanal, Trivandrum; IIRD, Aurangabad participated by 148 representatives from 21 NGOs of 7 districts**

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1. The congregation/ meeting consents to the Kumbalangi Declaration made during the Indian workshop on Rice held at Kumbalangi, Kerala on December 2004 and decided to intensify a national level campaign on conservation of local seeds and propagate the cultivation of local varieties.
2. Rice is life for the people of Asia. It has become a matter of food security & life security of the common people, small farmers and the community. Therefore it is beyond the scope of International Trade. So rice has to be kept out of the jurisdiction of World Trade Organisation (WTO)
3. Our priority should be conservation of our local seed varieties through the participation of farmers and farming communities and enriching our traditional knowledge. Only through this we can attain the national food security and life security. Therefore, instead of encouraging the market powers government should encourage the farmers through provision of all assistance needed, cooperation and support.
4. The genetically modified rice & Hybrid species have no role to play on our national food security. Therefore the programmes & policies which encourage the kulantari & hybrid species should be entirely forsaken. Instead, policies and programmes should be formulated and implemented to encourage organic & traditional paddy cultivation systems.
5. Today Organic farming has become very important in the perspective of all people & agricultural sustainability. Hence Indian Govt. should adopt organic agricultural policies and implement special financial facilities and profitable programmes for farmers. It is necessary to increase the support price fixed for paddy at a minimum of two times the present amount.
6. Any researches & development programmes in agriculture field should be taken up only through public sector. Private organisations or multinational organisations should be prohibited from taking up researches and development programmes in our country.
7. The Central Govt's Seed Bill 2004 which is harmful to the traditional rights of farmers on seeds should be rejected completely. Giving prominence to the interest of the farmers, the Seed Bill 1966 should be continued with some necessary amendments.
8. The plan to make water a marketing commodity through water privatisation policy should be forsaken. Considering water as the right of people, it should be made available to common people and farmers.
9. Our Agriculture Universities and Technical Institutions should concentrate on researches towards inventing new Agricultural Technologies and Agriculture Instruments to benefit the small farmers and women.

10. Today the young generation is moving away from agriculture. This is a dangerous trend. To correct this situation agriculture and its importance should be incorporated into the school and college syllabus. This policy should be included while preparing syllabus for non formal education also.

11. It has become very clear that the new environment policy of the Central Govt. is pro Industrialists & supportive to Multinational companies. In view of the development of our country and agriculture, environment conservation is very important. Therefore necessary changes has to be made in the draft of Government's Environment Policy and it should be made possible to file criminal suits against the industrialists and companies that are polluting the environment.

12. The Agriculture Product Marketing Committee policies of Government to change Agriculture Marketing System to Contract Farming System will only benefit the Multinational companies and not the farmers. Therefore this policy should be abandoned and programmes should be formulated to improve and strengthen the APMC.

13. The Govt. records do not reflect the actual situations of the land classification today. The crops registered in the records are different from the actual cultivated crops. Therefore land classification/division should be once again examined thoroughly.

**Save our Rice Campaign**  
**Regional Meeting, Thiruvapur**  
(Old Tanjavur District – presently of Thiruvapur,  
Tanjavur and Nagapattinam Districts)

Jointly organised by  
Federation of Consumer Organisations – Tamilnadu and Pondicherry (FEDCOT)  
Tamil Nadu Organic Uzhavar Movement  
CREATE Trust  
Thanal, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala  
IIRD, Aurangabad

**Executive Summary**

Date of the Meeting : 22nd March, 2006 Time : 9.30 am to 5.30 pm

A regional Meet on ‘Save Our Rice’ campaign was jointly organised by Thanal, Thiruvananthapuram, Institute of Integrated Rural Development (IIRD), Aurangabad, Federation of Consumer Organisations – Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry (FEDCOT), Tamil Nadu Organic Uzhavar Movement and CREATE Trust at Tiruvapur on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2006.

Presiding over the Meet Prof. P. Duraisingam, Chairman, FEDCOT who is also the Chairman, Consumer Coordination Council, New Delhi, decried the efforts of some vested interests to get the water privatised and thereby to make life of the people and the farmers miserable. Dealing with water-related issues he said that women were very much affected by any decision taken by the authorities on water. He referred to the happy coincidence of World Water Day 2006 and the Rice Campaign at Tiruvapur, a predominantly agricultural district. He expressed concern about the progressive depletion of water resources and the need for economic use of water.

Prof. P. Duraisingam explained in detail how water was essential to life and how water and sanitation were interlinked. Multinational companies are having an eye on water business in India on a very big scale. Many developing countries are paying dearly for water because of privatisation. Water which is presently in State list should be brought to the control of the Central Government. If this is done, many water-related problems in the country could be solved. For this all rivers are to be nationalised and a river grid is to be formed. He cited the Mullaiperiyar dispute between Kerala and Tamil Nadu over raising the level of the dam. He reminded the audience that FEDCOT has taken up the matter seriously and proposes to stage dharna-like programme in Theni by April this year to get justice for Tamil Nadu.

Ms. Usha, Coordinator, Thanal, Thiruvananthapuram, explaining the objectives of the campaign, spoke about sustainable rice, need for rejecting genetically modified food and to ensure food safety by using community wisdom. Mr. E. Baskaran, Joint Director, Agriculture (i/c) gave suggestions to improve farming methods by using organic manure.

Mr. G. Nammalwar, organic farming scientist, in his keynote address, said that the ‘Save Our Rice’ campaign should not end as one-day affair but is to become a continuous movement. Nor should it be referred to as a ‘silent revolution’ but it should be made a flaming torch. He expressed happiness over the fact that the nature farming movement has changed the outlook

of the agriculture departments in the country. In passing, he mentioned about his visit to Indonesia where land is being spoiled by the use of chemical fertilisers. He was critical of the self-styled experts who are indulging in the import of western technology on our soil by passing our traditional method of agriculture.

Mr. A. Ambalavanan spoke about the importance of organic farming and his own experience in agriculture. Mr. V. Chandrasekaran spoke in detail the problems of buying paddy and selling rice. Mr. R.U. Venugopal explained the need for orderly marketing system. Prof. S. Peermohamed, former chairman (i/c), FEDCOT talked about the danger involved in GM rice and food safety. Mr. K. Varadarajan, director, Food and PDS, FEDCOT dealt with irrigation management. Mr. Arupadhi Kalayanam, General Secretary of Federation of Farmers' Associations in Delta Districts, traced the problem of declining paddy crop in the District and measures to increase the output. Messrs. G. Sither, Mr. M. Sethuraman and Mr. R. Dhanapal, who are actively involved in organic farming, narrated their success story. Prof. Dr. R. Kaladharan, Treasurer, FEDCOT, Dr. S. Venkatasubramanian, Branch Manager, SBI, Tiruthuraiipoondi. Mr. V. Sivanandam, director, Health, FEDCOT. Mr. M. Seran, President, Federation of Farmers Association in Delta District. Mr. N. Govindarajuly, Nagai District Coordinator, FEDCOT. Mr. G. Varadarajan, Mr. M. Nagarajan, Mr. G. Gandhi and Mr. A.G. Rajendran spoke about the necessity of taking the 'Save Our Rice' campaign to the grassroots and asked for cooperation of the people in the success of the movement. Mr. R. Sridhar, Thanal, Thiruvananthapuram, proposed a vote of thanks. Earlier, Mr. R. Jayaraman, Director – Agriculture, FEDCOT, welcomed the gathering and stated briefly the importance of the Regional Meet.

**The following resolutions were passed in the meeting:**

1. The farmers should come forward to protect the traditional varieties of rice so as to ensure food safety and continuous farming operations.
2. To produce poison-free food steps must be taken to resort to organic farming only.
3. The government is requested not to allow in our country either the genetically modified food or GM seeds under any circumstances.
4. This meeting is in full agreement with the decision taken at Kumbalangi Meet in Kerala and to translate it into action. It was decided to maintain rapport with the connected persons/organisations.
5. The Central Government is requested not to be a party to any agreement arrived at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which would affect the farmers' right to life and their produce.
6. It was decided to request the farmers to take this the movement of 'Saver Our Rice' to the villages and establish forums for the purpose.

ON 23 March 2006 a meeting of nature farming practioners and activists was organised by the Agriculture Directorate of FEDCOT at CREATE Adirangam Kattimedu with Mr. V. Sivanandam, Direct-Health FEDCOT in the chair. The theme of the meeting was: 'Save Our Rice' facilitated by Thanal, Thiruvananthapuram.

The meeting discussed in detail the intrusion of GM food and seeds, soil erosion and chemical pollution and to protect our traditional rice by using our native wisdom. The speakers explained how the farmers are unable to produce more as the soil becomes exhausted owing to chemical inputs forcing them to move to other areas. They said that the cultivable area is shrinking and fast food culture is rearing its head.

Ms. Usha, Coordinator, Thanal, spoke about the urgency of looking into the problem and wanted the cooperation of everyone to protect our traditional rice. R. Sridhar of Thanal, emphasised the need for a sustained campaign to 'Save Our Rice' before farmers and consumers lose control over agriculture. Dr. S. Venkatasubramanian, Manager, SBI, wanted the farmers to be helped by disseminating the information on the advantages of vermin compost. Mr. R. Ponnambalam, Director, Public Utilities, FEDCOT, warned against GM food and emphasised the need for nature farming. In his address, Mr. G. Nammalwar, reputed nature farming scientist severely criticised the use of pesticides and explained how they adversely affect our soil, our water and our health. He elaborated on the harmful effects of GM food and Seeds and the necessity of saving our rice from the clutches of Multi national companies which are went on marketing GM crops and Foods. If allowed, the damages would become irreversible Mr. A.G. Rajendaran, an expert in his own right in nature farming. Ms. Pitchaiammal, and S.P. Murugadass spoke.

Mr. R. Jayaraman, Director – Agriculture, FEDCOT, demonstrated to the audience how, vermicompost *panchagavya* and herbal repellent could be prepared and effectively used in organic farming.

The participants were chiefly from Tiruvarur, Koradachery and Valangaiman blocks, Members of Bharathi Womens' Development Centre, Kattur participated in a large number there were 65 women and 12 men who took part in the meeting led by Mr. N.M. Nagarajan in addition to Besides Mr. G. Shankar Ganesh and three students of Valivalam Desikar Polytechnic, Nagapattinam. Mr. S. Sivasubramanian proposed a vote of thanks.

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Prepared by Thiru R Jayaraman, Director – Agriculture, FEDOT, Thiruthiraipoondi.

**SOCIETY FOR EQUITABLE VOLUNTARY ACTIONS (SEVA)**

3C, Milan Apartment, 52/3 Vidyayatan Sarani, Kolkata- 700035

Ph. 033-25785590/25776365, E-mail- [seva@cal2.vsnl.net.in](mailto:seva@cal2.vsnl.net.in)

Report of two days workshop on “SAVE OUR RICE” May 21-22, 2006

On the occasion of Second International year of Rice, Society for Equitable Voluntary Actions (SEVA) along with THANAL, IIRD and Human Network India organized two days regional level sensitization programme on 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> May at Vikas Kendra, P.O. & Village, Atghara, North 24 parganas on the topic “SAVE OUR RICE” to achieve sustainable lively hoods in remote part of West Bengal and to bring people together to discuss about issues related to rice.

This is the first time in West Bengal we had the opportunity to organize this program ‘Save the Rice’

It also gave us a good feeling and a sense of pride that this program has been considered as parts of the Millennium Development Goals, UN.

The venue of the program was at our coconut grove, Vikas Kendra. It was nicely decorated with traditional inputs & knowledge. Through lively demonstrations like integrated farming systems, the use of rice in our life, display of various indigenous paddy seeds etc. a beautiful workshop environment was made and it got a different dimension.

The primary intention of this attempt was to bring together all who are concerned about rice for sharing their experiences, and deliberate on ways to sustain rice and the culture of rice cultivation.

With this end in view two workshops were organised. On 21<sup>st</sup> May, more that 82 panchayat members from 7 gram panchayats attended the workshop. On 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 115 farmers from 10 villages of 4 blocks came together for the workshop. Both the workshops were held at Vikas Kendra, Atghara in North 24 parganas of West Bengal .

**21<sup>st</sup> May 2006**

The workshops started through on inaugural song by the inmates of Ananda Kendra.

Rice is our item which is much more than a crop or a food item in Indian context, we had thirty six thousand varieties of rice in the past ; the figure is now sixteen hundred only. This figure will came down drastically if the present trend of interference by the multinational companies is allowed to continue said Dr. Chandan Mukherjee, President, SEVA in his welcome address.

Mr. Asok Ghosh, Secretary SEVA explained how rice influenced our lives and culture in very many ways. He narrated about the impending danger of terminator seeds which is almost fully controlled by Monsanto Company. He also said now we are standing on the cross roads of history where we find it hard to sustain agriculture as a whole and rice in particular. High yielding varieties and hybrids seeds caused immense loss of paddy varieties

and the huge cost of modern agriculture led to mounting debts and have pushed the farmers to commit suicide. Prophet Muhammad, Vidyasagar and many others created history by continuous movement. Save Our Rice is the right movement for this time. This movement is scientific and may touch history.

After tea break Ms. S. Usha, Co-ordinator, Save Our Rice campaign talked about how the rice campaign started. She also spoke on the present reigning issue of Genetically Modified crops in the country. She also mentioned that when the first 'Miracle rice - IR - 8' launched in 1966, from then the destruction of traditional farming and rice started. Now International Year of Rice in 2004 was actually the inaugural ceremony for GM Rice, the 'latest miracle technology'. This will take away the last attempts of our farmers to save farming in the country through organic and other sustainable means.

She requested the panchayat members and farmers groups to work collectively to resist the introduction of genetic modification of rice and hybrid seeds and protect the traditional knowledge and systems of cultivation.

"Rice cultivation and rice based systems have played a significant role in the lives of a very large population, influencing our language, our culture and the rural economy. As rice has become an inherent part of our life, culture and value systems, rice is more than agriculture and commerce; rice is life for us" said Mr. Soumen Brammachari in this lecture of the importance of rice in India's social life. He also warned the participants regarding the impending danger of GMO seeds.

SEVA felicitated the newly elected MLAs Md. Salim of Baduria Constituency, Prof. Pranab Bhattacharya of Habra Constituency and Dr. Mortoza Hossain Minister-in-charge of Agriculture Marketing & Relief by offering scarf, bouquet and a book on 'One Straw Revolution' each by one of our female workers.

Mr Salim said in his short speech that this rice campaign should not remain confined to one or two blocks, and that we have to take this campaign to different regions and sectors, who are directly or indirectly connected to rice. Prof. Pranab Bhattacharya conveyed his gratefulness to Vikas Kendra as it is used as a resource centre of human resource development for last 20 years. He also expressed his happiness for organizing this Rice Campaign and he requested to take this campaign to rice growers, consumers, activists, students, teachers, women group etc. for more diffusion of this campaign.

"Rice culture is under serious threat all over India. Cash crops and other value crops are penetrating their way into the paddy fields. Genetically modified seeds are being pushed into our lives. But in West Bengal our farmers don't want multinational and their farm inputs in agriculture since we have traditional systems of farming and seeds" said the Minister-in-charge Agriculture Marketing & Relief.

After lunch break Mr. Suhash Chaudhury, ADO, Barasat-1 emphasized on Organic Rice Cultivation. He said we lost our indigenous seeds, we forgot our bio-diversity of crops, indigenous technology in the rush to make more profit. By using bio-diversity, bio-fertilizer, vermin-culture, compost etc. in paddy fields the soil health will recover otherwise it will be barren land for the next generation. He said many methods and techniques of organic agriculture have originated from various traditional farming systems all over the world. The

method controls weed, requires less water and enhances the fertility of the soil. By return of earthworm and friendly insects, farmers make their own friendly ambience.

In the discussion of 'Method of Indigenous Rice Production' Mr. Anupam Pal, ADO Training stressed how to conserve seeds for self sufficiency of rice cultivation. He mentioned that only those who have own seed, can be considered as a farmer. What is high yielding paddy? Increase of production should not be our main motto. We have to consider its production cost also. He also explained to the farmers how to increase the production of paddy by using the indigenous methods and seeds in their fields. Cuba is a best example for the same.

In the concluding session Prof. Partha Mukherjee, Extension Director of Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya, discussed about the technical part of soil health. He said vast areas of once fertile lands got degraded due to soil erosion, salinisation or a general loss of fertility. For getting back our soil in previous condition we have to think about organic cultivation. A healthy plant can resist its pest & disease problems by getting nutrition from organic matter. Farmers can make more profit by using indigenous varieties of seeds, azola, dhaincha seeds as a part of reducing the dependency on external agriculture inputs.

## **22<sup>nd</sup> May 2006**

The second day was fully dedicated for the rice farmers. The session was started by a beautiful rice related song by our Ananda Kendra inmates.

Mr. Alauddin Ahamed explained the relevance of rice workshop in his brief introductory talk. He said how the multinational corporations like Monsanto, Bayer and Syngenta try to get exclusive rights over our seeds through patents. How the genetically modified seeds are being pushed into our lives. How the traditional rice systems are being destroyed. He also discussed the impending danger of Seed Bill.

“The use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has spread out in our country since 1960’s. In a new approach referred to as the “Green Revolution” aimed at increasing the yields per cultivated area. This kind of agriculture is based on excessive use of external inputs, so we are being depended on foreign countries” Said Ms. S. Usha. She also highlighted to the farmers who traditionally have held the rights to keep his own seeds, will no longer have it, as seeds of the GM crops cannot be retained by the farmers for the further use. Every year the farmers will have to depend on the Biotech companies.

Mr. Mrinmoy Das, co-ordinator, HUMAN Network INDIA, said by organizing a larger movement farmers group can stir against the dominant policy of multinational corporations. Whatever the companies are doing only making for their profit. It is not only the movement of 'Save Our Rice' it is also the fight to 'Save Ourselves'.

Dr. Arunava Biswas, Plant Pathologist mainly focused on the use of organic inputs in paddy. “As the resistance power of indigenous paddy is more, so we have to preserve the same” said Dr. Biswas. He also explained to the farmers about the integrated process of organic pesticides for preventing pest & disease of paddy.

Mr. Samiul Islam Entomologist, Rice Research Station, Chinsura emphasized on selecting area wise enduring paddy seeds which will be effective for protecting pest & disease. A strong protest came out from the participants when the speaker explained the Government policy about our organic agriculture. The Govt. policy is farmers should not stop chemicals in their paddy field at a time, it should reduce 20% step by step. The farmers were very much against the same, as many were good organic farmers who have been practicing for years. It was a good case of an interactive session.

Before lunch break, the Kumbalangi Declaration from the “Indian Workshop on Rice” at Kumbalangi, Kochi, Kerala on December 9-11, 2004 was once more read out by Mr. Alauddin Ahamed, Program coordinator, Vikas Kendra, SEVA. The participants stood up and promised to honor the declaration by raising their hands.

After lunch break, Dr. Gunendu Bikas Bhattacharya, Assist. Botanist, Rice Research Station, Chinsura said indigenous paddy in the core culture of our country. He stressed how to cultivate indigenous paddy and high yielding paddy both. On one side this system will protect the paddy from different disease; on the other hand it will fulfill the demand of our country’s food grain. All inorganic is not harmful for our health. Salt is inorganic but it is very important for our daily lives.

How the farmers might have increased their paddy yield by using salt water, it was the major point of discussion of Dr. Bhattacharya’s deliberation. It was another lively interaction session, where the farmers got interested how to use the method in their respective paddy fields.

On the concluding session, four of our Organic Farmers honoured four of the THANAL friends by handing over one head cover made by palm leaf, one hand fan and one small basket for each. The friends of THANAL expressed their happiness to get the honors and promised to take the same to their state.

The two days workshop concluded with the declaration for resolving to ban the use of chemical inputs in Rice Cultivation, to resist GMO Seeds and to work collectively to sustain Rice.

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