

Natural Farming

In the Vidarbha region, hundreds of farmers continue to commit suicide. To save the farmers from debts, diseases and death, MSS endeavoured to mobilize farmers of Samudrapur, Nagpur, and Chandrapur blocks to shift from costly, hazardous, chemical-based farming to cost-effective chemical-free Natural Farming.



The natural farming movement led by MSS is, directly and indirectly, assisting 3159 farmers. With MSS efforts, 2000 farms are practicing natural farming on 2500-acre land and annually saving 3 Crore Rupees. Similarly, 220 organic Cotton farmers (instead of using BT cotton seeds and chemical inputs) use indigenous cotton seeds and Natural farm inputs and save Rs. 40 lakh on an annual basis. Initially, this money was siphoned off by the multinational seed companies and chemical industries but now it remains in the village and strengthens the rural economy.



Natural Farming is freeing the farmers from the clutches of multinational companies producing seeds and fertilizers. By producing their own farm inputs, Natural Farmers are saving 20 to 50 % of investment on-farm inputs. There is a 10 to 30 % rise in the crop yield resulting in a 20 to 50 % rise in a natural farmer's income.

Apart from economic benefits, natural farming is protecting the land, air, soil, water from hazardous pollutants and saving the birds, bees, earthworms, snakes and farm-friendly insects from extinction.

School for Organic Farmers



MSS built the first Organic Farmers School with mud and terracotta. Here, around 3000 farmers attend workshops and training courses in Natural Farming every year.

Though women do 70% of farming work, the training in farm-based technology is generally imparted to men farmers. MSS made the training of women farmers an essential part of the Natural Farming movement. Now, women participate in large numbers in such training programs.



Padmashree Shri Subhash Palekar training women farmers

Farm Produce Processing Unit

Due to the lack of processing facilities in the village, most of the farmers sell their unprocessed raw farm produce at a very low rate in the market. In this transaction, the farmer not only loses money but also valuable residues. To overcome these losses, MSS established a Processing Unit in



Girad village with machines and equipment to process grains, pulses, spices, forest produce, and oil.

Being located in the village, this processing unit saves farmers time, money, physical efforts, pilferage, exploitative middlemen, transportation charges, etc. The additional advantage of the processing unit is that the farmers get back the residue like oil cake, seed kernel, husk, chaff, broken pulses, wasted flour, etc. These residues are used by farmers as feed for cattle, fishes and poultry birds. Annually 3500 farmers from 70 surrounding villages use this facility.



Farmers Marketing Federations

Some of the major reasons for the poverty of farmers are their low bargaining capacity; exploitative market; low price for the farm produce; and lack of Government support. Along with this the problems like lack of storage space, lack of working capital, and lack of unity among farmers further aggravate the crisis.

In order to make them have better bargaining power, MSS formed 42 Organic Farmers Federations. Presently, these 42 Farmers' Federations with 778 members are collectively registered as Natural Farm Produce Marketing Company under the Government's Agriculture Department. Now, the federation has better bargaining power as it collectively decides the sale strategy and sets the market rate for organic produce.

Farm Tool Fabrication Workshop



MSS setup a Farm Tool workshop that fabricates improved hand tools for farmers. These improved hand tools help farmers to do agricultural operations like clearing and levelling the field, making harrows, weeding, etc. without employing outside labour.

Consequently, each farmer annually saves around Rs. 2000 per acre. By using these hand tools, 69 natural farmers working on 307-acre land saved more than Rs.7 Lakh in a year.



Mobile Repair Workshop



To save the farmers from the drudgery, time, and money spent in bringing broken tools and non-functioning equipment for repair to a big village or town based workshop, MSS started a mobile repair workshop for farmers. The mobile workshop

goes from village to village and provides services like repairing, mending, sharpening, fabricating, and transporting, to farmers and rural households.

Rental Services to Farmers



Many small and marginal farmers cannot afford machines and equipment; therefore (during agriculture season) they are forced to borrow these from fellow farmers. But ,during peak farming season, sharing of machines and equipment becomes very difficult.



Therefore, MSS started the rental service centre that gives farmers the basic tools like the tilling machine, spray pumps, water pipes, drums, steam cooker for processing turmeric, insect trap, devices to ward off wild animals and birds.etc.

Friends of Snakes, Birds, and Bees

In Natural Farming the role of other living beings including insects, bees, birds, snakes, etc. is given due respect.

In this region, due to fear and lack of knowledge, snakes are killed in a big way. Girad and surrounding villages being Cobra-infested villages face fatal accidents due to snake bites. Therefore, the Farmers School trains rural youth in the techniques of conserving Snakes. Similarly, many farmers are trained for protecting birds and bees.



These trained youth have formed a club named Sarpa Mitra & Pakshi Mitra (Friends of Snakes, Birds and Bees) which provides emergency services to farmers.

Forest and Vegetable Nursery

The members of women Self Help Groups trained in nursery techniques were assisted to set up forest and vegetable nursery in Girad village. The forest nursery raises fruit, timber and shade trees. From the forest nursery, fifty percent of plants were purchased by the Forest Department and the remaining thirty percent by local farmers and institutions.



In Jamni village, another women group has set up a Sugarcane Plant Nursery that sells Sugarcane saplings to Jamni Sugar factory, which in turn sells it to associated farmers. The Girad vegetable nursery supplies vegetable saplings to local farmers at a concessional rate.