

Prudent practices to generate more income

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A Mayiladuthurai farmer shows how easy it is to make a simple vermicompost shed using local materials. Be it organic or chemical farming, farmers in Tamil Nadu always have the habit of applying some truckloads of cow dung manure or vermicompost to their fields before planting their crops.

Sourcing problem

“Today it is a common knowledge that sourcing the raw materials for this manure proves a daunting task for many farmers. Cow dung or vermicompost is not easily available. And if it is available then the seller decides the price. I would suggest to farmers that they try to make their own compost/manure for their farms making use of locally available material in and around their fields,” says a progressive organic farmer, Mr. D. Bharani of Mayiladuthurai taluka in Tamil Nadu’s Nagapattinam district. Usually farmers across the country build a roof either with thatched straw or asbestos sheets as a cover for their vermicompost manufacturing unit. The bottom of the unit will either have sand or plain cement or sometimes toughened red soil. But Mr. Bharani has used locally available cut tree trunks for the four poles supporting his rudimentary compost unit. The tree trunks absorb the moisture from the compost unit and grow as individual trees. For the roof, he has used the climbing tendrils of vegetable plants growing near the compost unit. The plants grow well, absorbing the required moisture from the unit and their leaves provide shade to the manufacturing unit.

Extra income

“In addition to making the compost which I sell at Rs 5-8 per kg, I am also able to sell vegetables such as bhendi, brinjal, snake gourd and bitter gourd grown on the roof of the compost shed,” he says. “Farmers, instead of spending money on constructing thatched sheds and asbestos, can follow simple methods like this. “By doing so, they can get double income from the compost unit and the vegetables,” he adds. He is also cultivating rasthali banana variety in about four acres.” Commercially, rasthali has a good demand in the market compared with other varieties and if consumers know that it is grown organically, then the farmer need not search for buyers. It will be vice-versa,” he says.

Plantain variety

Strong winds often uproot banana trees and farmers have to tie each tree to a wooden pole to prevent the tree from falling or getting uprooted. Rasthali variety does not grow quite high and is often sturdy against strong winds. "Secondly organic practices are found ideal for my banana orchard as banana is often found susceptible to wilt disease which is a major and fatal infestation. Chemical control methods have not been found successful in controlling this infestation, compared to organic methods," he explained. For an acre, about 780-800 pits at 8x8 feet (row to row and plant to plant) were dug and the suckers were planted in them. About 3 kg of farm yard manure (FYM) was also applied for each pit. The FYM was applied a little distance away from the pit, because if it were applied directly into the pit or near the suckers it would spoil the plant growth due to heat generation. Panchangavya spray was done once every month till the crop was about 5 months old. He was able to harvest his first yield in about 14 months after planting and this variety can be maintained for two years.

Selling price

"One bunch was sold for Rs. 120-130 and I was able to get a net income of Rs. 80,000 annually. The expenditure for maintaining one tree comes to about Rs. 35 and after deducting the expenses for all my plants I am still able to get a net profit of Rs. 50,000 annually." he said. According to the farmer a lakh of rupees invested for a year in a bank cannot get you a good interest compared to the same amount spent for an acre in farming. "One lakh rupees invested for growing a crop, in 5-6 months will double provided one gets a good market for the produce," he says.

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