Increase marketing outlets to make agriculture remunerative

August 6, 2014

Taking up agriculture as a full time profession in spite of all its uncertainties requires courage and a strong bent of mind, especially for young educated people like M. Nallamuthu, a young engineer turned farmer from Arasur village in Kancheepuram District.

At a time when today's rural youth are moving away from farming citing lack of good income as the main reason, Mr. Nallamuthu seems to differ.

"A constant income alone can serve as inspiration for people like us to take up or continue farming. If you work in a concern your annual increments, promotions and salary hike are decided by the company.

"But for a farmer, his field and crops are everything. Farming can become profitable only if done scientifically and meticulously. Even when I was offered a salary of Rs.2.16 lakh per annum I decided to stay and work on my farm," he says.

Guidance

The young farmer owes his success in this line to support from National Agro Foundation (NAF). The foundation trained him in use of latest technologies like drip irrigation, fertigation, lean farming with less use of agrochemicals etc.

"More importantly, the foundation made me aware of the schemes and subsidies available in the agriculture department and helped me access the same," he says.

Mr. Nallamuthu cultivates horticulture crops like chrysanthemum, chillies, bitter gourd and watermelon, in his 10 acres when his fellow farmers in the region are still cultivating traditional paddy round the year which consumes a lot of water.

Different crops

He mixes his crops judiciously in order to get regular income, unlike others where farm income is seasonal.

"His annual earnings from his acre is nearly Rs.7 lakh, which is better than the salary of an executive in any MNC, according to Mr. S.S. Rajsekar, Managing Trustee, NAF.

"I harvest 15 tonnes of watermelon, 2.25 tonnes of paddy, 5 tonnes of bitter gourd, and about a tonne of flowers from an acre, on an average."

All the products are sold at the local market and some at the farm gate itself.

Planning

"I plan the cropping depending on the market demand and try to grow what the market requirement is. More marketing channels are the only way to make people enter and stay in this line. More than technology or inputs it is marketing which matters," says Mr. Nallamuthu. NAF constantly backs him up with lot of technical tips and low cost measures for solving the problems of pest and diseases.

Farmers' choice

"Normally it is the farmer's choice whether he wants to adopt a natural method or conventional way to protect his crops. Whatever method he desires we guide him on that.

"Our foundation has been guiding several hundred farmers in the region on maintaining soil health management and care for secondary and micro nutrition. We have been also trying to play a pro-active role in helping our farmers source the right marketing," says Mr. M.R. Ramasubramaniyam, Executive Director.

Nabard encouraged the young farmer to form a club in the region and the young farmer says "I am now looking forward to spreading my success experience to other farmers through the club in my village." A lot of changes have been happening in the agriculture scene in the last 20 years.

We find through our grassroot interaction that mere theory, oration or advice will never work with today's rural youth.

They need to see and get convinced by themselves. If the annual agriculture income is more than the salaried income, these youngsters will definitely take the plunge into agriculture.

Old adage

Unlike the old adage that agriculture profession is only for old people, today the interest among educated youth is increasing and their dedication towards farming is an encouraging sign that the agriculture scene is going through a renaissance, according to Mr. Rajsekar.

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