

THE HINDU

A proven technology to retain and attract youth to agriculture

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What is it that spurs an individual to quit a Government job and take up farming as a full time profession? Or why does an MBA student be more interested to become a full time farmer than work in a company? "If the annual agriculture income is more than a salaried income, youngsters will take the plunge into it. Unlike the old adage that agriculture comprises only old people into their 60's, today the interest among present day educated youth and their dedication towards farming is an encouraging sign that the agriculture scene is going through a renaissance," says Dr.B.J. Pandian, Director & Nodal Officer (TN-IAMWARM Project), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore.

Partnership mode

Dr. Pandian is presently in charge of the project for entire Tamil Nadu, where precision technologies are offered to willing farmers.

Under this technology, drip lines, tanks, mulching sheets, soluble fertilizers, seedlings and a good market source are supplied under a partnership mode free of cost for the first year. The farmer on his side needs to invest about Rs. 10,000.

From the second year, the farmers will have to buy the inputs. But the specialist team would be helping him with the right market linkages.

"Apart from the inputs marketing is the most important factor. Mere technologies and advice without marketing help will not secure a cent per cent success for any field-based project," says Dr. Pandian.

Since last six years

For the last six years since it was first introduced in Krishnagiri and Hosur regions the project continues to remain popular in Kanchipuram, Tiruvannamalai and in Marakanam (Puducherry) areas.

"Tiruvannamalai and Marakkanam are basically oilseeds and pulse growing regions, but for the past one year since the precision project was introduced, there has been a marked move among farmers to go in for watermelon, muskmelon and vegetables cultivation," says Dr. Pandian.

MBA

graduate

An MBA graduate, Mr. B.Karthikeyan was one of the first to adopt this precision technology, initially in 40 cents in Marakanam village.

In three months he was able to earn nearly Rs. 50,000 as income.

Today he is growing fruits in his entire four acres and earns Rs. 12 lakh a year from an acre. In addition he has taken up dealership of micro irrigation tubes for helping other farmers under the scheme in the region.

"If I had been working in a private company I would have been drawing a gross salary of Rs. 50,000 a month. In a year, I would have earned about Rs. 6 lakh but in three months I am able to earn Rs. 12 lakh from muskmelon under this project," he says with a smile.

A bus conductor, Mr. S.Venkatesan, in Alankuppam village used to get Rs.700 day as collection money. But after trying this project he quit his job and is presently a full-time farmer.

Personal experience

"Initially I was quite happy with the everyday income but when I heard about the income some of my friends were getting from the project

"I also wanted to try it out in my ancestral three acres. I planted both muskmelon in 0.93 acres and watermelon in one acre and was able to harvest 24 tonnes of musk melon fetching me a profit margin of Rs.2.46 lakh and my 20 tonnes of watermelon fetching 1.7 lakh.

"Within 70 days I was able to get a total income of 4,16,000. Can any other work fetch me such an amount?" he asks.

Another example

Mr. N. Thirumal from Alankuppam village owned only two acres of land with annual income of Rs. 18,000. After witnessing the many successful farmers in his village, he started capsicum cultivation during 2011. Now he has bought an additional two acres for Rs. 12.6 lakh and two plots close to Puducherry at an investment of 27 lakhs.

At present the University is organizing field days, trainings and exposure visits to create a massive impact among the farmers about this technology.

More young people

"We are seeing a number of youths in the age group of 25-30 years actively coming forward to try this out in their fields.

"This only proves that a remunerative income is the only way to retain or bring back youth into this fast-declining field.

"Mere theory, oration or advice will never work with today's youth. They need to see and get convinced themselves. Once they get convinced they will easily pull others into it," sums up Dr. Pandian.

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