Projecting possibilities

*National Agro Foundation is adopting exemplary methods in the farms of Tamil Nadu to cultivate rural prosperity.*

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Majority of India lives in its villages, but sadly there are not enough measures taken to support and safeguard the interests of rural India. The grim reality that shrouds us is the shrinking cultivable land area, declining soil fertility, stagnating crop productivity levels and shortage of farm labour, which spells crisis. This is when 60 per cent of our population is involved in agriculture and its allied activities. Daring to dream and change the scheme of
Watershed Development will conserve about 28,000 lakh litres of water and would benefit 20 villages in Kancheepuram district

The foundation comes to the rescue of smallholder farmers owing less than five acres of land. These farmers happen to be major stakeholders in Indian agriculture but most of them practice only subsistence farming. In order to assist these small and marginal farmers pursue agriculture as a profitable venture and prevent urban to rural migration, the organisation is implementing various projects for agriculture development in Tamil Nadu.

The aim of these agriculture development interventions are to improve crop productivity through scientific farming and eventually enhance the quality of life led by farmers. “National Agro Foundation works for Integrated Rural Development in the villages with thrust on agricultural productivity improvement, dairy cattle management, watershed development, social development, functional adult literacy, healthcare, training and capacity building and education,” says S S Rajeskar, Managing Trustee, NAF

The foundation’s grassroots interventions have reached out to 26,000 poor rural families spread across 250 villages in Tamil Nadu. The foundation constantly tries to introduce methods that turn rural prosperity into a reality.

FARMING RICH FUTURE

Among their many initiatives, FTTF project is currently implemented in six blocks of Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu covering about 15,000 small and marginal farmers’ families. The interventions by NAF include formation of farmers’ clubs; joint liability groups; seed villages and vermicomposting that are intended to upgrade farmers from subsistence primary producers to a producer group. This enables farmers to be shareholders, and get higher price for their produce and also get inputs at cheaper rates through collectively bargaining.
Recently NAF initiated its programme in Sodam village, Chittoor district

Another inspiring project developed by NAF is Watershed Development. “This project will conserve about 28,000 lakh litres of water in an area of 850 Hectares (on a pilot mode, now being scaled up to 5,600 hectares). This would directly benefit 20 villages in Kancheepuram District. This initiative would improve water harvesting and conservation; increase the green cover and create sustainable livelihoods for the community,” informs Rajsekhar.

The NAF, envisioned by Subramaniam, is an institution not only to facilitate rural development in Tamil Nadu, but also as a replicable model suitable for implementation in other states of India where marginal and poor farmers live. Modern technologies on agriculture and dairy development have been disseminated to selected farmers across 26 districts of Tamil Nadu through their training programs. Recently NAF initiated its programme in Sodam village, Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh. The initiative focuses on agriculture, dairy development and training interventions for rural upliftment in Sodam and neighboring villages.

Setting benchmarks for other states to follow, Rajsekhar explains as a grassroot NGO working closely with the community gives NAF opportunities to learn about the requirement of the community. “This assessment of felt and unfelt needs of the community has paved way for planning, designing, implementing, monitoring, carrying out midcourse corrections and evaluating various interventions. Our efforts are streamlined towards improving the quality of life of the rural community members through multi-pronged interventions,” insists SS Rajekar who hopes that rural prosperity can see the light of the day.