



DFID Natural Resource System Programme

DFID-NRSP R8192
Improved NRM for Better Livelihoods

Rediscovering the Value of Green Fodder

The story of Pampanur Farmers

Case Study 1

Livestock are valuable assets of the rural poor and are critical in supporting their livelihoods particularly during unfavourable times. Mixed (crop-livestock) farming systems provide poor farmers with flexible asset regime and reduce risk and vulnerability. However, frequent droughts and the resultant fodder shortage affect livestock productivity. Better feed and fodder management to some extent, helps in overcoming these shortages.

Forage production is important not only for augmenting feed availability but for maintaining the natural resource base through soil stabilization, preventing soil erosion, and contributing to soil fertility through microbial nitrogen fixation and organic matter addition.

The DFID-NRSP project identified fodder shortage as a serious constraint in the target villages. The scientists team talked to the farmers of Pampanur village, Anantapur cluster on the importance of fodder development locally. The village located in Atamkur Mandal of Anantapur district receives average rainfall of 250 mm only. Therefore, the farmers of this mandal are among the poorest in the district encountering repeated droughts. The severity of the fodder scarcity was such that farmers are feeding whatever green leaves they could lay hands on to keep their animals alive. They collect green leaves from the hillocks on bicycles to feed livestock. Frequent droughts in the past five years brought down the milk production almost to half, besides resulting in value of cattle crash to the lowest levels in the recent past.

When the DFID team floated the idea of cultivating fodder on small area with irrigation in a farmers meeting, farmers opposed the idea initially. They argued that it is waste of their precious land and water. The team however continued their efforts to convince farmers to part with at least 5 cents for fodder production. Finally the team met with success when a group of four young farmers Viz. Shri Y. Ramkishnappa S/o Rammappa , Ch. Ramachchandra S/o Pedda Ramappa, G. Narayana S/o. Marepaa and H.Obalpati S/o. Narayanappa came forward to try the idea. They were supplied with hybrid napier cv Co 1 slips in May 2003.

Of the four, only Mr. Y. Ramakrishnappa showed keen interest and took care of the planted grass slips while the remaining three farmers neglected their fodder plot and hence the grass could not establish.

Success of Mr Y. Ramakrishnappa

Mr. Y. Ramakrishnappa is a small farmer in Pampanur, owning 2.5 acre land. But for the bore well that yields modest amount of water he would have been as poor as any other farmer of his village. Acute fodder shortage brought down the milk production almost by half, laments Ramakrishnappa, who has a buffalo and a pair of bullocks. He sold the bullocks and was about to sell even the last buffalo for want of adequate fodder. That was the time he was approached by the NRSP project staff with an idea of growing fodder. But



Lush green fodder in RamaKrishnappa's farm

Ramakrishnappa was not convinced and said he would not like to waste his precious water on fodder production.

But his son prevailed upon. With great reluctance, Ramakrishnappa agreed to part with 5 cents land. Finally the slips of Co 1 grass planted on his 5 cents patch came up vigorously within 3 months with lush green leaves that were liked by his buffalo. Soon he realized that he has more fodder and he can support a couple of more buffaloes. He added three more buffaloes to his herd within a couple of months. Alongside, he slowly went ahead expanding the area under the grass. Now he has four buffaloes in his herd and sells 15-20 liters of milk every day. He also appreciates the fact that the availability of green fodder has resulted in increase of milk yield by almost 1 liter /day /buffalo. On an average his daily earnings are Rs 150- 200/-. Besides, he gets precious dung that he uses to recycle and enrich his small farm.

Impact:

Sri Nagi Reddy who cultivates another small patch of land next to Ramakrishna's farm is also a small farmer. He also owns a bore well. For the past two years, he discontinued growing paddy on part of his land, as he doesn't have enough water. When Co-1 slips were being planted on Ramakrishnappa's farm, the NRSP staff persuaded Nagi Reddy also to plant a few of them on his farm too. He had reluctantly agreed but later did not like the idea and uprooted whatever little he had planted. But he kept one eye on the small patch of Y. Ramakrishnappa's farm all the while. As the 5 cents area gradually extended to almost half an acre on his neighbours farm and more and more farmers started to drop by to take a look at the lush green fodder, he decided to jump in. He wasted no time and borrowed slips from Ramakrishnappa. He has now enough confidence in his venture and claims that he will have enough fodder to feed his buffalo and a pair of bullocks and another buffalo he is planning to buy shortly. After seeing the success of Mr Y. Ramakrishnappa, the other three farmers who had lost their Co-1 grass due to negligence approached the project staff for Co-1 slips. Project staff arranged for the planting material from the nearby Government Fodder Institute at Reddypalli and facilitated planting of the fodder grass. The success story had not taken long to spread through the word of mouth. Now 41 farmers in and around Pampanur have set aside atleast 5 cents for growing Co-1 grass. They realised the value of green fodder to support the livestock, the mainstay of their livelihood.



Women farmer showing fodder crop



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