

Organic Farmers and Farms in Haryana

RAMESH CHANDER DAGAR

Akbarpur Barota village, District Sonapat, Haryana.

Ramesh Chander Dagar has successfully disproved the popularly held belief that small farm lands are unprofitable. With the use of integrated organic farming he is able to generate an average income of Rs. 10 lakhs per year from one hectare of land. What triggered this success were the claims of many that small land holdings were not viable for agriculture. So, 4 years ago he set aside one hectare of his land to begin experiments in maximizing income generation through what he calls integrated organic farming. He defines integrated organic farming as farming that does not merely mean not using pesticides but also involves other practices such as bee keeping, dairy management, bio gas production, water harvesting, composting and making the most appropriate, sustainable use of naturally available resources.

He says to be a successful integrated organic farmer one needs to have a clear understanding of 3 vital factors: the market demand, the natural resources available and maintaining product quality. And adds that it is impossible not to make a decent living if these thumb rules are followed. He follows a simple strategy: before sowing a new crop he conducts a market survey to understand the demand and only when he is 60% sure of getting good returns does he take the 40% risk of sowing a particular crop. Dagar learned these practical aspects from firsthand experience.

He started with a 1.6 hectare farm in 1971 and today has a total of 44 hectares, all completely under integrated organic farming. All seasonal vegetables, fruits, paddy, wheat, mushroom and flowers are grown organically. He has also started growing exotic vegetables and fruits such as lettuce, baby corn, and strawberry for export.

One hectare of land has been set aside for research. The 'research lab' comprises of composting pits, farm pond with fish, bio gas and flower plots all interlinked in various agro cycles to add to the magic seven digit figure annual income.

Dagar has not kept all these self learned techniques to himself but is also busy spreading the word in his home state of Haryana and to the neighbouring states of Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan, etc. The Haryana Kisan Welfare Club through which he functions is giving hands on training in villages on integrated farming techniques. Recently in February 2009, four thousand farmers came together in Sonapat to interact and to learn from one another in what turned out to be one of the largest organic information exchange melas. Experts, agricultural scientists and Govt. officials were also invited. The Haryana Kisan Welfare Club has branch offices in all districts. Close to 5000 farmers are active club members busy spreading the word around.

Dagar has his own reservations about the Government's ability for timely and speedy interventions and thinks it best to work through organised farmers' groups. Just now Dagar's focus is on trying to organise certification at affordable costs. The Club is exploring the possibility of group certification schemes where rich farmers can to a certain extent subsidise the certification process of the not so well disposed.

For vermicomposting, Dagar uses paddy hay and paddy discards locally known as pawal. He finds it to be an excellent raw material for vermicompost. 300 tons of vermicompost are produced annually for farm use and some surplus is sold at Rs. 3 per kg. Dagar is all praise for vermicompost and says it is the best soil nutrient for it not only retains soil moisture but reduces water consumption by nearly 25%. Dagar gifts 2 kgs of earthworm to any farmer who pledges to go organic. Pawal is also being

used as substrate for growing mushrooms. Mushrooms fetch him Rs. 3 lakhs per annum.

He produces 600 tonnes of organic manure, keeps 50 buffaloes, has a dairy, bio gas and composting units. Bio-gas is used for the personal kitchen and to run the fodder cutting machine. Slurry is fed into composting pits. The water harvesting ponds also double as fish ponds fetching him an income of Rs.30,000 per annum.

Dagar keeps 150 bee boxes that yield 35 to 40 kgs of honey per box. His income from honey is Rs. 4 lakhs per year. Bees being excellent pollinators have helped increase his crop output by 10 to 30%.

Solar power is used for running pumps and recharging household inverter batteries. A five hundred square meter green house on the farm grows exotic crops.

He is presently experimenting with a Chinese plant that claims to yield a sweetening agent 300 times sweeter than cane sugar.

(Reference: www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in)

NATURA AGROCONSULTANTS PVT. LTD.

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Contact: Dr. A.Thimmaiah, Director

In 1999, my wife Anjali and I started a consultancy firm, Natura Agrotechnologies, to provide advisory services in organic/biodynamic agriculture and solid waste management. Our aim was to make a farm sustainable by utilizing the local resources. In other words we wanted to turn a farm from Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture (LEISA) to No External Input Sustainable Agriculture (NEISA).

In 2002, we expanded our work and formed a private limited company, Natura Agroconsultants Pvt. Ltd. Due to our sound technical background we were the most sought after consultants by the big agri-business companies. Most of the large organic agriculture projects in India like tea, coffee, medicinal plants, basmati rice etc., were advised by us. The aim of our services is to transform a farm or estate to a self-sustainable farming system. We have helped small and marginal farmers in different parts of India by providing free training to farmer groups in organic/biodynamic agriculture.

We have rendered our advisory services to various international organizations like International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), Rome; Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations; International Development and Research Centre (IDRC), Canada; International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Nepal; SNV (Netherlands Development Organization), Bhutan; Maharishi Group, Holland; Tradin International, Holland; Stassens Group, SriLanka, Agribio, Italy.

At present I am working as advisor to SNV (Netherlands Development Organization) providing technical support to the Govt. of Bhutan in organic agriculture.

Some of our major projects are:

1. POABS Estates Pvt Ltd, Seethargunda Estate, Nelliampathy, Palakad District, Kerala- 678511. Ph.: 04923 246223, Email: poabs@poabsorganic.com

- Crops: Organic tea, coffee, spices, waste management and Eco-tourism.
2. Organic India Pvt. Ltd., Plot No.166, Vill. Kamta, P.O.Chinhut, Faizabad Road, Lucknow – 227105, Ph: 0522 2701579, 2702101, 2702103 (Direct), Fax- 0522 2701395, Cell: 09839018151, Email: balram@organicindia.com
Crops: organic cultivation of tulsi, medicinal plants, vegetables, cereals etc.
3. Farm Fresh Foods Pvt. Ltd, Batamandi, Poanta Saheb, Himachal Pradesh -173025, Ph.: 01704 222363,223134, Email: farmfood@sancharnet.in, subodhabbhi@hotmail.com
Crops: Organic wheat, basmati, mangoes, medicinal herbs.
4. Assam Company Limited, Girish Chandra Bordoloi Path, Bamunimaidan, Guwahati, Assam. Ph.: 0361 2550257, 2551422
Crop: organic cultivation of tea.
5. Vox Biodynamic and Vedic Farm, Thalaikkadu House, 2/979, Periyar Nagar, Madipakkam, Chennai – 600091, Tamil Nadu. Ph.: 044 2475456,2472885, Email: voxbalaji@yahoo.com
Crops: Organic mango, guava, fruits, vegetables and medicinal plants.
6. Craigmore Estate, P.Box No.10, Pollibetta, Coorg – 571 215, Karnataka. Ph.: 08274 2451341, Cell: 09448051341, Email: info@kmbimages.com, pramilamuthanna@yahoo.com
Crops: Organic coffee, pepper, cardamom and vanilla.
7. Ashakiran Estate, Konanakatte, South Coorg, Karnataka. Ph.: 08272 449370, 440622, Email: professo@sancharnet.in
Crops: organic coffee, pepper, paddy, ginger and medicinal plants.
8. Institute of Himalayan Environmental Research and Education (INHERE), 206, Gupta Arcade, Plot No. 5, Mayur Vihar, Phase I, New Delhi-110091, Ph.: 011 22713469,22744507 Email: inhere@rediffmail.com
Crops: Chilies, walnuts, garlic, onion, turmeric, pulses, vegetables and medicinal plants.
9. Sunstar Overseas Limited, 40 Km Stone, GT Karnal Road, Bahal Garh, Sonapat, Haryana. Ph.:0130 2381926
Crops: Organic Basmati.
10. Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation (BBTC), Singampatti Group of Estates, Manjolai PO, Tirunelveli – 627420, Tamil Nadu. Ph.: 04634 220485, Email: bbtc@dataone.in
Crop: Organic tea.
(Source: Dr. A.Thimmaiah)

THE HARYANA STATE COOPERATIVE SUPPLY AND MARKETING FEDERATION (HAFED)

Sector-5, Panchkula, Haryana. Ph.: 0172 2590520-26, Fax: 0172 2590711, Email:hafed@hry.nic.in, Web:www.hafed.gov.in

HAFED has initiated the promotion of organic farming in Haryana. Initially the project target is at 5000 acres. 1320 farmers having 1609 acres of farm land in the districts of Kurukshetra, Karnal and Kaithal have been identified and are being assisted to convert to organic farming.

Registered farmers are provided farmer services, trainings and farm level advisory services as per NPOP, NOP and EU standards of Organic Farming by Morarka

Foundation. Organic Certification as per International standards is being done by OneCert. Support networks for marketing tie ups are being established and promoted. A pilot experiment to air weekly radio programme on organic farming is already in operation. Demonstration of organic practices on 50 acres has been done at HAFED's cost. Five hundred farmers have been given earthworms free to start making vermi compost. HAFED has taken up the marketing of certified organic wheat and mustard oil and is expecting to add more products to this list. This is the first organised effort of its kind to promote organic farming in the state of Haryana where the 'commitment to go organic' is the only investment on the farmers' part. (Source: Website)

HARYANA ORGANIC GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

Pargatisheel Kisan Club, Sirsa- 125 055, Haryana.

Contact: Surinder Singh Vaidwala, President

HEAVENLY FARMS

Village: Theri Baba Sawan Singh, P.O. Moriwala, Dist. Sirsa, Haryana. Cell: 09416128634, 09254342666, Email: heavenlyfarms@hotmail.com,

www.heavenlyfarms.com

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