

Report on Two Training Workshops on Natural Farming Held in Haryana Recently

Two training workshops on Natural Farming were held in Haryana recently. One (May 9-10, 2001) was coordinated by SCRIA, an organization working in Rewari and neighbouring districts of Haryana and Rajasthan, and other one (May 13-15, 2011) was coordinated by an informal group based in Rohtak. In the training workshop held at Khori (Rewari), Sh Subhash Sharma from Maharashtra was the chief trainer and for training workshop held at Lakhanmajra (Rohtak) it was Sh Kishan Rao from Hyderabad. Number of participants was about 100 and 150 respectively, and both places had women farmers participating. About half of these did not sit through the trainings; they came and left after some time. In all about 70 villages were represented and about 80 farmers have expressed commitment to experiment with natural/chemical free farming. Though number of participants, particularly at Rohtak, was less than the expectations but those who stuck through the trainings were convinced and committed lot. While many who had earlier shown interest and were personally invited did not come, many came uninvited and they came from dispersed villages. This was true of Rohtak training at least.

All said and done, we have got enough numbers to get going. Best part is that of dozen or so farmers, who experimented with it last year, are satisfied with the results. In case of Kharif/monsoon crop yields were fine but in case of Rabi, while yields of main crop wheat were low, farmers were at least partially compensated by higher prices and demand that overshot supply. So, it has been decided to focus on those who have expressed desire to experiment with chemical free natural farming and contact them over next month before sowing season. Given our low human resources, it may be difficult but that is the task at hand. Simultaneously, contact shall also need to be made with those who came for the meeting but left soon. After sowing gets over, it is proposed to organize exposure visits as well as exclusive meeting of those who actually start off for experience sharing. At Rohtak a special training for women members of their families and other women is also proposed.

While being kind of first major trainings, we had expected whole gamut of issues to be covered, both resource persons had their one-point pet themes. While Rewari training was focused on trench method of water conservation, at Rohtak training, main thrust was on mixed green manuring. Both trainers refused to deal with plant protection and insect management issues, arguing that if soil health is taken care of, these issues do not matter. But for the first time farmers, discussion of plant protection and insect management issues perhaps has a reassuring role. At Rohtak training initially there was a language barrier too and that could be one reason why many left earlier. This problem can be taken care of if opening session and general principals are covered by local resource persons. As against this, we had left the whole thing to out side trainers. However, towards the latter part, good communication was established.

At Rewari, need for more detailed training, particularly in dry land conditions was expressed by some farmers, at Lakhanmajra (Rohtak) training, main problem faced by farmers is that of rising water levels and stagnant water during rainy season. What can be done about it at the level of individual farmer?

At Rewari, arrangements were made by SCRIA which has an institutional set up, at Rohtak, local arrangements were made by the villagers and they bore all the expenses on food and lodging amounting to Rs 25000. Other expenses amounting to Rs 14000 have been met through collections from participants leaving only a small deficit.