

Organic Farmers and Farms in West Bengal

DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH COMMUNICATION & SERVICES CENTRE (DRSC)

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Development Research Communication and Services Centre is a non-government development organization working in 14 districts of West Bengal and other states. Its major concern is to address the issue of food and livelihood security of the rural poor through sustainable management of natural resources. The work is based on principles and actions, that are environment friendly, economically appropriate, socially just and developed through mutual cooperation.

They work through 500 family groups spread across 300 villages reaching about 8000 farmers. Using ecologically sound appropriate farming practices these farmers and home gardeners grow all vegetables, paddy, minor millets, oil seeds, multipurpose trees and weeds of indigenous variety. At group levels many are engaged in processing NTFP and food products. They conduct pro-poor farmer led action research on sustainable agriculture and have an impressive list of over fifty published titles in Bengali and English on sustainable practices through natural resource management. A list is available on the website along with a resource section that details several topic specific literature.

This work is implemented locally through a network of eight organisations and across West Bengal through a wider network of about 82 organisations. It also assists other groups in Orissa, Jharkhand and Bangladesh with capacity building. DDRC has been entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating a national level project involving 18 organisations in different states of India who have developed integrated bio-farms according to specific agro-eco zones. It leads the Awareness Development Dialogue for Action (ADDA) Network which is a platform of resource organisations and NGOs.

Some small organic farmers in West Bengal:

North 24 Parganas

Narayan Bachar of Bajitpur village, Tumpa Biswas, Nirmal Sarkar and Maya Mondol

South 24 Parganas

Sukomol Mondol, Banamali Das, Balaram Mondol, Pusghpanjali Ghosh and Gobardhan Patra

Purba Medinipur

Mrityunjoy Manna, Sashadhar Giri, Bidyut Bera and Sisir Das

Bardhaman

Tapan Nandi, Memari.

Contact details available with the organisation. Also, one may check the website www.drcsc.org for some case studies. (Source: Communication with OIP)

MONINDRA KUMAR NATH

Narayanpur Village, Baduria (Taluk), North 24 Parganas (Dt.), West Bengal.

Or

C/o Society for Equitable Voluntary Action, 3 C, Milan Apartments, 52/3, Vidyayatan Sarani, Calcutta – 700 035, West Bengal.

Monindra Kumar Nath started farming on 1.52 hectares. Initially, he started agriculture in the high land and cultivated paddy, jute, mustard etc in the low land. After a few years, he started nursery beds in the highland.

Being motivated by Vikas Kendra, a local voluntary organisation, he started cultivation without using chemical fertilisers and pesticides, initially on an experimental basis on a small plot of land. Excited by the results he changed the method of cultivation on his other plots too. At the same time he started using organic fertiliser and organic pesticide along with preparing good quality of saplings in his nursery beds.

He says that by switching to organic farming the mortality rate of saplings has decreased, the quality of saplings is better, the saplings can resist the transportation hazards and their growth does not decrease due to transportation from nursery beds to distant places. The trees bear fruits almost at the same time as chemically grown plants or comparatively little earlier. All these allow him to sell the saplings at a better price.

Enterprises at the farm:

- a. Crops: Jute, paddy, fish, coconut, arecanut, mango, vegetables, mustard, etc.
- b. Nursery to raise vegetable, coconut and arecanut seedlings for sale.

c. Animal husbandry (he has some training in animal husbandry).

The farm produce is mainly for self consumption. The excess produce is sold in the open market.

(Source: AME, 1998)

DR MRINAL MITRA

AA/18, Baguiati, Deshbandhu Nagar, Calcutta – 700 059, West Bengal.

Dr. Mrinal Mitra has conducted research on different types of soil using natural farming techniques and organic farming techniques and also their combination. His results indicate that a combination of the two can be very beneficial from the first season itself. The soil improves rapidly if organic inputs are used and the yield increases faster than if only natural farming techniques are used. Also, he emphasises the use of live mulch over straw mulch as in Fukuoka's method because straw has other uses in India.

Thus, natural agriculture with methods adopted from natural farming of Fukuoka, the use of organic inputs which are readily available and other suitable modifications to suit the local conditions is a much safer and more sustainable method of agriculture than the modern methods. The results of his work were published in two volumes of 'Natural Agriculture in the Tropics' and 'Debaclé.' He was also the scientist-in-charge of the field station of Bose Institute in Calcutta. At present, he is working as an agricultural advisor for the Society for Equitable Voluntary Action, Calcutta. (Source: Communication with CSE, 1993)

TAGORE SOCIETY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

4, Khudiram Bose Road, Calcutta – 700 006, West Bengal. Phone: 57574 Contact: Pannalal Dasgupta

The Tagore Society has been conducting experiments in no-tillage farming under the guidance of Dr Mitra at Bolpur since 1986. The experiments confirm that natural farming can yield average or above average yield of better quality crops without any tillage, fertilisers or pesticides. (Source: IFOAM Newsletter, December 1991 – CSE)

PROF SAIJI MAKINO

No 11, Andrews Palli, Santiniketan – 731 235, West Bengal.

Prof. Saiji Makino has a one acre orchard in the university campus where he has grown various fruit trees in the natural way. He was the translator for Fukuoka and has made his method and philosophy available in Hindi.

(Source: Communication with CSE, 1993)

SWARAJ KUMAR BANERJEE

Makathbari Tea Estate, Kurseong PO, District Darjeeling – 734 203, West Bengal.

(Source: ARISE)

ASIM ROY

PO & Vill. Khamarchandi, Haripae, Houghly, West Bengal. Ph.: 03212-242684 (Source: Brochure)

SOCIETY FOR EQUITABLE VOLUNTARY ACTIONS

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25785590/25776365/25789762, Cell: 9433880092, Email: seva@cal2.vsnl.net.in & sevakolkata@gmail.com

Society for Equitable Voluntary Actions (SEVA) is a development organisation serving in North 24 Parganas & Birbhum district of West Bengal, promoting development alternatives through the initiatives of groups of rural poor.

SEVA believes the three enemies of rural society today are poverty, ignorance and apathy and through its work offers possible solutions to combat them.

Vikas Kendra, an effort of SEVA reaches out to around 50 villages involving itself in the field of agriculture, animal husbandry, health, education, appropriate technology etc.

(Source: Brochure)

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION IN WB FOLLOWING THE PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS)

West Bengal has 101 organic farmers registered through 17 farmers' local groups. IIRD and DISHA are the PGS Organic Facilitation Councils with 10 and seven grassroots level groups respectively. IIRD works through SEVA in West Bengal.

Details of these local groups and their organic produce is posted at the www.pgsorganic.in