

Best Practice – 2

ORGANIC FARMING AND VEGETABLE CULTIVATION

Objectives

- Create awareness among students about organic farming and vegetable cultivation
- Combat ecological problems like soil erosion and soil piping.
- To promote the use of bio fertilizers and put an end to chemical pollution and toxic residues
- To develop an eco-friendly atmosphere and to conserve flora and fauna
- To bring back the ‘culture’ of agriculture among students
- Effective use of extra time in the campus through productive cultivation.
- Create environmental consciousness among students
- Conserving environment and natural resources
- To improve soil fertility and to ensure biodiversity

Context:

Kerala is traditionally known for its agriculture, paddy fields, vegetable cultivation and its climate. But the last decade has witnessed drastic changes in its climate and agricultural pattern owing to various reasons. The traditional farming has given way to large-scale rubber plantations, and agricultural land is converted for construction purposes. This has made Kerala a consumer society and Kerala today depends on other states for rice, vegetables and other essentials. The increasing use of chemical fertilisers and the consequent health issues is another issue that Kerala society faces today. Paddy fields have disappeared, water level lowered, farmers are dwindling in number, and the general public is forced to consume vegetables with pesticide content from outside the state. So it became imperative to introduce the great agricultural past of the state and the benefits of traditional farming and organic methods to our new generation of students. It is in this context that we have started Organic Farming and Vegetable Cultivation.

The practice

Vegetables are cultivated in 2 acres land of the college campus. Students collected a list of crop items for cultivation, and after considering the nature of the soil bitter guard, brinjal, beans, tapioca, agasthyapoovu, papaya etc were cultivated. About 2300 kilograms of vegetable is produced till this period. First the students cleared the land and demarked the area for each crop and planted seedlings which were distributed from the department of agriculture. Watering, weeding and bio fertilising of the farm is exclusively undertaken by our students.

In the Karipoorela(paddy fields) of Anadpanchayath, under the initiative of our NSS college unit, we have leased out 3 acres of barren land. With the help and support from local self-government, our students were able to convert it into a cultivable land. The students' effort was a great success and the production was beyond expectation. College got help both from the people of the locality and from local governing bodies.

The students as well as local people enjoyed the traditional agricultural celebrations like Nadeelulsavam (planting), and Koythulsavam (harvesting). The presence of youngsters throughout these celebrations made the harvest more colourful. The vegetable farming and paddy cultivation brought back the culture of agriculture among them. Their collective effort became a model to the younger generation. Around 3000 kgs of rice produced till this season

Evidence of success

The quantity of vegetables and rice received from the cultivation is the evidence of success of the programme. There was an increase in demand for our products in the local market. The programme was under the supervision of NSS college unit and got recognition from university as the best NSS unit. This programme brought out a thorough shift in the attitude of the students and they became more environmental conscious. They also bring seeds and plant shoots to the college and share among themselves. They understood agriculture as the ancient culture of human society and this awareness changed them to accept this organic farming.

Problems encountered and Resources required:

- Converting the barren land to agricultural land and initial expense for cultivation were the biggest challenges. By ensuring the cooperation of local self-government, department of agriculture and college PTA, we were able to mobilise resources and funds.
- The semester system and busy academic schedule made it difficult to find extra time for the students
- Terrain around the college is not much fertile for cultivation. So it took more effort to convert it into agricultural land.
- Another problem is the scarcity of water for irrigating the crops. It is too difficult to water vegetable crops daily, because the vegetable farm is in an elevated position where water availability is scarce.