

***Training Workshops for the Trend Setters (Media people,
religious, community and political leaders) for achieving
sustainable food production through better landuse***

Report of WISE fellowship program

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The concept

The greatest challenge, we face today in sustaining food security of Kerala is demand for a coordinated and strategic intervention from the part of Government, Policy Makers, Farmers and Research and Developmental Institutions. Kerala is a food deficit State for the past many decades and will continue to be so unless the strong policy changes that the government has adopted is implemented in the full-spirit. In the current scenario of world food crisis, it is but natural that repercussions will be felt by all, but more on the poor. Kerala, in addition has to grapple with major cuts in the Public Distribution System for food grains and has to depend on the neighbouring States to meet its' requirement of cereals, vegetables, meat etc. Since the mid 1970s, the area under paddy cultivation in Kerala has been declining drastically. In 1973-74, the gross cropped area under paddy cultivation was 8.73 lakh ha, which came down to 6.78 lakh ha in 1985-86 and then to just 2.63 lakh ha in the year 2006-07, which indicates 70% of the cropped area under rice has been converted for other land uses. Added to this is the fact that agriculture production especially of food grains is rapidly on the decline in the State, for instance, the area of production of paddy has declined from 28% to 12 % from 1985-86 to 2004-05 while similar data for coconut shows an increase from 28% to 38% and that of rubber from 14% to 20% (Department of Economics and Statistics, GoK- 2001). With increase in labour cost, agriculture is no longer a profitable option for the farmers.

Experts believe, even if we are able to produce more food that will not solve the crisis of food and nutritional insecurity of the world. People's diet must be diverse enough to provide them with proper nutrition. More nutritionally diverse food will demand using as much diversity as possible in the diet. But it is not easy unless such diversity is available readily in the market and people appreciate its manifold benefits. To cite an example Paniya tribal community in Wayanad district of Kerala uses more than 100 leafy greens, however, these 'nutritious weeds' are now being completely replaced with less nutritious "exotic" cabbage or carrots or altogether disappears from the wildness because of less appreciation for the native diversity from the society and as a result of the impacts of land use changes. Kerala had been famous for the home garden diversity in the world. Many studies had been brought out in Kerala on the management of such gardens analyzing the structure, species composition and the socio-economic dimensions. However studies that concentrated on the food and nutritional security contributions of these gardens are limited. There is a growing trend in Kerala, which is termed "nutrition transition", in which people simplify their diets and eliminate the diversity that has traditionally been a strong component of their food intake.

Ironically, no attention has been paid to explore the potential of agrobiodiversity especially of the homestead gardens which was important for food security at local level. Moreover, studies have revealed that tribal communities and economically poor people depend on the local agrobiodiversity for their sustenance. However, the agrobiodiversity itself is under severe threat due to various reasons like habitat destruction, change in food habits etc leading to the decrease of nutritionally diverse food from their food basket, thereby marginalising such communities further. Moreover, we have a rich genetic diversity in our crops like rice, banana, spices which is also rapidly being eroded. This necessitates concerted action and policy level intervention to conserve the

agrobiodiversity and encourage sustainable and equitable use traditionally known diverse agro bio-resources for ensuring state and local food security. It is felt that, though the role of agrobiodiversity in food security has been recognized by the State Government, yet the state struggle in achieving effective and scalable results even in case of our major staple like rice. Why is it so? Where are the issues? What are the strategies and means for a coordinated action?

It was on this context M. S. Swaminathan Foundation have planned two District level workshops on Food Security and Agrobiodiversity at Wayanad and followed by a State level policy dialogue.

The proposed activity plan of the workshop against the work done

Theme	Profile of discussion and participants	Status
First in the series (2 day program) <i>Sustainable Food Production for Wayanad district (Rice cultivation)</i>	Media experts, subject experts, activists/NGOs, political leaders, community religious leaders and farmers	Done (August 28, 29 2008)
Second in the series <i>Sustainable Food Production for Wayanad district (Home Garden keeping)</i>	Same as the above	Done (September 2, 2008).
Third in the series <i>Sustainable Food Production for Wayanad district (Action plan for procurement, distribution and Use)</i>	Public Forum: An interface with the above group and civil society members	Clubbed and done as a state level venture in collaboration with State Government, State Agricultural University and NGOs.
Fourth in the series <i>Land Use Management Strategies for sustainable food production</i>	Essentially a Policy Maker's workshop with a group of senior level bureaucrats and elected representatives	January 29, 30 2009 (See <i>Thazhava Plan of Action</i>)
A video film on traditional Food Basket and Food production system		Progressing

Activities in detail

District Level Workshop 1 August 28, 29 2008

The first workshop was focused on the rice cultivation of the district, which brought out the voices of the farmers up to the policy makers and gave several recommendations for the sustainability of rice production in the district.

District Level Workshop 2 September 2, 2008

The second part was focused on the sustainable production of fruits and vegetables in the district.

State Level Workshop

***State Level Policy Dialogue on 'Sustainable Food Security of Kerala Role of Agrobiodiversity'* January 29, 30 2009**

This event was jointly organized with Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur and Navasakti Trust in Thazhava, an NGO devoted to the farming community for promoting sustainable agriculture.

This Annual Dialogue, first of in this series was aimed at to deliberate the importance of agrobiodiversity in local level food security and contribute to the policy level actions toward sustainable food security of Kerala state. The Government of Kerala has addressed the issue of food insecurity by taking policy level decisions that intended to ensure sustained food and nutritional security through wide ranging policy decisions. The Kerala Conservation of Paddy and Wetland Bill, the Organic Farming Policy, formation of State Food Security Mission etc, are some of the steps taken towards this direction. Though, the government has made visionary policy change to address the issue of food security, it was worthwhile to understand in depth from all players, the issues and problems from each sector. The dialogue could able to identify some of the “do how” mechanisms for implementing these policy initiatives. It has also shown the way to many local level organizations to scale up some of the models already available in the state in the area of sustainable food security (Report attached -Thazhava Plan of Action).

Video film on traditional Food Basket and Food production system

The story of Dwindling wild and traditional edible resource diversity

A variety of factors work against maintaining agricultural biodiversity and its wild relatives. The most important are the lack of knowledge of agrobiodiversity's intrinsic value to society, its potential for development and inadequate attention. This is contributing to the loss of irreplaceable genetic resources that are endemic. Many of the tribal groups in the district who led a healthy life in the bygone years have now become most vulnerable to diseases and other health related problems. A study by MSSRF in Wayanad, shows that this region alone has about 260 different wild edible plant species, which were consumed once by the tribal people and tribal women play a major role in ensuring household food security through using and managing these resources. Among the edible tubers *Dioscorea* comes up with unique status owing to its food and medicinal values. These resources supplemented the nutritional deficiencies over and above the staple food. The erosion and shrunken of these food basket varieties drove them in to acute poverty. This video film will be giving an overall look in to the traditional food basket of this area, which was the only source of food for the weaker sections of the community.

Budget (all costs in USD)

Head	Contributions		Expenses until April, 2009
	WISE program	MSSRF	
Travel costs	500		1737
Media workshops and Reports	2500	2000	3140
Video film	2000		446
Total	5000	2000	5323

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Farmers and policy makers in the District level policy workshop



Dr Anil delivering the welcome speech in the State Level Policy Dialogue



Prof. Swaminathan on his presidential address in the State Level Policy Dialogue



Minister for Food and Civil Supplies, Govt of Kerala, giving a special talk in the State Level Policy Dialogue



Minister for Agriculture, Govt of Kerala, giving a special talk in the State Level Policy Dialogue



The participants in the valedictory function of the State Level Policy Dialogue

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