

## Report

### **Block level consultation on Farming System for Nutrition to address Malnutrition**

**Venue: Panchayat Samiti Hall, Arvi**

**Date: Friday, May 12, 2017**

A block level consultation on “Farming System for Nutrition to address Malnutrition” was organised by the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation under the aegis of the TATA TRUSTS and the LANSAs research programme in Arvi, Wardha district on Friday, 12th May 2017. Organised jointly with the office of the Block Development Officer (BDO), the event was held at Panchayat Samiti Hall, Arvi Block office. The meeting was organized to share and discuss the experience and insights from the ongoing Farming System for Nutrition (FSN) study under LANSAs in Arvi with block level officials from different departments, administrative personnel, PRI members and farmers. The Agenda is in Annex I.

A total of 101 participants from government line departments such as: Block Administration, Agriculture Department, Taluka Health Department, Livestock Department, Arvi; PRI members: Sarpanch and Panchayat Samiti members from the 72 Gram Panchayats under Arvi block, progressive farmers, NGOs and staff from MSSRF participated in the consultation.

Prashant Deokar, Coordinator FSN Study, MSSRF, Wardha, welcomed the gathering.

Dr. R V Bhavani, Programme Manager, LANSAs highlighted that malnutrition is a problem in South Asian countries including India; the picture is similar in Maharashtra and in Wardha district. A large proportion of the population in this region is dependent on agriculture, indicating the potential for leveraging agriculture to address the problem. In this context, the Farming System for Nutrition study underway in five villages of Arvi and Karanja blocks since mid 2013 endeavors to demonstrate addressing nutrition deficiencies through a farming system approach. She briefly described the different components of the FSN study and emphasized the importance of pure drinking water, health and hygiene. She further stated that in order to sustain the FSN activities, nutrition awareness among farmers and different stakeholders as well as convergence with relevant government schemes is necessary.



*R V Bhavani addressing the gathering at Arvi*

Keynote address by Saritha Pawar, BDO, Arvi:

Pawar explained that nowadays various factors are affecting the consumption pattern and contributing to greater prevalence of malnutrition. She acknowledged the research oriented Farming System for Nutrition programme taken up under LANSA by MSSRF in Arvi and Karanja blocks. She expressed that cultivation of and consumption of nutrient dense crops and consumption of other nutritious foods will help in overcoming malnutrition. She also highlighted importance of developing nutrition gardens of vegetables in backyards and promotion of nutrition awareness among the community. She said that all government departments should promote such programmes collectively.



*Saritha Pawar, BDO addressing the gathering*

Prashant Deokar made a detailed presentation on the farming system approach to address malnutrition. He started with the core objective of the farming systems for nutrition (FSN), and explained the individual components. He highlighted the agriculture-nutrition disconnect in the study area based on survey findings and the activities included under FSN to address the nutrition deficiencies. He mentioned that the project started in 2013 in five villages under Karanja and Arvi Block with 556 households with detailed baseline survey on socio economic, agriculture and nutrition status of the communities.

- Some of the key findings of baseline survey were:
- 63% of the people are involved in cultivation, 33% are agriculture labourers, 4% are engaged in non-agri labour.
- 39% are small and marginal farmers; 32% are landless and 29% are medium farmers.
- Key challenges identified in the area were negligence in usage of biofortified crops, poor seed replacement, low production and crop diversification.
- With regard to nutrition status, 43.3% people were underweight, 27.5% wasted and 40% reported stunted growth and 85.9 % non- lactating non- pregnant women were anemic.
- Consumption of pulse was less than 75% of the Recommended Dietary Intake (RDI). Foods such as roots and tubers, vegetables, fruits, milk and milk products consumption was also found to be very low at less than 50 % of RDI.

Deokar further explained the different components of the FSN model highlighting intercropping of red gram with cotton as well as sole cropping of green gram, red gram and sorghum in kharif and cultivation of wheat and Bengal gram in rabi. He further described backyard



*Prashant Deokar, Coordinator, FSN Study under LANSA in Wardha, MSSRF describing the Farming System for Nutrition study*

poultry being practiced by 25 landless and marginal farmer households and organizing of animal health camps jointly with the Maharashtra Animal and Fisheries Science University (MAFSU) from Nagpur on artificial insemination and vaccination. He also highlighted growing different groups of seasonal vegetables (roots and tubers, leafy vegetables, fruits and other vegetables) along with planting of naturally fortified plants such as moringa, lemon, papaya in 363 backyard nutrition gardens across the five villages as well as in community nutrition gardens in three villages. Nutrition

gardens have been established in three schools (including a genetic garden in Heti) where the produce is being utilized in the midday meal (MDM). Various awareness and training programmes were also organized on nutrition and health particularly for adolescent girls, women and children. Similarly, trainings on improved package of practices of nutritious crops, integrated pest management, integrated nutrient management, seed treatment, seed storage and value addition of roots and tubers along with few exposure visits were also organized especially for small and marginal farmers. By the end of 2016-17, a total of 492 farmers in kharif and 111 in rabi were practicing one or more FSN intervention. He further mentioned that various sustainability measures such as distribution of triple layered polythene bag for safe storage of seeds, discussion on installation of community dal processing mill and formation of community seed bank of vegetable seeds were underway. He highlighted the establishment of farmer knowledge centre (FKC) in two villages, to support the households in the activities.

- **Kishor Jagtap**, Project coordinator, Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), MSSRF Wardha, moderated the farmers' experience sharing session. He also gave a brief introduction of activities under MKSP in Wardha and Yavatmal districts.



*Krishor Jagtap, MKSP, MSSRF moderating the farmers' experience sharing session*

### **Experiences shared by Farmers:**

Sarita Bhagat, Bhidi village, explained that there were 18 women members in her group and there were 65 groups in Deoli block with 1061 members in the block level federation formed under MKSP. She said that earlier she was practicing inorganic farming but with technical guidance from MKSP, she started practising mixed farming and also established a farm yard manure preparation unit in her farm. Under mixed farming, she is cultivating black gram along with few vegetables such as spinach, fenugreek and coriander, and soybean in the field. She has started conserving vegetable seeds in the community seed bank and distributes the same to other members in the village for cultivation. She is also a member of the CNG along with five other women farmers from the village.

**Raju Bhojar, Saheli** shared that four years ago, he used to cultivate only cotton, but after the introduction to FSN approach in 2014, the first thing he did was soil testing to know the nutrient status of his fields followed by information on better nutrient management. He acknowledged the technical guidance he acquired through various training and exposure visits conducted under LANSa which in turn helped him improve his agricultural practice and increase both production and crop diversity. Later, he also recited a poem, written by him on how the LANSa project had benefitted his family and the villages.

**Sheela Kumrae, Lonswali village** mentioned that from her 3 ac land she used to get 10 q of cotton and 3 q of red gram earlier. Now with technical guidance from MSSRF, she is getting 16 q and 6 q of cotton and redgram, respectively from the same area and with reduced cost of cultivation. She said that she used biofertilizer and neem based products for plant protection, vermi-compost, Jeevamruth etc. She encouraged



farmers to apply organic manure in their fields as it not only helps improve soil health but also reduces the cost of chemical fertilizers.



### *Farmers sharing their experience*

**Surekha Uike, Bitpur village**, shared that due to implementation of FSN interventions in her village, she along with other farmers in the village had learnt a lot on importance of nutrient rich crops, balanced diet, health, hygiene and technical knowledge of farming.

**Kausalya Borje, Saheli village**, shared that she was one of the members of community nutrition garden in the village and described the process of how land in the village was made available for CNG and the seasonal vegetables they grow in it. She further mentioned that the CNG produce not only met the needs of their household vegetable requirement but sometimes they also supplied the surplus to the village school for use in the midday meal. She stated that the discussion of developing a community seed bank to conserve and distribute the seeds for nutrition gardens is underway.

**Bhimrao Iwanate, Bitpur village**, expressed that they used to grow jowar and red gram long ago but somehow it was discontinued in between and the focus had shifted to cotton. He thanked LANSa for bringing back the concept and encouraging farmers to go for nutrient rich crops.

**Lata Zoting, Krishnapur village** shared that she was working as a community resource person under MKSP and encouraging fellow farmers to go for soil testing, summer ploughing, organic farming and mixed cropping to have better soil health, increased production and reduced cost of cultivation and most importantly to avert the risk of climate aberrations. She mentioned that through mixed cropping, she was getting green gram, black gram, cowpea, jowar and pigeon pea with an annual profit of over rupees one hundred thousand.

### **Special Remarks by Invitees:**

**Child Development Programme Officer Asatkar** acknowledged the project initiatives and expressed that it is true that nutrition gardens and nutrition awareness can play a major role in addressing malnutrition. If seed materials for nutrition garden are made available, efforts can be made to establish them in the schools and Anganwadis. It will also be useful there can be convergence with other government departments for better delivery.

**Agriculture Officer, Panchayat Samiti, Dube** stated that before 20- 25 years, the issue of malnutrition was less as most of the food requirements were fulfilled from farming but nowadays it is more prevalent due to change in farming as well as consumption pattern. He mentioned the importance of nutrient rich plants such as Karonda, which is a shrub fruit plant and a good source of iron. He mentioned about the initiatives the agriculture department has implemented to improve pulse production in the area, which can help in meeting the protein requirement of the households.

**Deputy Chairman, Panchayat Samiti, Mr. Dharmendra Raut**, highlighted the importance of livestock in agriculture and human health along with livelihood support and requested that field needs have to be addressed and supported properly by all agencies. He appealed to MSSRF to emphasize more on these aspects. He expressed that the Panchayat Samiti would definitely extend their support to implement such programmes in other villages.

**Agriculture Extension Officer, Pandhare** reflected that the LANSAs programme seemed to be working for the welfare of farmers and aimed to address malnutrition in these villages. He felt that there should be effort for expansion to more villages.

**Assistant BDO Dhapke**, mentioned that he was convinced with the LANSAs approach of addressing malnutrition and as he had attended the programme, he would definitely try to explore how these initiatives can be extended through various government departments. He expressed that he would discuss with his staff as well as LANSAs officials for further planning and implementation in his block.

The programme concluded with the vote of thanks by Rupal Wagh, Research Associate (Nutrition), FSN Study, MSSRF and Pandhare, Extension Officer, Panchayat Samiti, Arvi.

***Event Agenda: Annex I***

---

**Block level Consultation on  
“Farming System for Nutrition to Address Malnutrition**

*Friday, May 12, 2017*

**Panchayat Samiti Hall, Arvi**

**Agenda**

<b>Topics</b>	
Registration	
Welcome	Prashant Deokar, Coordinator, FSN Study under LANSAs in Wardha, MSSRF
Keynote Address	Sarita Pawar, BDO, Arvi
Overview of Programme	R.V. Bhavani, Programme Manager, LANSAs, MSSRF
FSN Study in Wardha	Prashant Deokar
Sharing of Experience by Farmers	Surekha Uike, Bitpur Sheela Kumre, Lonsawali Raju bhoyar, Saheli Lata Zoting, Takali Kausalya Borje, Saheli Bhimrao Iwnate, Dablipur Sarita Bhagat, Bhidi
Feedback by Participants Moderated by	Kishor Jagtap, Project Coordinator, MKSP, MSSRF, Wardha
Special Remarks by Invitees	Chairman, Panchayat Samiti, Arvi Deputy-Chairman, PS, Arvi Taluka Agriculture Officer, Arvi Taluka Health Officer, Arvi Livestock Development Officer, Arvi Range Forest Officer, Arvi
Concluding Remarks	Sarita Pawar, BDO, Arvi
Vote of thanks	M.B. Pandhare, EO, PS, Karanja Rupal Wagh, RA (Nutrition), FSN Study under LANSAs in Wardha, MSSRF
Lunch	