

Workshop for Farmers in 5 Panchayats of Uttarkashi

28 January 2017 Municipality Hall, Uttarkashi

A day long training workshop followed by field visit was organised for farmers of 5 panchayat in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand on 28 and 29 January 2017. The workshop was supported by BCPH, PAIRVI and CECOEDECON. The long term objective of the intervention is building resilience of 50 farmers in 5 panchayat in times of changing climate perspective and increased income from agricultural and allied activities. The activity objective was 1. to familiarise the farmers with BCPH's intervention in the region 2. generate discussion with the farmers and understand regional challenges 3. plan out goals for the upcoming months 4. provide training to farmers on agricultural practices, govt schemes, and recommend solutions etc.

Training for farmers took place on 28 January at Municipality Hall, Uttarkashi, witnessing participation by 55 farmers from all 5 selected panchayats of Uttarkashi, agri expert from KVK Dr. VK Sachan, Pradhan from Chamkot Shri. Pradeep Kumar, Up-Pradhan from Seku Mrs Hema Devi, BCPH Convernor Mr. Soumya Dutta, Programme CoOrdinator from PAIRVI Ms. Nirma Bora and BCPH Uttarkashi Coordinator Mr. Devender Uniyal. While Nirma Bora acquainted the farmers of the objectives behind the intervention in Uttarkashi and the sub- activities that would form part of the intervention, Mr. Dutta made clear to the agrarian community that the intervention is an experimental study with no intent to distribute cash or goods.

As the meeting proceeded, the common challenges shared by farmers were found to be: pest infestation on *rajma*, *chaulai*, *lauki*, and on vegetable creepers, untimely seed and pesticide distribution by horticulture department, poor quality seeds sold by horticulture department at prices higher than market rate, monkeys' and wild boars' raid on crops, attack of pest on tree trunk of fruit crops like apple and mango, no compensation on crop damage due to hailstorm, farmers receiving a poor price for cash crops from middlemen, and problem of ploughing terraced farm. Region specific problems were lack of irrigation facility particularly in Chamkot and Chinakholi, habitation on forest land in Chinwa.

Addressing these problems, the agri expert Mr. Sachan made the following recommendations:

1. As ploughing on small terrace farms could not be done with tractor and bulls are not affordable, power weeder is a better alternative for farmers. Dr. Sachan recommended group of farmers to get together and establish a village level custom hiring centre. Any farm equipment purchased for the custom hiring centre is available on 50 percent subsidy. The group of farmers can use the power weeder for their own farms as well as give it on rent to other farmers and thereby add to their agricultural income.
2. For new orchard, 75 percent subsidy is provided by the horticulture department while for a new polyhouse 65percent subsidy is available (this includes manure, seeds and saplings given by the government)
3. Under the area expansion scheme, Rs 18,000 per hectare is given for cultivating vegetable, Rs 18,000 per hectare for cultivating marigold, and Rs 35,000 per hectare for growing gladiolus.
4. Water harvesting can be done by collecting rainwater in an impermeable tanks or ponds lined with low density polythene (LDPE) film.

5. For feeding livestock, Napier grass can be grown in waste land and non irrigated areas. VLB29 is another wheat variety which provides grains and fodders both. After 60 days of planting the seeds, 3 inch stalks are cropped from the top which serves as fodder for the livestock. Subsequently, urea is added and the farm is irrigated.
6. For treating creeper vegetables except bitter gourd, he suggested mixing 2 grams memkojeb in 1 litres water and adding it weekly to the just plant before flowering. Alternatively, 2 gram Copper Ox chloride (COC) can be diluted in 1 litre water and be sprayed on the plant weekly just before flowering.
7. For bitter gourd he recommended, mixing 1 litre Emida Chloride or sinosec in 3 litre water and spraying weekly.
8. During monsoon Sandovit/ Tipole / Epsa 80 are better options as these pesticides remain stuck to the plant even during rains. The mixture is prepared by diluting 3 gram pesticide in 1 litre water.
9. For treating blight in green chilli, he recommended adding 5 grams trichoderma in 1 litre water, leaving the seeds in the solution overnight and sowing them next day.
10. Pest attack on the fruit crops can be treated by adding a mixture of trichoderma and neemguard on the roots after pruning the fruit crop.
11. Apart from growing the usual 'red delicious' apple variety he recommended farmers to try out the low chilling aana apple too in their orchards.

Later during the day, Soumya Dutta informed the farmers that families who have inhabited the forests for more than 75 years have a right to access forest and non-timber forest produce (NTFP) like herbs, medicinal plants, fruits and vegetables, etc, as well sell NTFP in the market. He shared that the Government of India recognises the rights of forest dependent communities after passing of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. Therefore, forest communities need not fear forest officials who in the past have terrorised them and on occasions even imposed penalty for access NTFP.

The workshop ended on the note that farmers in the area of intervention need to take up joint action like writing an application to the Horticulture Department for providing quality seeds to farmers; contacting KVK for agriculture related solutions, recommendations and training; taking initiative for setting up of custom hiring centres, growing feed for livestock (napier or barsim grass) on wasteland.
