

Executive Summary

Nirakar Pradhan and Dr. D. Suryakumari

Stakeholder Consultation Meeting on “Fodder Development and Management towards Sustaining Livestock-based Livelihood”

The stakeholder consultation meeting on “fodder development and management towards sustaining livestock based livelihood” was held on 9th April, 2010 in Achampet at O/o of Divisional Forest Officer with special emphasis on addressing fodder security in Mahabubnagar District. The meeting was jointly organized by Centre for people’s Forestry (CPF) & Conservation of Natural Resource through Rural Awakening (CONARE) and duly supported by OxfamIndia & Andhra Pradesh Forest Department.

There were about 110 participants representing the district level officials from Forest Dept, Animal Husbandry Dept, NABARD, Agriculture Dept & ITDA; State & local level NGOs working on similar subjects, Vanasamakhya, Community & Panchayat representatives from Mahabubnagar and Kadapa districts. The meeting had discussion on several aspects of fodder development and livestock management.

The meeting had two major sessions At the outset, Dr.Suryakumari, Director, CPF shared about the background that led to the present meeting and also the “purpose of the meeting” She emphasized the need to create and sustain the base for fodder development. She also gave a quick glimpse of models developed by CPF in collaboration with local partner NGOs on “fodder development and management” at Mahabubnagar and Kadapa districts.

The meeting was facilitated by Dr.Suryakumari and chaired by Sri Pramod Kumar, DFO of Achampet forest division. The first half of the day was basically devoted to sharing of views by the participants especially community representatives and local NGOs, on the situation of fodder in the district in general and in their respective areas in particular. The concerns raised are as under:

1. Distress selling of livestock is high because people do not have money to feed the livestock during summer season
2. As the rainfall of the district is very low there is limited scope to go for irrigated and hybrid variety of fodder crops. It’s even difficult in summer to grow water as the water level goes down.
3. Community lands/grazing lands are being either encroached upon or distributed to for other infrastructure/development projects.

4. As the livestock population is decreasing farmers are not getting ample quantity of farmyard manure and so, the dependence on chemical fertilizer is increasing.
5. NREGS is giving employment to the people addressing the unemployment problem of rural poor. Govt is also passing food security bill for human being. Why can not the govt do some policy on fodder development so, that it will give some respite to the livestock keepers/rearers?
6. The tribal community depends on livestock and every village atleast 70 to 80 % people keep livestock. Tribal children and women take livestock for rearing into forest and oftenly migrate in the search water and fodder. If the livestock in migration did not get proper fodder then they are sold out at very low price. If some short of arrangement can be done near to the village then the children can sent to schools.
7. Commercial cropping and mechanization in agriculture even make the situation scarier pertaining to dry fodder availability.
8. During summer one tractor load of dry fodder some shoots up to Rs. 10000/- and which is quite difficult for a farmer to bear.

The Second half of the session was devoted for discussion on “possible solutions/suggestions for addressing the issues raised.” The suggestions that came up are as under:

1. Massive awareness is required at different levels on the need for fodder development (as against taking it for granted that it comes from the forest), animal diseases, vaccination etc and on existing govt schemes on fodder development.
2. Animal Husbandry department to take lead in earmarking the grazing land and creating appropriate infrastructure to preserve and develop fodder in these lands
3. The community has to be given proper orientation on livestock based economics especially on various products that we get from livestock. In fact this will improve their morale before selecting & rearing any livestock.
4. Water facility to be created in grazing lands for fodder development through govt schemes viz. watershed programmes, NREGS etc. During summer the tank bed can be effectively used to grow short term fodder variety.
5. Community should allocate atleast 10% of their agriculture land for fodder development.
6. The line departments should work in close coordination with the community to address such issues.
7. Mandal Mahila Samakhya/Village Organizations (VOs) can take up this issues and can work for it, with able support from Animal Husbandry department.
8. The VSSs/EDCS should pro actively respond and take up initiatives for fodder generation as it helps them in forest protection. The FD need to extend support to them in providing funds from NREGS and in technical matters.
9. CPF should think of taking it up further and ground the work in some villages so that it can be mainstreamed later.

Sri Ashok Kumar-Special Agriculture Officer from ITDA shared some alternative fodder crops which can boost milk production. Azolla in paddy or in water bodies and Gherkin can be fed to milch animals to boost milk production. Similarly, Jowar, Maize and Bajra can be grown in agriculture fields which provide good fodder for livestock and grains for human beings.

Dr. Ramchandar, Joint Director, Animal husbandry department, Mahabubnagar dist shared livestock statistics (Sheep: 41 lakhs, Goat: 6.8 Lakhs, Buffaloes: 5 Lakhs, Cow: 8 lakhs) of the district, various livestock related schemes and he told the district has highest population of livestock in the state. The district has large number of non-descript animal and hardly 1.5 lakh variety of hybrid cows and buffaloes. He shared that January to July is the critical period for the livestock as fodder availability is a major problem in this period. So, animals used to frequently migrate in the search of water and fodder. By saying this he told around 30 lakhs sheep migrate every year. He added that fodder availability during summer and drought is a major problem. In addition to this he suggested some of the measures like; keeping high productive animals, undertaking artificial insemination, availing govt schemes on fodder, adopting models like hortipasture, Silvipasture and mixed cropping. He shows concern over farm mechanization, mechanical harvest of crops, putting fire on farm residues which also affects the dry fodder availability.

Some questions raised by participants to Dr. Ramchandar, Joint Director, Animal husbandry department pertaining to waste land allocation to sheep rearers cooperative, land acquisition by bigwigs, awareness to small, marginal and land less farmers about fodder seed, vaccines etc. He answered all the questions raised by community and NGOs.

Sri Pramod Kumar, Divisional Forest Officer of Achampet forest division proposed on the idea of taking up "Fringe Area Fodder Management Programme". He told the forest is depleting and hardly there is any fodder in the forest. It requires comprehensive management and to bring back the forest into original glory the community has greater role to play. He expressed that if community is forthcoming, he can explore the possibility of mobilizing funds from NREGS for the proposed programme. In forest fringe area the Vana Samrakshana Samithis (VSS) and Eco Development Committee (EDC) can undertake the programme. And, in plain areas the fodder can be grown in tank beds and grazing lands.

Sri Suresh, Asst. General Manager (District Development) of NABARD shared that NABARD has seed village programme for agriculture/food crops and why can't we make fodder seed village programme in some clusters on pilot basis. He also gave a road map on how to go about it. At the end Dr. D Suryakumari summed up the outcomes of the meeting and the points are mentioned below.

Commitments:-

Forest Department:

1. Interest to involve EDC & VSS for fodder development and management
2. Interest to develop “fringe area fodder development programme” using NREGS funds

Animal Husbandry Department:

1. Ready to supply any quantity of fodder seed and vaccines
2. Also willing to work in collaborative mode with other line departments

NABARD:

1. Willing to fund for fodder seed village programme in 2-3 clusters on pilot basis (initially 10-20 villages) if CPF puts up a proposal and Forest Department is willing to collaborate
2. Successful models can be up-scaled to whole district later

Joint Resolution:-

1. NREGS fund has to be used to develop fodder nursery in forest fringe area
2. NREGS fund has to be utilized for fodder development in fringe villages
3. NREGS fund has to be used to cut and carry grass from forest during summer months (due to the multiple benefits) and fodder depots can be established to distribute the fodder grass for a price.

Annexure 1: Purpose of the meeting

Title: Stakeholder consultation meeting on “Fodder development and management towards sustaining livestock based livelihood”

Objective of meeting:

- To seek support for conservation, protection and management of Common Property Resources (village grazing lands and water bodies) in the rural areas Andhra Pradesh
- To showcase best practices/models established in Mahabubnagar District from fodder development and management prospective.
- To identify mechanisms to sustain fodder security in Mahabubnagar district

Expected Outcome of the meeting:

- District level action plan on fodder security formulated and livestock extension services revitalized
- Roles and responsibilities of concerned stakeholders formulated and shared
- A joint body constituted to advocate and review the progress of fodder security & livestock based livelihood in the district.

Annexure 2: Participant Profile

Dept/NGOs/Community	No of Participant
Forest Dept	1
Animal Husbandry Dept	2
Agriculture Dept	1
ITDA	1
State/Local NGO Representatives	34
Community representatives	65 (17 F+48M)
CPF	4
Local Vanasamakhya Representatives	2
Total	110 (22F+88M)