

His Trash Became his Gain

The canal command area of Ghod river basin from Shirur block in Pune district of Maharashtra is an area where the cultivation of sugarcane and onion is very extensive but both these crops if cultivated with traditional methods have a high requirement of water and are expensive to cultivate. In view of this, AFARM with the technical support of Vasantdada Sugar Institute under the 'Mission Sunehra Kal' project have come up with innovative ways to promote water management by introducing new techniques of farming such as trash mulching and ratoon management in sugarcane cultivation and raised bed farming in onion cultivation. Farmers were introduced to these new practices of farming and given vigorous trainings, along with visits to plantations where these processes proved successful, in hopes to persuade farmers to adapt the same.

Mr. Somnath Satras is one of the participating farmers from village Uralgaon. He belongs to an ancestral farming family and had been farming for over twenty years but barely earned enough to provide for his family. He was approached by AFARM along with other farmers of his village to attend trainings and educated them on sustainable ways of agriculture.

AFARM introduced the concept of trash mulching to the farmers along with drip irrigation and optimal use of fertilizers.

When the time came to try out these techniques, Mr. Somnath was initially hesitant as the concepts were entirely foreign to him, but with the informative workshops and trainings provided by AFARM, he was persuaded to give trash mulching a go at his sugarcane plantation. He soon reaped the fruits of his labour, as his first try yielded a whopping 100 tonnes of sugarcane per acre which made him use the same technique a second time which yielded an impressive 80 tonnes per acre. He now has cultivated his plantation for an astonishing third



time and expects an 80 tonnes ratio this time around as well. He aspires to adopt the technique for the record fourth time around if he gets the expected yield for the third attempt.

It wasn't all easily sailing though, the drip irrigation system failed to irrigate his fields as the water of the river being used was high in mineral / salt content which lead to the repeated clogging of the drip irrigation pipes and due to the overgrowth of leaves it became difficult to access and irrigate deeper, central parts of the field. Even after these minor setbacks the practices of increasing space between the bunch of crops and other technical assistance, Mr. Somnath was able to save water due to the trash mulching process. With the trash mulching, the frequency of irrigation application / rotation got extended from 7 to 15 days which in turn saved a considerable amount of water.

Mr. Somnath states that AFARM's intervention has impacted his life profoundly. His cost of production has significantly reduced and yield has increased by 20 tonnes per acre. He thanks everyone involved that made his livelihood better and also drove him to be a more environmentally conscious farmer.

