

Multidimensional Approaches for Human Resource Development in Oil Palm Production

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ABSTRACT

Introduction of oil palm in India as a new oil seed crop, necessitated to develop human resources for an effective transfer of technology. 900 Officials and 22,000 farmers were equipped with knowledge and skills in oil palm production. Approaches like training programmes, interface meets, study tours, demonstrations, group meetings / discussions, multidisciplinary team field visits, publications, radio and television network sessions, video films and cyber extension techniques were adopted to develop human resources of farmers and officers. These farmers and officers played a key role to motivate other farmers to adopt oil palm and increase the area under oil palm and production. Through their concerted efforts, area under oil palm in India increased from 1050 ha in 1990 to 64,000 ha during 2006-07.

Key words: Human resource development, extension, oil palm

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of oil palm in India, as new oilseed crop under irrigated conditions necessitated to develop human resources for an effective technology transfer. This would be possible, if the officials involved in oil palm development and farmers are equipped with knowledge and skills in oil palm production. Officials of Department of Agriculture/Horticulture in oil palm growing states / potential states, entrepreneurs and scientists involved in oil palm development need effective training to develop their human resources to motivate the farmers to adopt oil palm. Elite farmers will also equip with knowledge and skills. These farmers and officials would use their human resources to motivate other farmers to grow oil palm, area expansion and increase oil palm production.

Keeping the above points in view, Government of India established National Research Centre for Oil Palm (Presently upgraded as Directorate of Oil Palm Research) with a mandate to develop human resources in oil palm by providing training to officers

and farmers. The Government of India implemented "Training of trainers programme (Oil Palm) with the support of United Nations Development Programme during 1996-2000, and "Strengthening of training on oil palm production" since 1996 with the support from Technology Mission on Oil seeds and Pulses at NRC for Oil Palm. The centre is adopting various approaches to develop human resources of farmers and officers in oil palm through trainers training, interface meets, study tours, demonstrations, group meetings/discussions, multidisciplinary team field visits, publications, radio and television network sessions, video films and cyber extension techniques. All these approaches of human resource development were aimed to support and strengthen the efforts of technology transfer in oil palm for area expansion (motivating the farmers to adopt the crop) and increase the oil palm production.

APPROACHES ADOPTED

Training of officers

Directorate of Oil Palm Research, identified the training needs of the officers belonging to various

agencies involved in oil palm development in different oil palm growing states. Designed and regularly organizing the following trainings.

S. No	Training Programme	Duration
1*	Oil palm production technology	7 days
2*	Plant protection in oil palm	3 days
3*	Oil palm hybrid seed production	3 days
4*	Nursery management in oil palm	3 days
5**	Oil palm cultivation	3 days
6*	Leaf nutrient analysis in oil palm	2 days
7**	Intercropping in oil palm	2 days

* Organizing every year ** organizing based on requirement

During training programmes, lectures were delivered, field and lab visits, demonstrations were organised. Training material consisting of lecture notes, slides, CDs, technical publications were distributed. A total of 904 officers from Department of Agriculture / Horticulture, entrepreneurs, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, State Agricultural University belonging to Andhra Pradesh (470), Karnataka (158), Tamil Nadu (123), Kerala (17), Goa (35), Gujarat (26), Orissa (32), Mizoram (29), Maharashtra (6), West Bengal (4), Assam(1), Madhya Pradesh (1) and Tripura (2) were trained in the above training programmes. Trained officers perceived that the training was beneficial. Subject matter learnt was relevant, majority of them were in high knowledge category, trainers disseminating learnt technology to the farmers through individual contacts, group contacts or using both. Trainers are conducting farm and home visits to convince individual farmers and their family members about oil palm (Prasad and Raju, 2004).

Training of farmers

Farmers training programmes are being organized based on need and request from the farmers through Department of Agriculture / Horticulture and entrepreneurs. The programmes are of one to four days duration. The programmes organised to farmers were oil palm cultivation, irrigation and nutrient management in oil palm, plant protection in oil palm, harvesting of fresh fruit bunches from tall palms and intercropping in oil palm. Trainings were organised at regular intervals every year either at DOPR or on farm depending on need and availability of physical facilities. A total of 21,769 farmers belonging Andhra Pradesh (13,817), Karnataka (3375), Tamil Nadu (3417), Kerala (25), Goa (426), Gujarat (552), Orissa (102) and Mizoram (55) were trained. Trained farmers felt the training was beneficial and they are in high knowledge category (Prasad and Raju 2004).

Farmers study tours

Interested farmers from new areas (to cultivate oil palm) or oil palm growers from different states, where adult oil palm plantations were not available were brought to DOPR on study tours to expose them to fields of successful oil palm growers, entrepreneurs of Andhra Pradesh and technologies available with DOPR. They were explained about technologies available to grow oil palm and visits were arranged to farmers fields and processing factory. Farmers from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Gujarat, Orissa and Mizoram came on study tours to DOPR.

Interface meets

In order to discuss policy issues, implementation of oil palm development programme, views, experiences, constraints in oil palm cultivation and suggestions to overcome the constraints in oil palm cultivation, interface meets were organised from time to time decided by the forum. The forum consists of policy makers, administrators, scientists, developmental officials, entrepreneurs and farmers. The interface meets organised on various topics viz., How to make oil palm more remunerative, oil palm research and development, market intervention scheme, recent developments in oil palm production and processing technologies, How to make oil palm more sustainable, problems and future strategies for sustainable production in oil palm and priorities for oil palm research and development and a total 1406 personnel participated in 20 interface meets.

Demonstrations

Demonstrations were conducted to show the technologies and its adaptability to the farmers. A total of eight demonstrations were conducted on various technologies of oil palm. Three on farm testing / verification trials were also conducted under "Institute Village Linkage Programme", where in farmers and officers participated.

Exhibitions

Centre has participated in 32 national and state level exhibitions to create awareness among the public and farming community about oil palm and its cultivation. Apart from exhibits slide shows on cultivation practices and video show was also organised for the benefit of oil palm growers.

Group meetings / Discussions

Group meetings/discussions were conducted for farmers and officers based on the requirement to

acquire new knowledge, skills from time to time on the following topics viz., oil extraction ratio; harvesting of fresh fruit bunches from tall oil palm plantations; market intervention scheme, growing of intercrops in adult oil palm plantations; mixed farming systems; micro irrigation system etc.

Publications

Technical, semi technical and popular articles were brought out and made available to farmers, officials and others also. Details of the publications were as follows i.e., NRCOP News letter, book on oil palm cultivation know how and do how (in English, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Gujarati and Oriya); compendium of lectures on oil palm production technology; oil palm nursery manual; oil palm hybrid seed production; oil palm diseases, pests and nutrient deficiencies and oil palm cultivation (in English, Telugu and Kannada). CD on oil palm pest information system, CD on information system on harvesting and processing of oil palm are also available. Popular articles in different languages were also published in respective languages in different oil palm growing states.

Radio / Television network sessions

Frequent radio talks were recorded and broadcasted at regular intervals on the subject matter viz., oil palm cultivation, nutrient water management, plant protection in oil palm, harvesting of bunches from tall oil palm plantations, Governmental efforts for oil palm cultivation, training provided to oil palm growers for the benefit of farmers through All India Radio. Video segments were also recorded and telecasted on the above subjects in television network channels from time to time.

Video films

Video films on oil palm cultivation in English, Hindi, Telugu and Tamil were brought out and used in trainings, interface meets and study tours. Video CD's on oil palm cultivation (in English, Hindi, Telugu and Tamil) were also made available to the required agencies involved in oil palm development. These were intensively used by the Department of Horticulture and oil palm entrepreneurs to equip their staff on knowledge and skills in oil palm production.

Multidisciplinary team field visits

The Scientists of this centre make regular field visits to farmers' fields, diagnose the field problems and technical advices were given to the farmers and extension staff. The technical advises are also being given over telephone. Letter queries of farmers, officers and entrepreneurs were attended.

Cyber extension

For effective use of information and communication technology, computer based information access services are used for developing human resources of farmers and officers. Email queries received from field level officers and farmers were responded and communicated the knowledge pertaining to oil palm production. Reasonable number of email queries (cultivation of oil palm, suitability of soil, pest, disease and disorders etc) was attended every year.

CONCLUSION

Directorate of Oil Palm Research has completed a decade in developing human resources of farmers and officers involved in oil palm and committed to do so in future endeavors, play a supplementary and complementary role in oil palm area expansion and sustainable oil palm production, to lead India in self-sufficiency in vegetable oil production.

FUTURE THRUST

Developing human resources of farmers, officers, youth, self help groups, women and school drop out in oil palm production and allied industries associated with oil palm to meet the time to time requirements of agriculture and industry.

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