



**Solidaridad**

**CRB** CENTRE for  
RESPONSIBLE  
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*Enabling Change for Impact*

# DIALOGUE ON REGENERATIVE VEG OIL SUPPLY CHAIN IN THE CONTEXT OF EU-INDIA PARTNERSHIP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

14th January 2025 | Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh



## About the Project:

*“Promotion of Regenerative Agriculture Practices for a Food Secure and Climate Resilient Future in the EU-India Partnership”* is being implemented in 12 districts of Madhya Pradesh, benefiting 35,000 farmers, including 10,000 women farmers. The project's core objectives are:

- ▶ Strengthen national and local collaboration and consensus around regenerative practices in the vegetable oil supply chain.
- ▶ Enhance capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) towards organising and facilitating structured policy dialogues at the local, state and national level around regenerative approaches in agriculture.
- ▶ Enable an environment that drives innovations and builds knowledge through collaborative learning and provides a platform for stakeholders to scale up regenerative practices that prioritise soil health, biodiversity and ecosystem
- ▶ CSOs are engaged in EU-India Partnerships policy dialogues in particular on the priorities on Water, Biodiversity, Gender, and Climate, which could contribute to the effective implementation of the Global Gateway Strategy in India

The project ultimately aims to improve food security, enhance livelihoods of farmers, and strengthen India's resilience to climate change.

## Context of the Event:

The event was organised as the first step towards engagement with the demand-side stakeholders of the vegetable oil sector to promote regenerative agriculture with specific reference to the vegetable oil. In the event, the project's objectives – which is to encourage farmers to adopt regenerative practices to improve soil health, climate, biodiversity, water, and promote gender equality – as well as benefits of sourcing vegetable oil from regenerative agricultural practices, were shared with the demand-side participants. The event provided a unique opportunity for demand-side stakeholders — those involved in sourcing, processing, and marketing vegetable oils — to gain insight into the practical applications and advantages of regenerative agriculture. By bringing together stakeholders from both the supply and demand sides, the event fostered collaboration and developed a shared understanding of how regenerative practices can be scaled up within supply chains. This is an important step towards creating more sustainable, transparent, and resilient vegetable oil sourcing practices.

Evidence of the positive impacts of regenerative practices on vegetable oil were also presented to brands. This evidence, gathered through

fieldwork and discussion with the farmers, showcases how regenerative practices not only contribute to environmental sustainability but also offer economic advantages for farmers, including higher yields and more stable incomes, and promote gender equality through women-led FPOs.

### What Farmers Say:

Farmers who have adopted regenerative practices in the crop production are expressing positive outcomes and increased confidence in these sustainable methods. Many of them report noticeable improvements in reduced cost and unchanged yield – a more stable crop yields even in the face of unpredictable weather patterns. Some farmers share that there is reduced or no usage of the chemical inputs. Farmers also mention a reduction in input costs, particularly in terms of fertilisers and pesticides, as regenerative practices emphasise natural ways to manage pests and improve soil condition. Female farmers, in particular, highlight how regenerative practices have empowered them by offering improved family livelihoods and greater economic stability through reduced health expenditure and better soil health.



“ I adopted regenerative practices a year ago. It has reduced the cost of production. I have used only 20% of chemicals as compared to previous years. The crop is in very good condition. I will adopt more regenerative practices and expand the area. ”

-Heeralal Dhanghar from Imlikhedha Village, Sehore

Overall, farmers emphasise that while the transition to regenerative practices requires patience and learning, the long-term benefits, both environmentally and economically, are making it a worthwhile investment for their future and the future of agriculture.



Sapna Rai, CEO of Rakshita Farmer Producer Co. Ltd., asserted the importance of regenerative agriculture and scaling businesses for regenerative agriculture with a focus on vegetable oils. The FPO is promoting regenerative agriculture practices, with business potential in selling of the bio-inputs, Farm Yard Manure, vermicompost, etc. besides aggregating and selling the regenerative crops by linking with the businesses. She also showed the ideal cluster of regenerative agriculture at the

FPO's office.

### Presentation on EUDR:

Mr. Adarsh Mohandas, Regional Director – South Asia, Preferred by Nature, gave a presentation about the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) where he spoke about the rules, obligations, and due diligence process for companies under EUDR. This has the potential to offer opportunities for the regenerative agriculture vegetable oils to market in the companies sourcing from India or EU companies in India.



### Presentation on Regenerative Veg Oil Project:

The project on promotion of regenerative vegetable oils was presented, with an emphasis on its five major focus areas i.e. Water, Climate Change, Gender, Soil Health, and Biodiversity. This project is executed in a phase wise manner with three farmer categories – lead, associate and fellow – which are decided on the level of interventions that farmers have adopted for resilient farming. Lead farmers adopt all interventions of regenerative agriculture, while 50%-70% adoption is targeted by associate farmers

at various levels. Fellow farmers are the ones who are in the initial stage of adopting regenerative agriculture.



In the long run, the goal is to have the panchayats adopt a package of practices of regenerative agriculture. Water use efficiency, application of bio enzymes coming

from the local system, local tree species linked with local livelihood are improving the four identified areas.

This led to the starting of the discussion around:

- ▶ Understanding alignment of regenerative agriculture strategy with corporate sustainability priorities.
- ▶ Engaging with regenerative agriculture and its institutions on the ground.

- Need for policy and market mechanism to incentivise farmers and farm institutions to embrace regenerative agriculture to full extent.
- Challenges and opportunities in adopting regenerative agriculture.

## Discussion:

### *Impact on yield:*

The impact on crop yield with the adoption of regenerative agriculture was raised in the discussion. It was stated that the adoption of regenerative practices is likely to reduce the crop yield in the beginning. However, experiences from the field reflect that the conservative use of the resources will not reduce the yield. It is likely to create an opportunity to increase the farm yield where the selling of agri-inputs like vermicompost can create opportunity for the farmers. The traditional thought that using chemical interventions proportionally increases the yield is not correct. In the field, farmers have also understood this by experiencing the loss in the soil health due to the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. In the field, the farmers are experiencing water availability as there has been water budgeting in a few villages.

The impact on the yield and the cost of cultivation is reduced, thereby eliminating the risks involved. Regenerative agriculture encourages minimising the usage of chemicals, however, it does not strictly prevent farmers from using them.

The elements of regenerative agriculture will be deeply considered: soil health and carbon monitoring evidence is to be captured, a set of agronomic practices are to be implemented, certified regenerative agriculture practices should be encouraged. Quality seed is included, which will contribute towards improving yield.

### *Awareness about Regenerative Agriculture:*

One of the challenges discussed by the experts is that regenerative agriculture is often mistaken as natural or organic farming. However, both the methods of farming are different and proper awareness is required to promote regenerative agriculture as a separate method. Unlike organic farming, regenerative agriculture employs a mix of modern technologies, natural farming methods, and minimal use of chemicals. There are also no interventions of soil enrichment practices and the supply of micronutrients. Speaking to farmers and the Centre of Excellence which provides extension services, they have reported no decline in the production. There is cost implication at the initial level, if there is net profitability.

There is a need to create a value-based system in the long term. To create such a system for farmers, FPOs and collectors play an important role.

### *EU as the market:*

EU-India collaboration for sustainability and evolving partnerships between the two economies present an opportunity to promote regenerative agriculture for downstream actors. At the EU level, the adoption of the EU Global Gateway focusses on issues such as supply chain, clean energy, digitalisation, etc. whereas the EU-India Trade and Technology Council is evolving to address similar areas. Understanding the key areas, four impact areas were identified to drive and promote regenerative agriculture aligned with EU objectives. Recognising this can create a scope of collaboration between the two regions. It creates an opportunity for the downstream actors to support this initiative, and collaborate not only on procurement but also on other areas like capacity building, partnerships, funding, etc. The idea is to come to the downstream actors with the evidence for engagement.

### *Need for multistakeholder platform:*

In order to fully realise the potential of regenerative agriculture and its market access, there is a need for a multistakeholder platform where both downstream and upstream actors can engage in a meaningful dialogue and collaborate effectively. The promotion and mainstreaming of regenerative practices need stakeholders from the ground such as farmers as well as civil society organisations, brands, policymakers, and government departments. Events such as this can also help in creating a space for meaningful dialogue and collaboration.

### *Validation of the Regenerative Agriculture:*

Solidaridad is promoting regenagri as a certification which can create validation about the farm produce with regenerative agriculture. It is a continuous maturity model: farmers will start in phases and have the option to adopt all the elements of regenerative agriculture. However, considering the small farm size and huge number of smallholders, it is important that no one is left behind. For this, there is a need for collaborative efforts and a value chain approach. Scaling is an issue considering the small farm hold in India.

One system of sustainable sourcing may not be acceptable by others as it may follow other sustainability systems. There is a need for dialogue to arrive at a common pathway. Financing is another issue to promote regenerative agriculture. If there is financial support then it is easier to promote downstream as well as upstream players.

## Conclusion:

- ▶ There is a need to make regenerative agriculture viable for both sides of the supply chain, presenting its benefits for both downstream and upstream actors.
- ▶ Mainstreaming and creating awareness about regenerative practices is essential, which also requires conceptual clarity of regenerative agriculture.
- ▶ The project offers a unique opportunity to create evidence for the benefits of regenerative agriculture, which also aligns with sustainability standards developed in the European market and sustainability commitment of companies.
- ▶ A multistakeholder platform will help in creating a movement. The conversation at the platform will start with brands, buyers, and other stakeholders to promote regenerative agriculture.
- ▶ In order to involve regenerative agriculture in a movement through CSR and business, we need to create mass appealing products. Regenerative agriculture can be a differentiator to create value for the product in the sustainability market.
- ▶ Dialogues are required with the brands to create awareness and drive demand. The inputs from all the stakeholders to improve and drive regenerative agriculture are needed. Involvement of CSR and blended finance can push the niche market, collaborative or collective action to speed and scale the process to have integrated movement for regenerative agriculture.

## Participants:

S. no	Name of participants	Organisation
1	Aadarsh Mohandas	Preferred by Nature
2	Dr. Susheel Sankhyan	Pepsico. India
3	Archana Venur	LDC
4	Anubhav Srivastava	AAK
5	Richa	Pepsico.
6	Prasad Parte	Netherland Embassy
7	Dr Vivek Sharma	CARD
8	Farah Naaz	CARD
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Funded by  
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