



Solidaridad

CRB CENTRE for
RESPONSIBLE
BUSINESS
Enabling Change for Impact

FIELD VISIT REPORT

“Promotion of Regenerative Agriculture Practices for a Food Secure and Climate Resilient Future in the EU-India Partnership”

9th December– 13th December 2024



9 DECEMBER 2024

a. Logical Framework

The logical framework for the project “Promotion of Regenerative Agricultural Practices for a Food-Secure and Climate-Resilient Future in the EU-India Partnership” was discussed, including its outcomes and indicators. The deliverables by Solidaridad and CRB were identified. It was also discussed that the deliverables of Solidaridad and CRB had been identified. In Annexure 1, the highlighted parts of the logical framework represent the deliverables of CRB, while the non-highlighted parts indicate the deliverables of the Solidaridad team.

b. Baseline Report:

The baseline report of the project was discussed, it was suggested that in the baseline report there must be added

i. Analysis of the amount of pesticides and fertilisers used by farmers in terms of quantity and price: This indicator will provide information on the amount of chemical fertilisers and pesticides used by farmers on average at the beginning of the interventions. This will help analyse the impact of the interventions in reducing chemical usage and lowering the cost of crop cultivation.

ii. Number of tillage operations carried out by farmers: The baseline data will capture the number of tillage operations conducted by farmers, as the regenerative approach promotes no tillage or minimum tillage. This data will help assess the reduction in tillage achieved through the project.

iii. Crop-wise harvesting mechanisation (Manual or by Harvester): This will provide information on how crops are harvested, either manually or using mechanical harvesters. This data is crucial for understanding efficiency, costs, labour requirements, and the potential for introducing or optimising mechanised harvesting technologies for different crops. The baseline data will offer insights to guide decisions on improving harvesting methods, leading to better productivity and resource management.

iv. Status of plantations near farm bunds: This will document the existing conditions and characteristics of plantings or vegetation along the bunds of agricultural fields before the project interventions. Vegetation near these bunds plays a significant role in soil conservation, water retention, and improving overall farm biodiversity.

v. Method of irrigation used by farmers: The baseline data on irrigation methods will provide essential data into current water management practices and irrigation efficiency. This information will help evaluate potential improvements in water use efficiency and assess the impact of interventions on water use systems.

vi. Two practices for each component of regenerative agriculture need to be mentioned: In the baseline study, this will provide information about the adoption of the regenerative practices at the start of the project.

c. **Creation of an MIS for tracking farmers’ data:** As per the LFA, it is necessary to maintain data on farmers’ training for reference during the project period. Therefore, it was discussed that an MIS should be developed online, either through Google Forms or Kobo Collect, which can be created by Solidaridad and supported by CRB.

d. **A calendar for training and capacity building of CSOs must be prepared** to track and monitor the training sessions and topics covered.

10 DECEMBER 2024

Multi-Stakeholder Meeting at Mandla

The meeting of multi-stakeholders in regenerative vegetable oil was organised at Mandla and attended by farmers, including women farmers, CSOs, National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) representatives, Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) representatives, Animal Husbandry representatives, local traders, NGOs, and others.



The meeting centred around four key points:

- i. What are your opinions on regenerative agriculture? What are the opportunities and challenges for: Farmers, Government, Mandi, CSOs, and Traders?
- ii. Regenerative agricultural practices are currently adopted by only a few farmers and in small portions of their fields. What should be done to encourage farmers to embrace regenerative agriculture across their entire fields?
- iii. What are the expectations of farmers from the government and traders for increasing agricultural production and marketing of crops? What is the role of the Mandi in this?
- iv. What kind of training and capacity building do farmers require to adopt regenerative agriculture on a large scale?

The meeting began with the introduction of the participants. When the application of vermicompost was discussed, only one woman farmer had applied it to her field, where it had shown positive results in productivity. During the discussion on regenerative practices, it emerged that the concept of regenerative agriculture was more or less known to the farmers. Some farmers had adopted only one or two elements of regenerative agriculture to revive soil health.

- ◇ During the discussion, it emerged that some farmers had previously prepared and applied vermicompost in their fields. NRLM had provided bags to women farmers for this purpose, but the practice was discontinued as the bags had a lifespan of only three cycles. After that, farmers stopped preparing vermicompost, and this discontinuity has restricted them from continuing the practice. If a permanent structure were available for vermicompost preparation, farmers would be able to produce and sell it, improving soil health and generating household income. When discussed with the agriculture department, it was found that no specific schemes exist for permanent structures. However, other government departments have provisions for constructing such structures, which could be utilised by farmers for this purpose.
- ◇ Soybean was earlier produced in the area, but due to diseases and declining yields, farmers shifted to millets. Millets is the dominant crop in the region due to soil quality and rain-fed irrigation. They are preferred because they have a short growing cycle and require less water. Given these conditions, representatives from the ATMA department emphasised the potential for cultivating Alsi (flaxseed) in the region. Alsi, which has significant potential, is well-suited to the conditions of Mandla. The ATMA representatives informed the farmers that they could provide support in terms of seeds and procurement.
- ◇ Among vegetable oilseed crops, Ramtil is the primary oil crop cultivated in the region. At present, this crop serves as an “ATM” for farmers, as they sell it whenever they need money. However, since there are no traders making bulk purchases of Ramtil, market linkage is essential to increasing its acreage in the area.
- ◇ Regenerative agriculture can be promoted effectively if there are bio-entrepreneurs in the region who can produce and sell bio-inputs to farmers. At present, only farmers with access to cow urine and dung have adopted regenerative practices in some areas. While NRLM has similar schemes, it can further promote bio-entrepreneurship among women farmers who own sufficient cattle. This initiative would not only support regenerative agriculture but also empower women in rural areas.
- ◇ Animal Husbandry discussed various schemes related to the rearing of hens, goats, and cows/buffaloes. Since animal husbandry plays a significant role in regenerative agriculture, the discussion highlighted the need to increase the rearing of bulls and buffaloes. To achieve this, it is essential to improve water availability through watershed development to ensure a steady supply of green fodder in the area.
- ◇ After discussions with various departments, it became evident that they are working in silos. Integrating departments and schemes at the household level would yield better results. There must be greater coordination among government agencies.
- ◇ Farmers have some knowledge of regenerative agriculture, with women farmers showing higher participation in these activities. It was discussed that, in addition to training on regenerative practices, farmers should also receive training on crop marketing and better price realisation.

Multi-Stakeholder Meeting at Dindori

The multi-stakeholder meeting on regenerative vegetable oil was organised at Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Dindori. It was attended by farmers, CSOs, NRLM representatives, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) representatives, Animal Husbandry representatives, NGOs, and others.

The meeting centred on the same four key points as Mandla meeting:

i. What are your opinions on regenerative agriculture? What are the opportunities and challenges for: Farmers, Government, Mandi, CSOs, and Traders?

ii. Regenerative agricultural practices are currently adopted by only a few farmers and in small portions of their fields. What should be done to encourage farmers to embrace regenerative agriculture across their entire fields?

iii. What are the expectations of farmers from the government and traders for improving agriculture and crop marketing? What is the role of the Mandi in this?

iv. What kind of training and capacity building do farmers require to adopt regenerative agriculture on a large scale?



The meeting began with the introduction of the participants. At the outset, the participants were briefed on regenerative agriculture and the necessity of adopting regenerative practices for sustainable farming.

- ◇ In the discussion on regenerative farming, it emerged that seed treatment is a crucial aspect of cultivation. It is required to treat the seed and remove the invasive species. The seeds of the crop will settle down in water while the invasive species will float in the water. Seed quality is a key factor in crop productivity, contributing to nearly 30% of the yield. To ensure better productivity, farmers should replace crop seeds after using them for two to three cycles.
- ◇ Cattle are a vital component of regenerative agriculture, providing essential ingredients for the preparation of bio-inputs. During the discussion, it was identified that every household in the region owns one or two cattle, and farmers are willing to increase their herd size due to the benefits cattle offer. However, the limited availability of fodder plants is a major barrier to expanding cattle numbers. It was discussed that introducing Napier grass in the region could help address this challenge. Napier grass is a low water-consuming plant that would enhance fodder availability for animal husbandry. This, in turn, would support the expansion of regenerative agriculture in the area.
- ◇ The participants observed a decline in the number of small birds and butterflies in the region over time. During the discussion, it emerged that biodiversity in the area has significantly decreased. To address this, it was suggested that sunflower should be used as a border crop, as it would enhance biodiversity, improve pollination, and provide an additional source of oil. Border crops also contribute to better ecosystem services, improve soil health, and reduce the impact of wind.
- ◇ A nearby seed crusher, promoted by CSOs, exists in the region. However, due to the limited production of oilseeds by farmers, the crusher currently depends on traders to procure the required quantity, leading to high costs. Increasing oilseed production at the farm level would ensure a steady supply, enabling farmers to sell directly to the crusher at better prices.
- ◇ Farmers, especially women farmers in the region, can become part of the oilseed value chain by forming



producer groups. In this regard, NRLM is supporting producer groups in the value chain with funding of Rs 2 lakh.

- ◇ The Horticulture Department has emphasised the importance of planting horticultural trees along the boundaries of fields. Saplings are provided at a very low cost through the department's nurseries. This initiative will enhance biodiversity while also generating additional income from fruit sales.
- ◇ Vermicompost can be prepared and sold to farmers at better prices

Visit to the demo plot The demo plot of Dilip Marawe in the village of Kangri was visited. The plot, which was previously used for wheat cultivation, has now been shifted to the production of Alsi. The farmer has transitioned from deep tillage to minimum tillage. It was suggested to remove the invasive plants from the border and plant Moringa and Marigold to enhance biodiversity. The farmer has adopted regenerative agriculture to improve soil health and reduce the cost of cultivation.

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Multi-Stakeholder Meeting at Vidisha

A similar multi-stakeholder meeting on regenerative vegetable oil was organised at Panchayat Bhawan, Vidisha. It was attended by farmers, CSOs, NRLM representatives, KVK representatives, Animal Husbandry representatives, NGOs, and others.

The meeting centred around four key points:

i. What are your opinions on regenerative agriculture? What are the opportunities and challenges for: Farmers, Government, Mandi, CSOs, and Traders?

ii. Regenerative agricultural practices are currently adopted by only a few farmers and in small portions of their fields. What steps should be taken to encourage farmers to embrace regenerative agriculture across their entire fields?

iii. What are farmers' expectations from the government and traders for improving agriculture and crop marketing? What role does the Mandi play in this?

iv. What kind of training and capacity building do farmers need to adopt regenerative agriculture on a large scale?



The meeting started with the introduction of the participants. The participants were briefed on regenerative agriculture and the necessity for farmers to adopt these practices. It emerged from the discussion that most farmers were aware of the elements of regenerative agriculture. Some of them had been practising regenerative agriculture in certain parts of their fields. However, since the market does not offer a premium for these types of crops, farmers do not adopt them completely. For their own consumption, they cultivate them in small parts of their fields. It was discussed that since the prices of regenerative and chemically grown crops are the same, there is no incentive for farmers. Moreover, when they attempt to market regenerative crops, there is no mechanism to verify their claims. Ultimately, farmers have to sell regenerative and other crops together.

- ◇ It was requested that a testing facility be established at the Mandi to measure the quantity of chemicals in crops. If such a facility is provided by the Mandi, farmers will be able to justify their claims of producing crops using regenerative methods.
- ◇ In the Vidisha Mandi, there is a separate shed for organic crops, where traders of organic produce bid for the crops, allowing farmers to receive different pricing. However, organic crops require certification, which

is an expensive and technical process. Adopting and certifying crops is a tedious task, and it is preferable to take gradual steps so that the farming community is not destabilised. It is better for farmers to first adopt regenerative practices, which will eventually lead to organic farming over time. To motivate farmers to adopt regenerative practices, it is necessary for the Mandi to have separate sheds for regenerative crops.

- ◇ Farmers are willing to adopt and expand regenerative agriculture, but they need a market and premium pricing for their crops. A certification system for regenerative agriculture, similar to organic certification, could be introduced so that traders can purchase these crops at a premium. There must be a dedicated market where regenerative crops are recognised and valued.
- ◇ Farmers also need training in various aspects of regenerative agriculture, such as bio-input preparation, agroforestry, and bird perch wires.

13 DECEMBER 2024

Discussion with Board of Directors of Rakshika FPO

- ◇ The discussion involved: Women farmers advocate for regenerative agriculture because the crops are chemical-free and healthier. Consuming chemical-free crops protects them from harmful diseases, protecting their families. Moreover, the continuous use of chemicals has degraded soil health, leading to reduced productivity. However, after applying vermicompost and other bio-inputs, they have observed that soil productivity improves after two to three cycles.
- ◇ In regenerative farming, the responsibility of collecting ingredients for the preparation of bio-inputs primarily falls on women. It is a labour-intensive task. Occasionally, men support them in this process. Women farmers acknowledge that the workload has increased, but since it is a safer practice, they do not consider collecting and preparing bio-inputs a burden.
- ◇ Their decision to adopt regenerative farming has improved soil health and enhanced production. As a result, women's participation in decision-making on other issues within the family has also increased.



Discussion with Board of Directors of Krishi Navachar FPO

- ◇ Women do not participate in selling crops at the Mandi because it is far, and it takes an entire day to sell the crop. If the FPO starts purchasing crops directly from the village, women would be able to negotiate, as they are part of the FPOs and would be dealing with a familiar person.
- ◇ At present, traders are men from outside the village and are unknown to the women farmers, which discourages them from negotiating for crop sales.

Conclusion: The multi-stakeholder meetings held in the three districts were highly beneficial in understanding the current gaps in the adoption of regenerative practices and identifying the challenges. These region-specific meetings helped identify both the challenges and opportunities unique to each area. In summary, regenerative crops require premium pricing and differentiation in the Mandi compared to chemically grown crops, which could be facilitated through certification or lab-based testing. If the market offers a premium, in addition to the biotic benefits for soil health, farmers will be more inclined to adopt regenerative agriculture on a larger scale. Furthermore, farmer-related schemes should be integrated to ensure the holistic and sustainable development of their livelihoods.



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