

## ORGANIC EXPERIMENT IN PUNE, INDIA

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Vilas Lokhande, an agriculture graduate and farmer in Jambroon village, 15 kms from Nanded city has devoted one acre of his land for growing soya bean only through traditional methods like using vermicompost for the soil or cow urine for pesticides; i.e. organic methods. What is more important is that he has decided not to use chemicals on this plot. On the remaining three acres, he has sowed other oil seeds including soya bean and is tending the crops the way he has been doing all this time using urea and Diammonium Phosphate.

In this small village, an experiment is on. All 55 families including Lokhande have agreed on paper to earmark a part of their land for organic farming see if it can be sustainable and reap them profits at the end of the harvest season. More than three months have passed since the sowing.

“ We will compare the cost benefits at the end of this year, said Dadarao Patil, the sarpanch of Jambroon. On January 10 this year, the villagers held a special panchayat meeting

with the Pune-based Maharashtra Organic Farming Federation (MOFF) and resolved in writing that they would give organic farming a chance and allow the NGO to guide them in the process.

“ People believe that getting a good yield is impossible without chemical fertilisers and pesticides. We just want to show that it is possible for a farmer to make good money and get a good yield through organic techniques. We have told them that MOFF will not give them any money, only guidance on

organic techniques of farming,” said Harbans Singh, coordinator for MOFF in Nanded.

“ This is a five year project to be completed in stages. In the end, we have promised to help convert Jambroon into a complete self sustaining bio village,” said Singh.

As promised, Ganpath Kondewad has devoted half his land to moong, urad and soya bean to be grown using organic techniques. Recollecting the days of his father when it all began, Kondewad said that chemical fertilisers and pesticides were introduced in the village in a big way a couple of years after the green revolution. “Around 1980, we would get bags of urea for free. In the initial year, the production increased drastically. After a couple of years, people started using DAP along with urea when the production fell a little. Much later, we started depending on the advice of the shopkeeper,” said Kondewad.

In these parts, jowar is grown widely; sugar cane and cotton are the chief cash crops. Other crops include moong, tur, jowar, urad, soyabean, mustard, cotton, channa and wheat. As a precursor to the project, MOFF did an economic baseline survey of the village with family details, agricultural details, available resources, livestock, irrigation facility, income source, agro-based

profession, family expenditure, agricultural expenditure, finances, investment, social status, amenities, health records, addictions, observations on surroundings, problems with crop cultivation and expectations and future planning.

“When they started using chemical fertilizers, there were a lot of micro organisms in the soil. Chemicals in the soil killed the organisms and the bio mass generated gave life to the crops. Now there are no live organisms left to die and chemical residue is only spoiling the soil further, not helping the crop,” said Harbans Singh.

Since January, the farmers here have been meeting on a weekly basis with the MOFF and till June were learning techniques to practice vermicomposting, prepare the soil bed, and harness organic fertilizers and pesticides. Now discussions are on to harness the waste and the garbage to create biogas. Work is also on to improve the bio-diversity of the village. Saplings of a mixture of large, small and medium trees have been planted at planned distances.

“ We want more insects, birds, and animals. We know that we have ruined our land and soil. We want to give this a shot,” said Lokhande. Most of them have debts; at least 26 families live below the poverty line. A few do not have land. “At the end of this project, we want the farmers to have more money in their pockets. Organic farming helps farmers in reducing the expenses drastically,” Singh said.

**By Express India**