

Taste of success: Kitchen gardens!

Krishi Vigyan Kendra is working for the tribal community since long years together. The major emphasis was given on productivity enhancement in the field crops and introduction of subsidiary business viz. Poultry and goatary. The major objective behind these activities was 'betterment of the lifestyle of the tribal farming community'.

Regular contacts and some informal surveys by the Kendra inferred the fact that the nutrition of this tribal mass was not up-to the standard. Moreover, malnourished conditions were observed especially in women and children. Considering these facts, Kendra decided to intervene in this matter through establishing Kitchen Gardens. Because, continuous supply of fresh vegetables, all the year round, can be accomplished to a great extent by growing vegetables in a kitchen garden. As balanced nutritional food is incomplete without vegetables as these are the major source of nutritional vitamins and minerals required by human body besides being rich source of carbohydrates and protein, Kendra systematically planned and implemented the program by providing vegetable seeds.

Kendra supplied wide range of vegetable seeds to tribal families to grow vegetables in small spaces near their homes. Before monsoon begins in June, KVK scientists motivated people to dig out a plot for planting vegetables. In every village, 20-25 families come forward and do the work needed to prepare the plots. They need to find a space near their homes that receives sunlight. The families must then loosen the soil and commit to watering and protecting the plants from animals. KVK scientists then inspected the preparations made. After inspection, families received seeds for Spinach, Cluster beans, Bottle gourd, Ridge Gourd, Bitter Gourd, Fenugreek, Chilli, Brinjal, Beans, Radish, Okra, Cucumber, Coriander etc. from the Kendra. 100 families from the 5 villages have taken the benefit of the kitchen garden program being implemented by the Kendra.

This program was well supported with technical training programs and on the spot guidance to the groups. For this purpose continuous visits to kitchen garden plots were given by the KVK scientists. Separate training packages, specially designed to take account of food production and eating patterns and respond to the needs of the groups, have been prepared and are widely disseminated.

One of the easiest ways of ensuring access to a healthy diet that contains adequate macro-and micronutrients is to produce many different kinds of vegetables in the kitchen garden. While deciding the kinds of vegetable to be supplied, Kendra took into account the type of in-deficiencies in tribal diet and need of the families. Non inclusion of protein and iron rich vegetables in diet was the foremost lacuna in dietary habit of the tribal. So, Kendra has given stress on supply of the seeds of protein and iron rich vegetables, besides the other nutrient containing vegetables.

Such a kitchen garden program is worth more than the few lakh rupees that the produce is worth. Since the benefit is in the form of food, it directly meets a basic need of all family members. Cash on the other hand can be spent on other things which may not necessarily enhance family nutrition and health.

Most people do not use chemical inputs in their kitchen gardens. We plan to build on this by introducing more local and organic varieties to improve biodiversity and food sovereignty.

Insight advantages: Balance diet for the family, savings on purchasing the vegetables, chemical free, healthy and fresh vegetables in regular diet, Promoting appropriate diets and healthy lifestyles, reducing malnutrition, and promoting nutritional well being for all.