Transition to Organic/Natural Farming: Learning from Ground

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2004
2006
2009
2020
16 years of journey

• Agriculture has to shift to low energy, low water and low chemical production system

• Significant progress in understanding the need and processes to shift to organic/natural farming are better understood

• The benefits are clear and some more exploration may be required

• A livelihood centric approach to farming than technology centric approach seems to be working

• Using Practitioners in Extension is working well

• What seems to be working?
  • One, all have made use of locally adapted resource conserving technologies.
  • Two, in all there has been coordinated action by groups or communities at local level.
  • Third, there have been supportive external (or non-local) government and/or non-governmental institutions working in partnership with farmers.
Research, Extension and Education
Whose knowledge counts?

• Agroecological framework for research and innovation
• Valuing externalities
• New learnings
  • Recycling approach to nutrients
  • Non Pesticidal Management
  • Moisture harvesting from atmospheric water vapour
  • Benefits of farm designing-multiple crops, integrated farming systems
  • Community Extension Services
• Product and information based extension to knowledge based extension with experienced farmers as extension agents
• Changes in the curriculum to prepare for future challenges at various levels-
  breaking monopoly of ICAR is needed
• Integrating into school education
Practice: adapting to variances

- Understanding variances in experiences across various agroecological conditions and taking a scientific approach than a belief system
- Needs a problem solving and diagnostic approach than a solution driven approach
- Assessing learnings based on a agroecological lens than a conventional agriculture lens
- Shift towards more participatory approaches
- Building new models, new practices/products which can ease the drudgery reduction, cost effectiveness, quality assurance needed
Markets: making supply chains work

• Strengthening local markets
• Building infrastructure support-farmers markets, warehouses, processing units etc
• Some of the new FPOs can focus on organic/natural farm produce
• Quality Assurance issue
  • FSSAI legislation
  • PGS Certification System getting drifted
    • Issue of conflict of interest
    • Excessive focus on export markets
    • Lack of Space to accommodate variances
Policies: changing the support systems?

• Equitable support to farmers shifting to organic/natural farming
• Support for ecosystem services
• Transition support at the village/block/districts can be planned
• Key decisions on biosafety issues and regulating products/technologies which have high risks-GM crops, out dated pesticides, herbicides etc
• Long term investment in building alternative institutions and vision for farming and farmers in India
Thank you

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