



# Indian Farming



Farmer FIRST

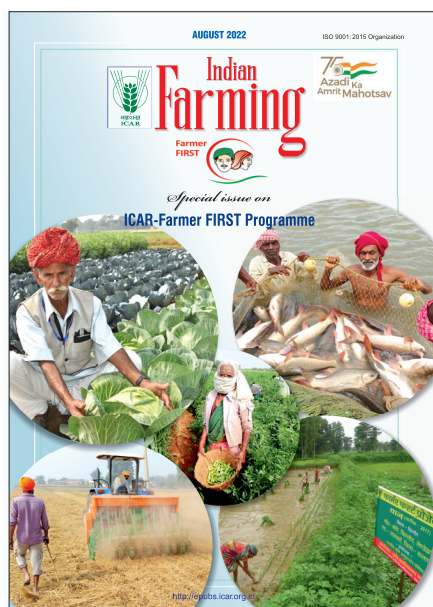


*Special issue on*

**ICAR-Farmer FIRST Programme**



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# Indian Farming

## In This Issue

Editorial	2
Impact of family farming: A case of vegetable cultivation under Farmer FIRST Programme <i>Kuldeep Singh, Buta Singh Romana, Pankaj Kumar and Dalbeer Singh</i>	3
Vegetable gardening: Boon for Agri-farmers of Punjab <i>Y S Jadoun and Kulbir Singh</i>	6
Shining stars of vegetable cultivation in Sangrur (Punjab) under Farmer FIRST Programme <i>Kuldeep Singh, Buta Singh Romana, Pankaj Kumar and Dalbeer Singh</i>	8
Empowering hill women of Uttarakhand through animal husbandry intervention of Farmer FIRST Programme <i>Shivendra Kumar Kashyap and Aman Kamboj</i>	12
Backyard poultry farming ensured livelihood/food security in NW-Himalaya during Covid-19: Success story <i>M Muruganandam and Bankey Bihari</i>	16
Bed planting: Affordable technique for resource conservation in wheat <i>Anil Kumar Malik, R S Shoran, Balkan Singh, Karma Singh, P P Rohilla and S K Singh</i>	20
Enhancing livelihood of small farmers through cultivation of Arka Prajwal variety of tuberose <i>B Balakrishna, G A Atheequlla, Sujatha A Nair, B B Supriya, Usha Bharathi, Uma Maheshwari and K S Kowsalya</i>	22
Sustainable Bee-keeping through Farmers FIRST Project interventions in Nainital district of Uttarakhand <i>S K Kashyap and Monika Kholiya</i>	25
Success of farmer FIRST Project in enhancing income of mango farmers of Malihabad, Uttar Pradesh <i>Maneesh Mishra, Anil Kumar Verma, P K Shukla, S K Shukla, R A Ram, Rohit Jaiswal, Pravesh Kumar Singh, Shantanu Kumar Dubey and S C Ravi</i>	28
On farm Agricultural produce processing: A boon for Indian farming <i>Sandeep Mann, Renu Balakrishnan, Sachin Mittal, Rajbir Singh and V P Chahal</i>	32
Promoting dry direct seeding of rice in line with post-emergence application of herbicide for higher productivity <i>Vinamarta Jain, Krishnakant Rajak and S R K Singh</i>	35
Economic, social and behavioral development of farmers through Farmer FIRST Programme in Punjab <i>Kuldeep Singh, Pankaj Kumar, Vajinder Pal Kalra and Dalbeer Singh</i>	38
Enhancing fertility at early ages in heifers by supplementing critical nutrients of reproduction <i>A Arangasamy, D T Pal, Letha Devi, L Niketha, A Mech, S Senani, M A Katakataware, G B M Reddy, K Giridhar and Raghavendra Bhatta</i>	42
Income and employment generation through ecofriendly utilisation of paddy straw for mushroom and vermicompost production <i>S K Mishra, Swatee Prangya, B S Sathpathy, S Lenka, Lipi Das, Krutibasa Jena and Sonali Jethy</i>	44

Varietal led ecological resilience through KRL 210 in salt stressed wheat <i>Parvender Sheoran, Paras Kamboj, Arvind Kumar, Kailash Parjapat, Arijit Barmana, Ashwani Kumar, Ranjay K Singh, Subhasis Mandal, P P Rohilla, S K Singh, V P Chahal and P C Sharma</i>	47
Efficient Agri-horti farming system for irrigated agro-ecosystem of western plain zone of Uttar Pradesh <i>M Shamim, Poonam Kashyap, A K Prusty, Nisha Verma, P C Jat, N Ravisankar, S K Dubey and A S Panwar</i>	50
Encashing remunerative returns from integrated farming system model through farmer participatory approach <i>R Roy Burman, Subhashree Sahu, Shailendra Sharma, Rahul Singh, R N Padaria, P P Rohilla, S K Singh and A K Singh</i>	53
Impact of precise land levelling on pearl millet-based cropping systems <i>Y P Singh, Sandeep S Tomar, Ravi Yadav, Ravi Gurjar and Deependra Sharma</i>	58
Resource specific and socially integrated interventions increased profitability of farmers in Varanasi <i>Shubhadeep Roy, S K Singh, Neeraj Singh, D R Bhardwaj, S K Dubey and T K Behera</i>	61
Silage making: Method of fodder conservation and entrepreneurship development: A success story <i>Y S Jadoun and Jaswinder Singh</i>	65
Innovative ridge furrow technology impact on area, productivity and economics of pearl millet: A case study <i>Y P Singh, Sandeep S Tomar, Ravi Yadav, Ravi Gurjar and Sudhir Singh</i>	67
Enhancing productivity and income of small farmer through new varieties and precision farming <i>B Balakrishna, K S Kowsalya, B B Supriya, G A Atheequlla, B L Manjunath and Shankara S Hebbar</i>	70
Technological interventions for doubling farm income: An analysis of Farmer FIRST approach <i>Letha Devi G, D T Pal, K Giridhar, A Arangasamy, A Mech, M A Kataktalware, Reddy, GBM, Ramamurthy, Narayanaswamy B N and Chaithra G J</i>	73
A successful model for socio-economic upliftment of tribal farmers of Chhattisgarh <i>P Mooventhan, Anil Dixit, M A Khan, G L Sharma, L K Verma, Praveen Verma, P Venkatesan, SRK Singh, Uttam Singh and P K Ghosh</i>	76
Fruit tree based alternate land use system for degraded rainfed lands <i>D M Kadam, Bankey Bihari, Rajesh Bishnoi, S S Srimali, Trisha Roy and Anil Malik</i>	80
Gender Mainstreaming through Integrated Farming Systems: Success witnessed under Farmer FIRST project in Uttar Pradesh <i>Nisha Verma, Azad Singh Panwar, Poonam Kashyap, A K Prusty, M Shamim, C Jat, Amit Nath and U S Gautam</i>	84
Honey for generations: Farmer FIRST Programme promoting beekeeping in Punjab <i>Kuldeep Singh, Jaspal Singh, Pankaj Kumar and Dalbeer Singh</i>	88
Integrated farming system for livelihood security of small and marginal farmers in tribal area of Chhattisgarh <i>Vinamarta Jain, Krishnakant Rajak and S R K Singh</i>	91
Development of Mushroom hub in Sangrur (Punjab) through Farmer FIRST Programme <i>Kuldeep Singh, Pankaj Kumar, Shivani Sharma and Dalbeer Singh</i>	95
Use of pheromone trap and vermicompost for the success of vegetable growers of Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh <i>N Manjunatha, H S Mahesha, Bishwa Bhaskar Choudhary, Purushottam Sharma, Sunil Kumar, Mukesh Chaudhary, S K Singh, R P Dwivedi, Shantanu Kumar Dubey, Avinash Chandra, A K Saxena, Sachendra, Prateek Shrivastava and Rohit Verma</i>	98
Replicable success cases of technological interventions under Farmer FIRST project in Uttar Pradesh <i>Uma Sah, Rekha Rani, Vikrant Singh, Jitendra Ojha, Shivakant Kushwaha, S K Dubey and Bansa Singh</i>	101
On-farm reproduction management in bovines paid big dividends <i>Suresh Kumar, Megha Pande, Naimi Chand, S Saha, Naresh Prasad and Shantanu Kumar Dubey</i>	103

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## Farmers FIRST Programme

### Bringing Socio-Economic Changes

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The Farmer FIRST Programme (FFP) is a unique programme of ICAR where farmers and scientists come together on one platform to understand the requirement of Indian agriculture in technological age. This approach warrants complete penetration in the national agricultural research system to bring a major transformation in research and extension. Recognizing the needs, 51 ICAR's Research Institutes and State Agricultural Universities culminated to ensure proper integration of this approach in research, problem identification, and prioritization, and accordingly conducted experiments and management in farmers' conditions; and 3 ICAR Institutes and a Directorate as a consortium body are involved in capacity building, impact assessment, management, content development and showcasing the technological interventions implemented.

This programme brings farmers on the platform of partnership at the institutional level and this new approach of partnership is aimed to enable innovative practices and adoption of technology that is location specific, demand driven and farmer friendly. The farmers in Farmer FIRST play central role and they are exposed to various fields to enrich their knowledge through workshops, conferences, capacity buildings, online portals and fairs. To integrate technology from the research and lab to the farm, they are also supplied with the basic inputs like seeds, livestock, natural resource management, equipment and knowledge.

In this special issue on the Farmer FIRST Programme, articles from various institutes and universities are a testimonial of the successful implementation of the programme at national level. It covers 6 modules on Crop, Horticulture, Livestock, Integrated Farming System, Natural Resource Management and Capacity Building. Various technological interventions on these modules have been so successful that non-participating farmers and neighbouring villages themselves had taken forward the programme and continue to expand even today. As the FFP progress with the forward impact on various agricultural sectors, it will continue to flourish and bring socio-economic changes in the life of farmers.



(Dr S K Malhotra)



# A successful model for socio-economic upliftment of tribal farmers of Chhattisgarh

**P Mooventhan\*, Anil Dixit, M A Khan, G L Sharma, L K Verma, Praveen Verma, P Venkatesan, SRK Singh, Uttam Singh and P K Ghosh**

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*The Farmer FIRST programme (FFP) has been implemented in the year of 2016 by ICAR-NIBSM, Raipur, at a cluster of five tribal villages in the Kasdol block of Baloda Bazar district, to improve the livelihood of tribal farmers through implementing agricultural enterprise integration in rice fallow. Under this, a set of five modules- crop-based, livestock-based, enterprise-based, horticulture-based and NRM-based were identified and implemented. Total 634 tribal farm families got benefitted under this programme. In economic terms, an additional income of ₹12,054 per farm family has been generated and as a social impact, nearly 36% of the seasonal migration of farmers was reduced. In addition, total, 347 capacity-building programmes were organized and 8417 tribal farmers were benefitted under this FFP initiative.*

**Keywords:** Agricultural technologies, Chhattisgarh, Socio-economic upliftment, Tribal farmer

**F**ARMER FIRST programme has been implemented in the year of 2016 by ICAR-NIBSM, Raipur, to improve the livelihood of tribal farmers through implementing agricultural enterprises integration in rice fallow. A cluster of five tribal villages namely Bakla, Kharaha, Bamhani, Kurraha and Kharri in the Kasdol block of Baloda Bazar district, Chhattisgarh, were adopted for this programme. Interventions were selected based on matrix ranking and agro-ecosystem analysis. Based on the results obtained, various interventions such as goat farming using breeds such as Sirohi, Jamnapari and Barbari, backyard poultry farming with Kadaknath breed, oyster mushroom production, Farmer Communication Centre (FCCs), low cost Azolla production, nutritional home garden, drudgery reduction equipment for women farmers through Custom Hiring Centers (CHCs), Agro Processing Centers (APCs), low-cost polyhouse with drip and poly-mulching for vegetables production and eco-friendly pest management technologies were adopted to generate additional income and have brought tangible changes in the socio-economic condition of tribal farming community.

In economic terms, additional income of ₹12,054 per farm family has been generated through the introduction of crop, livestock, horticulture, enterprise and NRM based modules, respectively. In 2022, sum of ₹118.75 lakhs was generated by the farming community

from different enterprises. FFP initiatives attracted 34% of farm women and 20% of rural youth in agricultural activities in the adopted villages.

Overall, 24–30% increase in knowledge was observed among tribal farmers in the selected technologies through the intervention of FCCs, agricultural film shows, capacity building programs and social media groups. A significant increase in skill and knowledge acquisition was observed in the adopted technologies such as scientific vegetables production, zero tillage, livestock production and eco-friendly plant protection measures. Drudgery of women farmers was reduced through village level CHCs. Meanwhile, nutritional level of farm families was enhanced through nutritional home gardening. A total of 54 agricultural interventions were introduced and sustained in the farmer's field. Cropping intensity has been increased by 120% in the adopted villages. Backward and forward production linkages were established for crop, livestock and horticulture enterprises. Market linkages were established for different commodities produced under this project for the sustainability of the disseminated technologies. It is evident from the above results that Farmer FIRST approach proved to be a successful role model programme in the socio-economic upliftment of tribal farmers through suitable agricultural enterprise integration in rice fallow pulse cropping system (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Major technological changes after implementation of the project

Particular	Before	After
<i>Cropping intensity</i>	100%	120%
<i>Major agricultural technologies</i>		
Goat	Desi breed	Sirohi, Jamunapari, Barbari breed with scientific farming practices
Poultry farming	Desi breed, household consumption	Kadakhnath breed, with scientific farming technology, Pucca shade, Hatchery units
Vegetable cultivation	Local varieties, Traditional Practices	Improved varieties from IIHR, TNAU, NSC, Beej Nigam, IGKV, and KVKs, Scientific practice, Polyhouse, Drip irrigation, poly mulching and post-harvest technology
Pulses and oilseed crops	Local variables, very less area through Utera cropping only	Improved variety like- Lathyrus (Prateek and Mahateoda), Chick pea (Vaibhav, JAKI 9218 and JG-11,12), Black gram (Azad- 03), Mustard (Indira Sarson, Pusa Jay Kisan and Pant Pili Sarson), Lentil (KLS- 218) and Linseed (RLC-92) in rice fallow, using with Happy Seeder and Aqua-Ferti Seed Drill
Rice cultivation	Local Varieties, Traditional cultivation practices	Improved varieties such as- Chandrasahini, IGKV R-1, IGKV R-2, Indira Aerobic, Swarna, HMT, Mahamaya and Indira Barani with SRI technology and scientific package of practices
Agro-based enterprise	Nil	Established- 04 Agro-processing Centers, 05 Custom Hiring Centers, 05 Kadakhnath Hatchery units
Availability of Farm machinery	Limited availability from nearby farmers and villages	Established- 05 Custom Hiring Centers (CHCs) with variety of drudgery reduction equipments and highly useful farm machinery
Plant protection practices	Only chemical methods	Introduced trichocard, Pheromone trap, Light trap, Sticky traps, Bio-control agents and Demonstrated IPM practices
<i>Source of information</i>	TV, Radio, Mobile, Local leaders	Farmer Communication Centers (FCCs), Farmers Scientist Interface, Agricultural Film Shows (AFSSs), Mobile App, WhatsApp group, Facebook page, YouTube Channel,
<i>Additional income</i>	Only farm (rice) income	₹12054 additional income generated per farm family

**General agricultural issues found in the study area**

- Rice fallow lands (82% of land left fallow after rainy (kharif) season);
- Low production and productivity;
- Low level adoption of high yielding varieties;
- Unawareness of GAPs and modern management strategies;
- Lack of knowledge in plant protection measures & technical know-how;
- Lack of marketing network, shortage of skilled labour;
- Mono-cropping (Rice-Rice-Rice);

- Lack of awareness on conservation of biodiversity and importance of sustainability of homestead system and subsistence nature of farming.

Seasonal migration posed a major problem in the adopted villages. During the implementation of FFP (2016) 915 farm families migrated outside Chhattisgarh for their livelihood. Under the farmer FIRST project, many farmers-friendly and region-specific technologies such as rice fallow pulses, Kadakhnath farming, goat farming, mushroom production, agro-processing centers, and high-tech horticulture for income generation were introduced at the village level. Due to these efforts,



Kadakhnath farming cum hatchery unit



Agro-Processing Center (APCs)

Only 580 farmers migrated in the year 2021–22, which is about 36% reduction in the seasonal migration.

### Desired socio-psychological changes of tribal farmers after the project implementation (N=500)

A baseline survey to assess the socio-psychological status of tribal farmers was conducted, and it was found that farmers had low social participation, risk-taking ability, achievement motivation, innovativeness, scientific orientation, mass media exposure, and less contact with extension agencies. Between the year 2016 and 2022, more than 350 capacity-building programs were organized to empower the tribal farming community. Farmers improved their social participation by 31.20%, risk-taking ability by 33.00%, achievement motivation by 31.00%, innovativeness by 62.00%, scientific orientation by 37.60%, contact with extension agencies by 29.20%, and mass media exposure by 30.00%, due to the project initiatives.

### Income generation from the major FFP intervention

Promoting the application of scientific production technology with quality inputs in agriculture is the foundation to improve the productivity, quality, efficiency, and competitiveness in agriculture sector. This intervention contributed to the transformation of agriculture and rural areas, ensuring food security, social security, and income enhancement among farm families. Under the FFP, introduced agricultural technologies had a remarkable impact on the income generated at the village level. Farmers are getting a higher income in the Kadaknath farming followed by scientific turmeric production, scientific rice cultivation, rice fallow pulses, mushroom cultivation, agro-processing centers, vegetable production, and Azolla production respectively.

### Economic impact of FFP interventions- B:C ratio of farmer's practice and scientific interventions

The benefit-cost (B:C) ratio is an indicator showing the relationship between the relative costs and benefits of a

**Table 2.** Economic impact of FFP Interventions

Technology/ Intervention	B:C ratio	
	Farmer's Practice	Due to intervention
Kadaknath	2.38	3.94
Goat	2.51	3.60
SRI	2.02	3.49
Chickpea	2.54	4.05
Lathyrus	1.53	3.39
Vegetable	1.80	2.61
Turmeric	3.16	5.33
Mushroom	3.61	4.28
Azolla	4.20	6.22

proposed project, expressed in monetary or qualitative terms. Under the Farmer FIRST project, more than 54 promising technologies with quality inputs and a scientific package of practices under crop, horticulture, livestock, enterprise, and NRM-based module were introduced as well as demonstrated. In each module, some major technologies had a wider adoption among the tribal farmers and they have been practicing them for the past six years. As a result of scientific technology and technical support from the project team, farmers achieved increased production and were able to decrease the input cost (Table 2).

### Achievements of Farmer FIRST Programme

- Farmer Communication Centers (FCCs)–02
- Crop varieties introduced–35
- Alternate crops introduced–12
- Area covered under horticulture –38 ha
- Rice fallow covered with pulse–122 ha
- Animal breeds introduced–04
- ICT agro advisory delivered–1650
- Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs)–08
- Quail farming cum hatchery units–02
- Goat Farming Unit (GFUs)–01



Low-cost shade net house



Mushroom production

- Village soil testing unit-01
- Low-cost Azolla production unit-01
- Model Mushroom production unit-02
- Low-cost shade net and polyhouse-04
- Modern nutritional terrace gardening units-02

### SUMMARY

Farmer FIRST programme was implemented with an aim to improve the tribal farmer's livelihood and socio-economic status through promising agricultural enterprises integration in rice fallow. Based on 6 years of experience on the Farmer FIRST, it was learnt that the group approach is highly suitable under resource-poor conditions, small-scale technologies are more suitable to generate additional income of tribal farmers, involvement of local/farmers resources creates more involvement of farmers in the project activities and low-cost technologies are having more acceptance and

adoption rate. With these lessons, we can upscale this FFP model by promoting rural entrepreneurship to sustain the farm income, scaling-up of the small-scale agro-processing units to reduce the seasonal migration of the farmers, increased capital accumulation with low-cost innovations to empower the small and marginal farmers in the resource-poor rural settings. Particularly, the rural development projects should combine with infrastructure development, education, investment in agriculture and the promotion of rural non-farm activities where rural women and youths can engage themselves.

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Each year **one third** of **global food production** for human consumption never finds its way onto plates and is lost or wasted

This is equivalent to **1.3 billion tonnes** of edible food