

Feeding growing cities: Enhancing livelihood capacities of small and marginal peri-urban farmers in Gampaha, Western Province, Sri Lanka

Background

The Gampaha is a rapidly growing city in the Western Province of Sri Lanka: 33 "Grama Niladari" divisions, population 63,335, total area 2790 ha, agriculture land 820 ha. Major crops are paddy, coconut, rubber, vegetables, fruits, and flowers.

Objective

The objective of the project was to strengthen farmer organizations; help innovate food production systems, and using ecological principles; enhance marketing capacities to benefit from on-going development activities as well as contribute to the "Ecocity" concept of the Gampaha municipality. This poster describes some of the outcomes observed during the first year of activities.

Methods

An urban producer association was formed comprising small and marginal farmers; the "Seemasahitha Gampaha Haritha Krushi Nishpadana Samagama" - SGHKNS (Gampaha Green Agro Products Limited). RUAF team carried out activities to enhance capacities for production, marketing, organizational and technology strengthening, and credit and financing.

context analysis * inventory of available resources * change analysis * selection of most promising options * identifying innovations * market analysis * seasonal calendars and value chain mapping * promotion of savings and internal lending schemes * urban producers' field schools * production and marketing of products * promotion of ecological farming principles - demonstration of commercial level chillie cultivation, different methods of compost production * exposure visits * development of business and project plans * book keeping

The Association

The SGHKNS comprises 7 neighbourhood groups to achieve the targets set out in the action plan. Of its 58 members, 81% are women (Fig 4). The executive committee, and four subcommittees (finance, purchasing, production and marketing committees) are the decision makers of the association.

Saving schemes within groups

Small groups (n<20) met at monthly intervals to save, lend and collect the repayments based on a fixed interest rate (2% per month). The funds collected for the period are given in Fig 5.

Revolving fund

A revolving fund supported the farmers in need of funds for inputs (Fig 6). Group based disbursement was adopted. Interest earned is used for the association's overheads.

Loan provisions and repayments (July 2010 to September 2010)

Description	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7
Recipients	5	3	2	3	5	6	3
Total amount (SLR)	25,000	15,000	10,000	15,000	20,000	25,000	35,000
Total monthly instalment (SLR)	5,000	3,000	2,000	3,000	4,000	5,000	7,000
Total repayment + interest 6% (SLR)	5,250	3,150	2,100	3,150	4,200	5,250	7,350

Urban producers field schools

Farmers exchanged innovation experiences in the field (Fig 7); nursery management, integrated pest and nutrient management, harvesting and post harvest techniques, marketing, compost making and mixed cropping, feed back and record keeping.

Exposure visits and capacity building

Urban Producers participated in a number of exposure visits to enhance their skills and capacities on different aspects related production, marketing, finance and landscaping. Several capacity building workshops and meetings have been conducted for organizational and technical strengthening (Fig 8 & 9).

Ecological farming practices

Compost making was demonstrated at training sessions. Some have undertaken commercial level production (Fig 10). Purchase of compost was reduced drastically - 20, 000 kg to 2,000 kg.

Production and Marketing

Chilies were selected as the most promising option (MoPO) based on a rank matrix. Production was aimed for high-end markets. Innovations were identified after discussion, and a value chain map was developed (Fig 11). Innovation was pitched at both technical and organizational levels. The timing of production was based on seasonal calendars.

3 cluster level marketing outlets (Fig 12) were established to sell the produce of group members. Each member produces a minimum of 25 kg of vegetables per month, and pays SLR 2.00 for the association common fund. Marketing outlets pay SLR 25.00 per day as rent to the association.

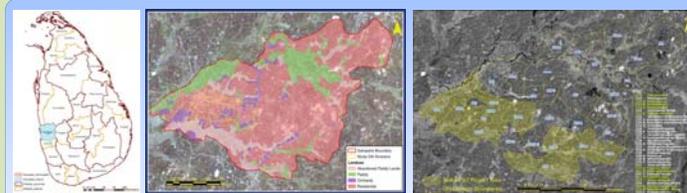


Fig 1: Location map

Fig 2: Land-use map

Fig 3: Project site



Introductory meeting



Establishment of producer company

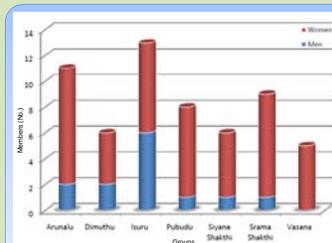


Fig 4: The SGHKNS groups

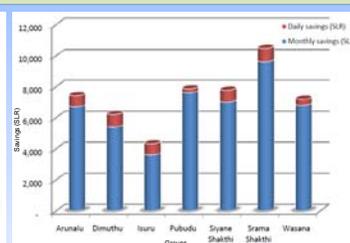


Fig 5: Group savings as at 25 Sep 10



Fig 6: Participant receiving a loan-revolving fund



Fig 7: Urban producers field school session



Fig 8: Commercial home gardening in Urupola



Fig 9: Training in accounting



Fig 10: Composting unit

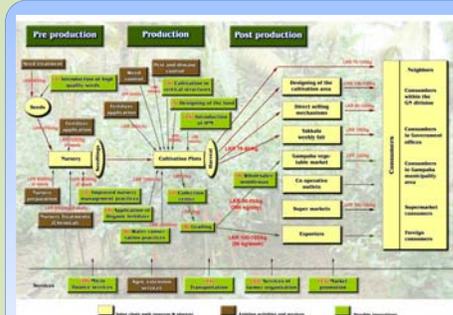


Fig 11: Value chain mapping



Fig 12: Marketing outlets