

Talk by Mr. Sandigawad during the 2020 World Economic Forum Sustainable Development Impact Summit | 2030 WRG Affiliate Session on Sustainable Agriculture at Ramthal, in Karnataka State, India.

24 September 2020

Namaste, I am Ningappa Mahantappa Sandigawad, a farmer from Bagalkot District of Karnataka, India. I consider this a privilege to be part of this reputed and significant platform, where knowledge, experiences, and opinions of the people from the grassroots matter and are heard. Special thanks to 2030 WRG for facilitating this and inviting me to be part of this reputed platform.

The Ramthal Drip Irrigation scheme is the largest in Asia with 60,000 acres befitting 15,000 farmers. Jain Irrigation and Netafim have been given contracts to implement the project. The area is predominantly semi-arid and mainly produces pulses, onion, chilies, and a few types of millet grains. The project area has 85% black soil and 15% red soil. Farmers in four villages also practice organic farming.

We have constituted the Amrutha farmer producer organization within the Ramthal Project Area. Within three months after the start of the organization, Amrutha has supplied seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides to all the farmers at their doorsteps. Sustainable Agriculture means comprehensive agriculture i.e., the farmers should not depend on only one crop, they should grow all crops needed for daily consumption like red gram, cereals, pulses.

2030 WRG and Ernst & Young have helped us connect to the market. The program was implemented jointly by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, titled 'Drip to Market Agro Corridor (DMAC). DMAC is being implemented to enable effective backward and forward linkages to farmers to increase yield and to tap the high-value markets. I am glad to share that around seven of us, who are also the presidents of seven different water user associations, have now come forward to form the 'Amrutha Farmer

Producer Company', for the first time ever in Hungund Taluk [villages in Bagalkot, Karnataka, India].

We are working as a seller institution to aggregate the produce from farmers and directly trade with buyers. Farmers in the water user cooperative societies have attended many training workshops and exposure visits by the Water and Land Management Institute (WALMI), and the Command Area Development Authority (CADA). Farmers also receive regular inputs from the Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Department of Agriculture.

In the month of February, farmers from the project area were able to sell their produce directly to buyers and receive money in their bank accounts. In the months of May, June, and July, farmers have received audio messages and attended phone conferences, organized by the Reliance Foundation. We also received high yield variety of seeds for red gram and green gram. We also received farm implementing nipping machines and it has been useful to my farmer brothers.

We need more support in creating farming infrastructure such as aggregation centers, warehouses, cold storage, etc. I believe cultivation is the only part of the farm production cycle. The farmer must be equipped with this knowledge, obtain equipment, capital, and collective strength to process the primary produce into value-added products and be able to sell it to the end-customer.

I believe sustainable agriculture is one that depletes neither the people nor the land. I strongly hope we collectively take the project forward in this direction. We need to promote especially millet production due to its nutritional value.

Thank you for your attention and for this opportunity to let me speak about my experiences.

**Talk by Shri. Sandigawad (Recorded) on
Sustainable Agriculture at Ramthal during phone discussions
with him on September 19, 2020**

1. Sustainable Agriculture at Ramthal is a very promising aspect.
2. To show that it is possible to practice sustainable agriculture in the project area of Ramthal project, Amrutha FPO (Farmer Producer Organisation) comprising around 10 Water users' co-operative societies, has been constituted in the limits of project area.
3. Till date, we used to buy the inputs needed for the sustainable agriculture from the whole sale traders in retail prices. In doing so, the farmers used to face many problems like financial constraints, purchasing inputs by paying more money, transportation cost, non-availability of seeds, fertilizers at doorsteps.
4. To address this, we have constituted Amrutha FPO in the limits of Ramthal Project Area. Within 3 months after commencement of this organization, Amruta FPO has supplied seeds, fertilizers, pesticides to all the farmers at their doorsteps.
5. Sustainable Agriculture means comprehensive agriculture i.e., the farmers should not depend on only one crop, they should grow all crops needed for daily consumption like red gram, cereals, pulses.
6. Farmers should plant the saplings on the border of the land, grass will become fodder for the cattle, urine and dung from the cattle will become manure.
7. We could get fruits and vegetables from the plants. We have chalked out a programme in our FPO to grow vegetables with the help of DMAC. WRG 2030 and M/s. Ernst & Young has helped us to connect with the market. At first, only the farmers and Irrigation companies M/s. Jain and M/s. Netafim were part of the project. Now days, DMAC and others also coming forward to unite. New roles are emerging here within DMAC.

8. If the Agriculture department, University of Horticulture, and the University of Agriculture are united together, there is no doubt that the project will be successful.
9. Sustainable agriculture provides plenty of opportunities. The companies only purchase the crops after grading. However, the discarded crops should also be evaluated to provide value added produce.
10. We need processing units. When there are processing units, we can process the crops we grow and also use the rejected graded crops and the pulses, oils, food products to develop value added products. The farmer will get appropriate rate for their crops. Then they will get double income in a year, itself.
11. Ramthal project will provide each and every one an opportunity to achieve the success. When all of us united together, we can earn a better outcome.
12. When we talked to the Project Chief Engineer, he told that he will ensure continued percentage-wise allocation of water for Kharif and rabi seasons.
13. In 60,000 hectares of land, there are 15,000 farmers. All of them do not have awareness about the project, do not have technology. Along with the technology, the farmers also need the knowledge for operation of project. For this, we have to demonstrate in their lands.
14. Till date, the representatives of the engineering companies have used 4-5 acres of our land and demonstrated the drip irrigation.
15. When I started drip irrigation in my land, I told people that we should use drip irrigation. Instead of spending our own money for irrigation, let us practice drip irrigation in our lands during late kharif and early summer season i.e; when the land is free after growing toor-dal (pulses), we also have an opportunity to grow summer crops, horticultural crops and usual crops such as water melon, musk melon, brinjal, tomato, wheat, groundnut.
16. The Chief Engineer has assured that the quantum of water which was not used by us in the previous season, could be additionally released and with the additional allocation of water, we can grow the crops in late Rabi/early summer.