

talked about sustainable development of India using smart agriculture technology. Saguna rice technique is a unique zero-till conservation agriculture method, a type of cultivation of rice and related rotation crops without ploughing and transplanting rice on permanent raised beds. According to Bhadsavle, the technique reduced treacherous labour by

50%, cost of production by 40%, stopped emission of greenhouse gases and improved soil fertility.

Lalitha Dhareshwar (Indian Women Scientists' Association), Jayshree Phadnis (Vivekanand Education Society, Mumbai), V. S. Shivankar (Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil College, Navi Mumbai) and A. P. Jayaraman (IDP Education,

Mumbai) participated in the panel discussion on the way forward for sustainable development in India.

**Parul R. Sheth**, E-705/706 Kalp Nagari, Vaishali Nagar, Mulund (W), Mumbai 400 080, India.  
e-mail: parulrsheth@gmail.com

## MEETING REPORT

### Organic farming\*

Organic farming is recognized as one of the recent trends in modern agriculture and lifestyle. It has a special value in the human society to a limited extent. Organic farming and vermicomposting issues need to be part of public awareness, learning and education for a sustainable agriculture. Awareness plays a significant role in promoting knowledge, skills and values necessary for the realization of noble goals of sustainability. For safe and better future of the generations to come, awareness and education play a central role in understanding and mitigating the problems related to modern agriculture.

A conference-cum-workshop was organized recently on vermicompost and organic farming with the overall goal of adopting organic farming to combat agricultural pollution and to provide hands-on training on vermicompost preparation rural to the farmers in remote locations. The theme was chosen to popularize organic farming and utilization of vermicompost in agricultural practice to reduce the impact of chemicals on the environment.

The major discussions were on awareness building, information exchange and the role of organic farming with particular emphasis on the challenges faced by farmers after application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Deliberations were made on three themes. Under the theme 'Organic farming: approaches and

benefits', participants discussed the current status and different aspects of organic farming in India and abroad, and perspectives on how rural farmers in remote locations can prepare for organic farming. Researchers presented their work on their understanding of organic farming and how one can change the entire panorama for this green practice. They shared their experiences on various positive as well as negative aspects associated with organic farming, its awareness status with special emphasis on the North Indian climate, agricultural tools and materials, and agricultural practices.

Under the second theme, the impacts of agro-chemicals on environment were discussed. P. B. Chauhan (SEHAT-India, Delhi) pointed out the environmental problems arising due to the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agricultural fields. He presented almost every possible route of pollution arising in the agricultural sector. He also emphasized that agriculture has a major influence on the economy of our nation. We need to adapt ourselves according to nature and not oppose it by using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Conventional agricultural practice has a great potential in rural India, and it can be implemented after minor modifications. Utilization of agri-waste in crop fields, in-house Gobar gas production, and nature-friendly agriculture with less application of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides are the major key factors for successful and sustainable agriculture.

The third theme dwelt on production and utilization of vermicompost and agricultural pollution mitigation strategies mostly through vermitechnology and integrated pest management. Nitin Pandit (Dhara Organics, Khurja) emphasized on the procedure of vermicompost manufac-

turing and maintaining the vermi-beds in local circumstances. He explained how to adopt vermitechnology in the fields, and how to develop field methods and technologies to produce vermicompost and reduce the impacts of agro-chemicals.

R. Jaswant (SEHAT-India, Meerut) explained the major programmes and initiatives recently carried out by his organization in different arenas. Avnish Chauhan (Phonics Institute, Roorkee) stressed on the need for organic farming and a green society. He lamented how some farmers are using nutrient-rich chemical fertilizers for instant growth of plants. This is resulting in soil fertility problems due to lack of proper enrichment and conditioning of agricultural soil because of changes in soil chemistry and texture. He also stressed on the need to motivate the youth to come forward to adopt organic farming for a better future.

A hands-on training on vermicompost preparation was given to the farmers. Pankaj Saini (SEHAT Organic, Khurja) and Nitin Pandit (Dhara Organic) explained the facts related to vermitechnology application in rural agriculture. Farmers showed deep interest and raised several questions during the training session. In parallel, a poster competition was organized for students of village vicinity, which was appreciated by all. Many farmers felt that such programmes must be organized frequently in rural areas. Discussion among the farmers and experts on various issues made this successful and fruitful event, especially in a remote location.

**Pawan Kumar Bharti**, R&D Division, Shriram Institute for Industrial Research, 19 University Road, Delhi 110 007, India.  
e-mail: gurupawanbharti@gmail.com

\*A report on the conference-cum-workshop for farmers on 'Vermicompost and Organic Farming' organized by the Society for Environment, Health, Awareness of Nutrition and Toxicology (SEHAT-India) on 15 November 2016 with the Junior High School, Jamaalpur Maan, Bijnore with the support of a few progressive farmers.