**Improving water use for dry season agriculture by marginal and tenant farmers in the Eastern Gangetic Plains**

**STAKEHOLDER MEETING**

Date: 30 Sept 2016 Venue: ICAR-RCER, Patna

A stakeholder meeting for ACIAR-ICAR collaborative project ‘ Improving water use for dry season agriculture by marginal and tenant farmers in Eastern Gangetic Plains’ was organized at ICAR Research Complex for Eastern Region, Patna on 30th September, 2016 with a purpose to create awareness about project activities among the line departments for scaling-up of the final products of the project. Different stakeholders like State Government Officials, members of NGOs, IFFCO, Scientists from state agricultural universities, CAU, ICAR-RCER, IWMI and farmers’ representatives participated in the meetings. List of the participants is attached at the end of this report.

**Goal**

* Meeting with state government officials, NGOs, Farmers, suppliers, service provider operating in the project area
* Present project objectives, activities and goals
* Identifying pathways for building synergy in out-scaling and up-scaling

**Agenda**

* Welcome
* Presentation on overview of the project – Dr Erik Schimidt
* Presentation on biophysical interventions– Dr Santosh Mali
* Presentation on social interventions– Mrs Suman Singh
* Facilitated discussions on social and biophysical aspects of the project
* Identifying ways to collaborate with other line departments
* Integration of project outputs in government schemes
* Discussions on policy implications of the project outputs

**Proceedings**

The meeting started with welcome of guests by Dr Tshering of ICAR-RCER. Dr Erik of USQ presented the broader framework of the project highlighting the core idea and objectives of the project. He explained about the partners and the role each of the partners is undertaking to take forward this very important project. Dr Santosh S Mali of ICAR presented the overview of the biophysical activities that are being undertaken at the Madhubani project site. He detailed about the interventions planned at each site in the Bhagwatipur and Mauahi villages. Mrs Suman Singh of Sakhi briefed the audience about the social intervention in bringing out the concept of collective farming.

The issues raised and discussed during the proceedings are summarized below:

* Why submersible pumps are being used since the ground water level is shallow. The ground water table varies within few meters.

Dr Mali explained that the water table mentioned is a static water level and as pumping starts the water level goes deeper and deeper (pumping water level) and at a point of time it becomes out of reach of the suction head of the surface diesel pump. This is a recurrent phenomenon in Rabi and summer which precludes the cropping during these seasons. Therefore, it is necessary to have submersible pumps to get the access to deeper groundwater.

* Need to work on the sustainability of the collective farming:

This issue was concern for many present in the meeting. Mrs. Suman Singh of sakhi said as of now there is overwhelming response to the collective farming. Farmers are visualizing the benefits in terms of not only time and labour saving but also reduction in input required. Farmers are coming forward to work in collectives.

* Out scaling the collective farming system is required in other parts of Bihar too

Many participants appreciated the concept of collective farming and expressed the need to replicate this practice in other parts of the tenancy dominant areas of the state.

* Confidence development of farm women is required especially where male member of the family has migrated.

During dry season most of the land remains uncultivated due to lack of water leading to migration of male members of the family to nearby cities in search of work. Women farmers left behind needs to be provided some support and education such that she develops confidence in herself that will empower her in decision making.

* Agriculture has been carried out since ages but the value of agriculture sector is not so much as other sector and hence, it needs to be developed in professional manner
* Farmers should be linked with the government institutions for sustainability

Since such projects have limited time span, it is important to link the farmers with government schemes to maintain the sustainability of the bio-physical as well as social interventions.

* Sharing findings with Government departments

The findings and strategies of the project need to be shared with the state government officials so that they can replicate such technologies in other villages of Bihar for the benefit of the farmers. Similarly, collective farming needs to be spread out throughout the region

* Tenants are being deprived of government schemes

Tenant farmers are unable to take advantage of government schemes because of the requirement of the document like land papers for subsidy. In this, NGOs are playing bigger role in developing trust with the government to help those tenant farmers for getting the benefits. Government officials also assures that the tenants can also get the benefit of the government schemes if the collective farming group is registered with the government.

* Irrigation/ water use efficiency plays a major role in increasing cropping intensity as well as to reduce the cost of cultivation

There was greater appreciation from the house that the focus of the project is on improving access and efficient utilization of the irrigation water. It is important to work out the mix of technologies that work better in such areas.

* The findings of the project will be very helpful in developing other government schemes and also to approach higher policy makers.

The government officials from rural development and soil conservation department lauded that the findings of the project will definitely assist them in framing the developmental projects of the state governments. They also assured to take the findings of this particular project to higher officials to have larger policy implications.

* Extension of project to water logged areas

In North Bihar, the water logged area is 5 lakh hectares and it is very fertile where crops can be grown in an intensive way so, this project can be enlarged to the water logged areas too.

* Studies on protection of ground water need to be carried out

One of the participants raised the concern over the quality of the groundwater and insisted on monitoring heavy metal concentrations in the groundwater.

* Gender friendly technology need to be looked into

Participants also raised the concern about technologies that are only male friendly. There is a stressing need that the technologies to be gender friendly.

* How the safety of solar pump is dealt?

There are some risks associated in operation of solar pumps and farmers needs to be trained on precautions and safety measures related to pump.

* Training for capacity building

Focus should be given for farmers’ education; farmers’ need awareness programmes on the technologies to be implemented. Government and research institutions together should involve in farmers education and training.

The workshop attained its stated goals. Overall the meeting had some robust discussions on both the bio-physical as well as social components of the project. The need to for integration of project outputs in government schemes was discussed, although the clear-cut outputs and framework for detailed policy document can only be possible towards the end of the project. This meeting was a fruitful exercise to make the government official aware of objectives, activities and the goal of project. This meeting offered great opportunity as a starting point to develop synergy between government officials, NGOs, farmers and the project team.

The meeting ended with vote of thanks by Dr Ajay Kumar of ICAR-RCER, Patna.

**List of the participants**

1. Suman Singh, Secreatary, SAKHI, Bihar
2. Mani Kumar, associate Professor, WALMI, patna
3. Kausal Indra, MT, KF, Samidduin
4. P. Deh Kannyou, IWMI, West Bengal
5. Erik Schmidt, Res. Director, NCEA, USQ, Australia
6. Dr. S.K. Jain, Associate Prof., Dr. RPCAU, Pusa
7. Gulab Yadav, Director, Soil Conservation, Bihar
8. Er Uday Singh, Dy. Director, Planning, Directorate of Soil Conservation
9. Balmiki Sharma, Water User Association, Patna
10. Kapil Dev Kumar, Farmer representative, Patna
11. Umesh Singh, Farmer representative, Patna
12. Alok Kumar, Farmer representative, Patna
13. Kabinda Kumar, Farmer representative, Patna
14. Pradeep Priyadarshi, Farmer representative, Patna
15. Rajen Raju, B R irrigation system
16. U.K. Sharma, Secretary, VASFA, Vaishali
17. Arun Kumar Singh, VASFA, Vaishali
18. Awadesh Kumar, VASFA, Vaishali
19. B.B. Singh, Chief Manager, IFFCO
20. N.G. Pandey, CFNS, NIH, Patna
21. Dr. R.R. Singh, Director, Seed and Farm, BAU, Sabour
22. Pankaj Kumar, Dainik Jagran
23. Arvind Sharma, Dainik Jagran
24. Rijnish Kumar Arya, Sanmarg news
25. Bipin Bihari Singh, IFFCO
26. Manita Ruat, IWMI, Nepal
27. Ram Bastakoti, IWMI, Nepal
28. Stephanie Leder, IWMI, Nepal
29. Romulus Okwans, IWMI, Nepal
30. Shri Anoj, IWMI, India
31. Dr. Asutosh Upadhayay, ICAR RCER Patna
32. Dr. Ajay Kumar, ICAR RCER Patna
33. Dr. Manibhusan, ICAR RCER Patna
34. Dr. A.r. rahman, ICAR RCER Patna
35. Dr. Santosh Mali, ICAR RCER, RC, Ranchi
36. Dr. Tshering Lhamu Bhutia, ICAR RCER Patna
37. Dr. Bikash Sarkar, ICAR RCER Patna
38. Dr. Kamal Sarma, ICAR RCER Patna

**Some snaps during the proceedings of stakeholder meeting**



