

Seed saving has decreased the market dependency

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Sukomal's village is situated in the Sundarban delta, and the soil is clayey and saline. With the limited knowledge he had inherited through generations, Sukomal grew paddy, and some 2-3 varieties of vegetables like chili, sesame, green gram and the like. Rarely, he cultivated fruit and leafy vegetables and mostly depended on vegetables procured from the market.

During one of the awareness cum training camps held in the village school in 2005 by ISWS and DRCSC, Kolkata, he learnt about the various indigenous ways of farming, the new concept of integrated farming system and the know-how of producing vermi-compost. Later during a residential training program, he underwent a training that provided him with both theoretical as well as practical knowledge on the different components of IFS, preparing organic manure, preserving the indigenous seeds of paddy and vegetable crops etc.

A small pond was dug at one corner of his land and the soil excavated was utilized to raise the level of his trial plot. A trench was also made along the inner boundary of his plot to ensure year round irrigation. The outer border of the plot was used to plant some trees like neem, subabul, rain tree, bamboo etc. Some perennial trees surrounding his homestead garden were grown. It included guava, water apple, sapota, lemon, mango and coconut. Throughout the year, he cultivates different vegetables using mixed cropping of various combinations and never runs short of food. He is able to feed his family with a balanced diet and is able to consume fresh vegetables from his garden. If any crop/vegetable is attacked by pest, there are at least 3-4 other crops on which he can sustain.



Being a farmer's son, Sukamal had a practice of seed keeping from his childhood. He used to keep seeds of 2 or 3 popular varieties. Since the HYV and hybrid varieties of seeds had introduced in market with attractive packets prescribing the dose of chemical and pesticide he slanted over the attractive package like other farmers and somehow forgotten his legacy of seed saving. However, after going through the training of preserving seeds, he not only starts to save seeds rather he is preserving seeds in a more scientific way. He learnt about the seed treatment with cow urine, keeping seeds with charcoal and paper to soak moisture. Thus, he is able to reduce the input cost of his farming and the practice become more sustainable.