

# **CENTRE FOR INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS**

## **REPORT OF WORK DONE DURING THE PERIOD**

**APRIL 2016 - MARCH 2017**

### **1. IMPROVING THE LIVELIHOOD AND FOOD SECURITY OF SMALLHOLDER TRIBAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH WADI MODEL AND INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES**

This project funded by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is in progress in Jawadhu hills of Thiruvannamalai district of Tamil Nadu from May 2013 onwards. The project activities are in progress in 39 hamlets covering 702 beneficiary households and 348.5 acres in Kovilur panchayat. WADI fields (small orchard) with fruit crops and border crops have been raised in 400 acres and these are being maintained by 510 beneficiary households. Soil conservation against erosion, organic nutrient management and intercropping are some of the technologies being implemented in these WADI fields. Under other livelihood activities component of this project, 432 beneficiaries are involved in various microenterprises like rearing of cows, goats and pigs, tailoring unit, petti – shops, poultry incubation and fodder cultivation. Beneficiaries of this project have also established kitchen gardens and conserved the seeds for the next season. Smokeless *chulhas* have been provided for the beneficiaries. Agricultural implements including a tractor maintained at the Seramarathur Agricultural Machineries Facilitation Centre are being used by the beneficiaries with minimum rental charges. A total of 40 Participants Groups (PGs), a Village Planning Committee and 18 Farmers' Clubs are in place. A total of 30 vermicompost production units have been established and the farmers maintaining the units are using the vermicompost for their own purpose. Various training programmes comprising of technical trainings, institutional building, health and enterprises related techniques were conducted for the beneficiaries. A total of Rs. 23.5 lakhs worth loan has been provided to 59 beneficiaries for the purchase of milch animals. An Integrated Centre comprising of oil extraction unit, little millet processing unit and the community building with storage facility has been established.

### **2. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE – DST CORE SUPPORT PROGRAMME – PHASE II (2013 - 2018)**

CIKS has been recognized as an institution for Core Support by the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India since 2002. Under this programme, towards the standardization of community input production centers, six community vermicompost units, two community soap making units and a biofertilizer unit are functioning with regular production. Neem oil soaps produced in these community units were utilized for the pest and disease management techniques in 67 acres in Nagapattinam district. A new product of neem, pongam and mahua oil mixed soap has been developed and standardized with 19 field cum laboratory experiments. Under the component on organic seed production, seeds of white ponni and indigenous paddy varieties (4.8 tonnes) were produced. Characteristics of 130 indigenous paddy varieties have been documented by cultivating them in two field locations in Nagapattinam and Kancheepuram districts. Two Producer Companies have been promoted with 6100 shareholders in Nagapattinam and Thiruvannamalai districts. Timely availability of quality inputs for the farmers and premium price for the organic produce are the highlights of these Producer Companies. A total of 34 training programmes, six exposure visits, six financial literacy awareness programmes and 16 credit linkage meetings were conducted.

### **3. WOMEN'S TECHNOLOGY PARK FOR PROMOTING ORGANIC AGRICULTURE**

This project supported by the Department of Science and Technology concluded in July 2016. Project activities were implemented in Kancheepuram, Thiruvannamalai, Nagapattinam, Ramanathapuram, Cuddalore of Tamil Nadu and Karaikal Region in the Pondicherry Union Territory. A total of 2623 women were part of this programme. A total of 16 community vermicompost units, five community organic mushroom cultivation units and 20 *Azolla* cultivation units were established. The processes have also been developed as bankable proposals to enable further dissemination. Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee programme, Rs. 75,000 /- has been sanctioned for the construction of vermicompost tanks and sheds in Nagapattinam and Kancheepuram districts. This is a major impact created under the Block Development Programme for the empowerment of women through vermicompost production. A total of 250 women are involved in fodder cultivation at their backyards. Credit linkages have been established between the

women groups involved in the above activities and local banks, NABARD, Ananya Finance in Gujarat and Shri Ram finance in Chennai. A total of 214 training programmes on sustainable agriculture technologies like vermicompost production, mushroom cultivation, fodder grass cultivation, *azolla* cultivation and vegetable seed production were conducted for the beneficiaries. Technical trainings on vermicompost production and mushroom cultivation were conducted for the Under Graduate students under UGC Refresher programme in Sirkazhi taluk. The project beneficiaries were made shareholders of the Producer Companies promoted by CIKS in their respective districts - Marutham Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company Ltd., in Thiruvannamalai district, Valanadu Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company Ltd., in Nagapattinam district, Neithal Farmers Producer Company in Ramanathapuram district and Cuddalore District Millet Farmers Producer Company Ltd., in Cuddalore district. Twelve women beneficiaries of this project are members of the Board of Directors of the above mentioned first three Producer Companies.

#### **4. STRENGTHENING OF FARMERS THROUGH SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN ALANGADU VILLAGE – PHASE VIII & IX**

This project has been implemented since January 2009 and this focuses mainly on the strengthening of women groups and farmers through Sustainable Agriculture and Livelihood Enterprises in Alangadu village of Sirkazhi taluk. Under this project, a total of four groups viz two groups involving men and two groups involving women were formed and nurtured through trainings on sustainable agriculture. The members of the groups (88 persons) are shareholders of Valanadu Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company in Nagapattinam district. The members have started summer cotton crop cultivation in small areas using available irrigation facilities. Three community enterprises – community vermicompost unit, tailoring and palm products production unit and a community biopesticide unit are functioning in this village involving 15 women beneficiaries. Nearly 14 tonnes of vermicompost has been produced and marketed through Valanadu Company. Products from tailoring and palm products production unit are being marketed through *Thughil* - an outlet promoting handicrafts in Chennai. Nine village girls have learnt tailoring form this unit and started sewing on their own. *Arivu maiyam* (evening tuition centre) is functioning in a common panchayat building with a total of 60 students and four part time teaching volunteers from Alangadu and neighbouring villages. Apart from

education, fine arts and yoga were taught to the children. Construction of a new building for *Arivu maiyam* has commenced in January 2017.

#### **5. SUPPORT FOR VSAPCL FROM RABO BANK FOUNDATION**

This project supported by the Rabo Bank Foundation, Netherlands has commenced in January 2015, for providing assistance and support for capacity building for the Valanadu Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company Limited (VSAPCL), which was promoted by CIKS in Nagapattinam district. In a marketing collaboration with Yem Foods of Coimbatore, 8.4 tonnes of CR1009 certified organic rice has been exported. VSAPCL has also procured groundnut and sesame from the farmers and converted them into oil and marketed it. Valanadu has provided milch animal loans to women shareholders through Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB), India and procures quality milk from the beneficiaries for an additional price of Rs. 4/- per litre. A separate godown cum outlet has been setup at Sirkazhi and it reaches out to 200 consumers daily. The turnover of milk sales in this financial year is Rs. 40 lakhs. Two exposure visits were organised for selected members of the Board of Directors and farmers to Iluppur Farmer Producer Company in Pudukottai and to CODISSIA Intex Expo held in Coimbatore. VSAPCL participated in eight exhibitions cum workshops on organic products awareness held in Chennai, Trichy, Pondicherry and Madurai. A one-day workshop on 'Leadership Qualities and Entrepreneurship' was organized for the SHG leaders at Sirkazhi in July 2016. A total of two BoDs and 30 women from 19 SHGs participated in this programme. SFAC has sanctioned a sum of Rs. 5,65,750/- under the Equity Grant Scheme in March 2016. A working capital loan of Rs. 40.40 lakhs has been sanctioned by NABKISAN in December 2016. During this year, a total of 90 farmers from seven FPOs visited VSAPCL to get to know about the activities. Valanadu has also obtained loan from FWWB - Rs.23.5 lakhs towards milch animal loan and purchase of tractor for a farmers club in Vedharanyam.

#### **6. SUPPORT FOR FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS THROUGH TRAINING PROGRAMMES**

CIKS has been recognized as a Resource Support Agency (RSA) by NABARD for the Producer Organization Promoting Institutions (POPIs) supported under the Produce Fund for the setting up and support for FPOs (Farmer Producer Organizations) in various parts of Tamil Nadu. As part of this commitment, CIKS had completed a set

of three five - day training programmes from July to September 2016. In all about 25 POPIs from various parts of Tamil Nadu involved in the promotion of 170 FPOs participated. All the three training programmes were held in Chennai. The content was a combination of field visits, talks, discussions and practical exercises on various aspects of FPOs. These training programmes provided an exposure to the participants on various topics including - Origin of the Producer Companies, Producer Companies Act, Strategic planning and good practices, Business plan for Producer Companies and generation of proposals for banks. Agricultural insurance, Marketing, Food safety and Standards were also discussed. Field visits were organized to the Marutham Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company in Thiruvannamalai district and discussions were organized with the members of the Board, CEO and staff of the Company. There were also presentations on schemes for the support of Producer Companies from various sources, discussions with officials of NABARD, Banks and the State Government. Possibilities for networking and linkages between the FPOs were discussed. In conclusion the participants also identified various areas in which they needed continued and further support and help.

#### **7. FARMER PRODUCER COMPANIES – EMPOWERMENT AND LIVELIHOODS OF FARMERS : CASE STUDIES FROM TAMIL NADU**

CIKS has been in the process of setting up and supporting Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in the form of Agricultural Producer Companies (APCs) for over four years. Currently, we have promoted / supported 23 APCs in various parts of Tamil Nadu. In this process we have received substantial support and help from Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB) who has provided credit for a large number of FPOs. It was decided to undertake a study of two selected FPOs with the support from FWWB and a report was produced. Two FPOs were selected, one a mature FPO – Marutham Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company and another which is an emerging FPO - Kurinji Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company to understand the factors that go into the performance of the FPOs. A detailed study was made and a report was produced. The section on each of the FPOs discusses the background, membership and governance, activities and structure, the role of women, reflections on the strengths and weaknesses and assessment of the overall impact. The concluding chapter discusses the factors responsible for the growth and nurturing of FPOs, the current challenges and makes suggestions about the way forward. It is

hoped that this would contribute to an understanding of the various factors that can help in the growth and nurturing of FPOs.

#### **8. PROMOTION OF FARMER PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS IN TAMIL NADU – SFAC (PHASE I, II AND III)**

The Small Farmers Agri Business Consortium (SFAC) has identified CIKS as a Resource Institution for the Formation and Strengthening of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in December 2014. Work of this project is in progress in five districts of Tamil Nadu – Cuddalore, Thanjavur, Nagapattinam, Thiruvannamalai and Perambalur. In all the five districts we are collaborating with the Department of Agri-Marketing and Agri-Business. A total of 4769 farmers are the shareholders of these five FPOs. 167 Farmers’ Interest Groups (FIGs) were formed. During this reporting period, 106 village level awareness programmes were conducted covering 2041 farmers. Twenty two exposure visits were organized for the beneficiaries. Capacities of the Board of Directors and FIG Leaders were enhanced through 105 training programmes. The second Annual General Body Meeting was conducted in the respective FPOs. The Cuddalore district FPO has got Rs. 30 lakh of working capital loan from NABKISAN and utilized the same for the procurement of maize, paddy, cotton seeds and fertilizers. The Thanjavur district FPO has availed the working capital loan of Rs. 35 lakhs from Ananya Finance in Gujarat and utilized the same for the procurement and sale of black gram, paddy seeds and grains and sugarcane setts. They also signed an MOU with the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) and facilitated the procurement of black gram. SFAC has sanctioned mini dhal mill for this FPO and installation is in progress. The Nagapattinam district FPO has taken working capital loans of Rs. 15 lakhs from FWWB, Ahmedabad and Rs. 20 lakhs from NABKISAN, Chennai. They utilized the amounts for the production of 90 tonnes of F-II ADT – 43 paddy seeds and the processed seeds were sold under the brand name “Veerachozhan seeds”. The Perambalur district FPC, in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology (IICPT), Thanjavur and with the support from District Collectors’ Fund is involved in the construction of onion value addition unit which is in progress at Chettikulam. A business MoU has been signed between Perambalur FPO and Kerala State Co-operative Marketing Federation in the month of January 2017. The Thenpennai FPO has got the sanction for mini dhal mill. They were also

sanctioned the Equity Grant from Central SFAC for Rs. 9.7 lakhs. Under business activities, a total of 17 tonnes of paddy seeds were sold to the farmers. The Raja Raja Chozhan Farmers Producer Company has procured 278 tonnes of black gram worth Rs.2.3 crores in the financial year and it ranked first among other SFAC companies in business activities.

#### **9. PROMOTION OF FARMER PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS IN TAMIL NADU – SFAC (PHASE IV)**

The Small Farmers Agri Business Consortium (SFAC) has sanctioned the fourth phase of the project for the Formation and Strengthening of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in October 2016. Work under this project is in progress in Cuddalore, Tiruvarur, Thanjavur, Thiruvannamalai (Thiruvannamalai and Cheyyar blocks) and Kancheepuram districts of Tamil Nadu. A total of six FPOs have been promoted in these districts with 4460 shareholders and 227 Farmers' Interest Groups (FIGs).

A total of 181 village level awareness programmes have been conducted covering 3670 farmers. In addition 43 technical trainings and 12 exposure visits were also organized. The first Annual General Body meeting was conducted in the respective Companies. The Tiruvarur district FPO had played a role of the sub - agent for Fazal Bheema Yojna Programme during November 2016. A total of 5897 farmers covering 17894.7 acres in four blocks are part of this programme. Through this activity FPO has gained 6% of the premium collected from these farmers as commission.

#### **10. PROMOTION OF FARMER PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS IN TAMIL NADU (POPI I)**

This project is being implemented under the NABARD PRODUCE Fund scheme from April 2015 onwards. A total of six Farmer Producer Companies with 4101 shareholders have been promoted in Kancheepuram, Dindigul, Thiruvannamalai and Ramanathapuram districts. A series of orientation and technical trainings were organized for the beneficiaries. To build the capacities of Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officers and shareholders different kinds of technical, managerial, financial and legal training programmes and exposure visits were organized. Six Agro Service Centres have been established through these FPCs in their respective working areas. Through these Centres supply of various inputs, groceries, cattle feed and knowledge dissemination activities are being carried out. Credit linkages were created with the

Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB), Ahmedabad and Samunnati, Chennai for working capital and milch animal purchase. Three FPOs under this project were sanctioned with the Equity Grant Fund from SFAC.

**11. PROMOTION OF FARMER PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS IN TAMIL NADU (POPI II)**

This project is being implemented under the NABARD PRODUCE Fund scheme from August 2015 onwards. A total of four Farmer Producer Companies with 1495 shareholders have been promoted in Thiruvannamalai and Dindigul districts. A series of orientation and technical trainings were organized for the beneficiaries. To build the capacities of Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officers and shareholders different kinds of technical, managerial, financial and legal training programmes and exposure visits were organized. Monthly meetings of the Board of Directors and project review meetings were also conducted regularly in all the districts. Five Agro Service Centres have been established through these FPCs in their respective working areas. Through these Centres supply of various inputs, groceries, cattle feeds and knowledge dissemination activities are being carried out. Credit linkages were created with the Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB), Ahmedabad and Samunnati, Chennai for working capital and milch animal purchase. One Producer Company has received the Equity Grant from SFAC.

**12. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ADOPTION OF TECHNOLOGIES (CAT) – IN NAGAPATTINAM, THIRUVANNAMALAI AND KANCHEEPURAM DISTRICTS OF TAMIL NADU**

NABARD has supported three programmes under the CAT (Capacity building for Adoption of Technologies) scheme during this financial year. The first programme was implemented in Nagapattinam district in April 2016. A two-day training programme was organized on the technology of honey bee rearing and value addition at Vibis Nature honey bee farm in Madurai between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2016. These training programmes comprised both practical and class room sessions. A total of 26 farmers participated and got trained on honey bee rearing techniques like identification of honey bees, selection of rearing site, types of honey bees and their important characteristics, design of rearing boxes, honey collection methods, smoking and feeding etc. A follow up session was conducted on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2016 and nearly 30



farmers participated in the training. The trained farmers have decided to start a honey bee rearing unit in Kathiripulam village. The second programme was implemented in Kancheepuram district between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> August 2016. A total of 27 beneficiaries including 13 women from 17 villages have been selected and trained intensively on sustainable agriculture technologies of pulses cultivation. The beneficiaries were also taken to visit the Nachalur Farmers' Producer Company Limited in Nachalur village of Karur district to learn the seed production technology of black gram and the procedures involved in the formation of an Agriculture Producer Company. The third programme was implemented in Thiruvannamalai district in two batches between 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017. A total of 69 beneficiaries from three blocks have been selected and trained on sustainable agriculture technologies related to pulses cultivation. The beneficiaries were also taken to visit the Nachalur Farmers' Producer Company Limited in Nachalur village of Karur district to learn about the seed production technology of black gram and the procedures involved in the formation of an Agriculture Producer Company.

### **13. REPORT ON MEDP PROGRAMMES**

NABARD has supported two projects under the MEDP (Micro Enterprises Development Programme) in Thiruvannamalai and Nagapattinam districts. The first project for matured SHGs – Dairy based Micro Enterprises was implemented in Thiruvannamalai district during the period February - May 2016. Beneficiaries from Ariyapadi and Kattamangalam villages were trained through 26 one-day training programmes on topics related to dairy enterprise.

The second programme on Rice based value added products and vermicompost production was implemented in Nagapattinam district between April – June 2016. The vermicompost production component was implemented in Kuthalam block and 30 beneficiaries have been selected from three villages and trained on the importance of organic farming, use of vermicompost as an alternate manure, production types and procedures, harvest methods, storage and shelf life of vermicompost etc. Participants were also taken to visit the community vermicompost units in Adhamangalam and Allivilagam villages. The component on production of rice based value added products was implemented in Sirkazhi, Mayiladuthurai and Vedharanyam blocks and two batches of 30 beneficiaries were selected from seven villages and trained on the preparation methods of rice appalam, vegetable appalam, and making of appalam and

vadagam using solar dryer, packaging and labeling etc. Practical sessions were also conducted. Beneficiaries were also taken to visit the Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology (IICPT) in Thanjavur to get to know about the equipments used in the value addition procedures. As a result of these trainings, two farmers groups - Shri Muruga SHG in Vadamazhai village and Sri Perumal SHG in Semmanarkovil were formed for the production of traditional rice based value added products and two women SHGs were formed in Komal and Manganallur villages for vermicompost production. The rice based value added products are marketed through the Valanadu Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company in Nagapattinam.

**14. PROMOTION OF JOINT LIABILITY GROUPS AND CREATING CREDIT LINKAGES IN KANCHEEPURAM, THIRUVANNAMALAI AND RAMANATHAPURAM DISTRICTS**

This project supported by NABARD to promote Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) in Kancheepuram, Thiruvannamalai and Ramanathapuram districts is being implemented from March 2015. Under this project, it has been proposed to promote 600 JLGs, 200 each in Kancheepuram, Thiruvannamalai and Ramanathapuram districts. In Kancheepuram district, Uthiramerur, Achirapakkam, Madhuranthakam and Thirukazhukundram taluks have been selected and a total of 21 JLGs have been formed. In Thiruvannamalai district, Vandavasi, Thellar, Peranamallur and Chetpet taluks have been selected and 19 JLGs have been promoted. In Ramanathapuram district, Kamudhi and Paramakudi taluks have been selected and 13 JLGs have been promoted. Savings bank accounts have also been opened for all these JLGs. Efforts are in full swing to promote remaining number of JLGs and to create credit linkages with banks.

**15. DISSEMINATION OF YIELD INCREASING TECHNIQUES IN GROUNDNUT CULTIVATION THROUGH SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES IN THIRUVANNAMALAI**

This project supported by NABARD under its FSPF (Farm Sector Promotion Fund) has been implemented in Thiruvannamalai district and concluded in March 2017. A total of 150 beneficiaries including 41 women from five Blocks of Thiruvannamalai district were selected and trained. Five training programmes on sustainable agriculture technologies related to increasing the yield in groundnut

cultivation were conducted for the beneficiaries along with five follow up trainings and three exposure visits. A total of 25 acres of demonstration fields were set up using the quality seeds of VRI 2 variety. Organic inputs like neem seed powder, biofertilizers and non chemical pest control materials have also been distributed. Through this project, farmers have realized the impact of reduced cost of cultivation and increased yield in groundnut cultivation. Five VABDSPs selected and trained under this programme are now providing their support for the strengthening of five FPCs in Thiruvannamalai district.

**16. INCREASING THE INCOME LEVEL OF FARMERS THROUGH PRODUCTION, VALUE ADDITION AND MARKETING OF INDIGENOUS RICE VARIETY – SEERAGA SAMBA**

This project from NABARD under its Farm Sector Promotion Fund (FSPF) is in progress in Thiruvannamalai district from April 2016 onwards. Vandavasi, Thellar and Peranamallur blocks have been selected for the implementation of the project. Literature survey as well as physical survey on availability of indigenous paddy varieties has been completed. A total of 323 farmers including 122 women were trained through 20 training programmes on indigenous rice varieties, organic farming and seed production technologies. Three exposure visits were organized to the CIKS Indigenous Seed Conservation Centre in Sukkankollai and *Seeraga Samba* seed Production and Processing Unit in Manimegalai Rice Mill, Kalavai, Vellore district. Information booklets on Organic Paddy Cultivation and Traditional Paddy Varieties have been distributed to the beneficiaries. Demonstration fields have been established in 10 acres and necessary inputs have been distributed to the beneficiaries. Procurement of *Seeraga Samba* paddy seeds and grains from the farmers is in progress. A documentary video film about this project is also at the finishing stage.

**17. INCREASING THE INCOME LEVEL OF FARMERS THROUGH PRODUCTION, VALUE ADDITION AND MARKETING OF INDIGENOUS RICE VARIETY – KUZHIADICHAN**

This project supported by NABARD under its FSPF programme is being implemented in Ramanathapuram district from April 2016 onwards. In Ramanathapuram district, project work is in progress in Kamuthi, Paramakudi and Mudhukulathur blocks. Literature survey as well as physical survey on availability of indigenous paddy

varieties has been completed in Ramanathapuram, Pudukottai and Tuticorin. Twenty training programmes on indigenous rice varieties, organic farming and seed production techniques have been conducted. Three exposure visits were organized to the CIKS Indigenous Seed Conservation Centre in Sukkankollai. Demonstration fields have been established in 10 acres. Information booklets on Organic Paddy Cultivation and Indigenous Paddy Varieties have been distributed to the beneficiaries. A documentary video film about this project is also at the finishing stage.

**18. A PILOT PROGRAMME FOR INITIATING RURAL WOMEN INTO AN ENTERPRISE USING BIOMASS DRYERS UNDER AICRP ON BIOMASS BASED TRAY DRYERS - DINDIGUL DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU**

This pilot project is being implemented under the support of DST since August 2016. Under this project, a biomass drier has been installed in Sendurai village of Natham taluk in Dindigul district. Awareness meetings have been conducted to women groups about biomass drier. A women group has been identified to become entrepreneurs by using this biomass drier. Trial run followed by main functioning of this biomass drier will be taking place shortly.

**19. RETAINING VILLAGE YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES – A PILOT PROGRAMME IN NAGAPATTINAM DISTRICT**

This project has been sanctioned in December 2016 with financial support from Rabo Bank Foundation, Employee Fund. This is being co-financed by NABARD, Chennai. The objective of this programme is to empower village based youth through capacity building programmes on technology, credit availing strategies and marketing aspects. A total of 60 members including five women have been selected from Nagapattinam district and will be trained through four training programmes on black gram cultivation techniques, integrated farming and water conservation methods with eminent experts. Initially, exposure visits were organised to the integrated farm in Kollumangudi and black gram field in Kadalangudi. During training session on 27<sup>th</sup> March, Mrs. Mildred Xess, General Manager, NABARD, Chennai and Mr D.Ganesh, DDM, NABARD Nagapattinam addressed the participants about the involvement of youth in agriculture today. This project has been co-financed by NABARD, Chennai.

**20. NAMMA NELLU - AN EFFORT TO SAVE TRADITIONAL RICE VARIETIES**

The efforts of CIKS in conserving indigenous rice varieties since 1995 took a new full-fledged shape in the name of *Namma Nellu* (Our Paddy) from 2016. It is a conceptualized initiative with broader objectives to channelize dedicated efforts to conserve traditional paddy varieties in Tamil Nadu. Under this effort, conservation activities are in progress in two locations - CIKS research farm in Sukkankollai village of Kancheepuram district and in Agani village of Nagapattinam district. During this year 25 new varieties of rice have been collected from three districts of Tamil Nadu through field survey. These varieties have been cultivated in the Sukkankollai farm for the purpose of seed multiplication and conservation. During this year a total of 128 varieties have been cultivated in Sukkankollai farm and in Sirkazhi area of Nagapattinam district 74 varieties have been cultivated. To take this effort forward, a detailed action plan has been worked out to involve various stakeholders in the conservation effort in the forthcoming year. A website ([www.nammanellu.com](http://www.nammanellu.com)) for this initiative has been launched and it provides comprehensive information on conservation efforts and traditional paddy varieties.