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## Director General of CAPART visits CIKS

On 10th January Sri. Rangan Dutta, IAS, Director General, CAPART visited CIKS. He visited our office at Chennai and met all the members of the team. He was given an overview about our work. After this he took part in a function organised at Singaperumal Koil in which about 300 farmers participated. During this function he released a book on "Indigenous Rice Varieties". The same book

in Tamil was released by the Assistant Director of Agriculture, Chengalpet. During this function the DG also honoured farmers who had made significant contribution for seed conservation. Farmers also made presentations of their experiences. After this function Sri Rangan Dutta visited our farm and he was appraised of our activities there. At the farm he had a face to face interaction with a group of farmers.



Sri Rangan Dutta honours seed conservator  
Sri Kothandarama Pillai

## Chandigarh Farmers for an Organic Revolution

At the invitation of the Regional Committee of CAPART based at Chandigarh CIKS organised an Organic Farming Workshop for farmers of Punjab, Harayana, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal at Chandigarh from 28th to 30th January. Vijayalakshmi and Subhashini Sridhar were the resource persons from CIKS. Over 60 farmers attended this workshop. The farmers were given training on different aspects of organic farming and a lot of enthusiasm was exhibited by the participants.

## CIKS at Sirkazhi

Since January CIKS has a field office at Sirkazhi, in Tamil Nadu. Programmes at Sirkazhi are coordinated by our Research Associate Mrs. Subhashini Sridhar. We wish her all the best in her new venture.

## New Projects at CIKS

### 1. Website for the COMPAS Project

Our centre has been entrusted with the responsibility of developing a website for the COMPAS project. The website will provide information about the COMPAS programme and the 27 partners of the programme spread all over the world. It would be bilingual (in English and Spanish).

### 2. Rufford Small Grants Award

The Whitley Award Foundation based in UK has given Dr. K. Vijayalakshmi, Research Director of our centre a Rufford Small Grants Award for conservation of indigenous seed varieties. This award grant will be used to strengthen its efforts on conservation. We at CIKS consider this as a significant recognition for our work.

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## **PROJECT WATCH**

*A round-up of our activities this quarter*

### ***Learning about herbs***

In the month of February our trainers being trained under the “Women in Conservation Programme” had an opportunity to learn about the usage of medicinal plants for common ailments. Mr. Arumuga Achariar, a folk practitioner along with his assistant were the resource people for this workshop. He gave a detailed lecture which was followed by an interactive question and answer session. The trainees were also taught to identify common herbs. In the afternoon the participants had an opportunity to view some interesting videos on folk practitioners and local health traditions.

### ***Self help through Ayurveda at Anjur***

In the month of March our trainers had an opportunity to learn certain simple remedies of Ayurveda. The course was conducted by Ayurvedic physicians Dr. Gowthaman and Dr. Shyam Sundar on 29<sup>th</sup> March. The participants were given an overview of the principles of preparing ayurvedic medicines. The theory of preparing four ayurvedic medicines which could be used for common ailments was given in detail. After this the participants prepared all the four medicines which included Ashta churnam, Dhavala lepam, Triphala kashayam and Thulasi thailam. Participants evinced a keen

interest to learn to make more such preparations.

### ***Seed Conservation Programmes***

Our seed conservation programmes are in active progress with several of its components being supported by various agencies. For the current season (Navarai Dec. - April) we are conserving 12 kinds of vegetables (a total of 21 varieties). These are being conserved by more than 50 women. 8 short duration indigenous varieties of paddy are being conserved in the in-situ conservation plot at Anjur. Visits to rice research station at Aaduthurai was undertaken to collect indigenous varieties from their collection. Work is in progress to identify new villages and new indigenous seed conservators.

### ***Organic Cotton Cultivation***

We are continuing experiments on organic cultivation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in the village Konganancheri in a half-an acre plot. Seeds were sown in the month of January after treatment with cowdung slurry. A spacing of 1½ feet between rows and ½ a feet spacing between plants was provided. Along with cotton, intercrops like sunflower, ladies finger, green gram are grown which attract pests like army worm, spotted bollworm, green hoppers respectively. Castor is cultivated as a border crop since this attracts a large number of cotton pests.

## **SKILLS UPDATE**

*An overview of courses attended by our staff*

### ***Training Programme on Integrated Pest Management***

Our Research Associate Mrs. Subhashini Sridhar attended a ten day training programme between 14<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> of January organised by the National Centre for Integrated Pest Management in New Delhi. She was exposed to various new developments in this area.

### ***Field Staff Enter Cyberspace***

With the increasing impact of internet in all aspects of our lives we felt it was important to train our field staff also on the possibilities of internet and its uses. A training workshop was organised for them on 13<sup>th</sup> February at our office. Our consultant Anand Ramachandran of Vistaas conducted this workshop and gave them an overview of the possibilities of web and its related components. This was followed by a practical session. We also hope to have regular programmes to update their knowledge on these subjects and they would also be provided time for regular practice with the computers.

### ***Basic Training Course on Biodynamic Agriculture***

Our researcher Arumuga samy attended the week long basic course on biodynamic agriculture from March 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> at Sacred Hearts College,

Shenbaganur, Kodaikanal. This course was conducted by stalwarts in biodynamic agriculture like Dr. Peter proctor and Raichen pomerooy of Newzealand, Mr. Jaykaran and Mr. Jaison Jerome of Kurinji farms, Kodaikanal and others. The course was a very rigorous one and the participants were kept busy from 7 in the morning to 9 in the night. The morning sessions started with a one hour walk during which the participants identified various plants and their uses. After an intense theory session in the mornings the participants had an equally intense session on practicals in the afternoons during which they learnt to make several biodynamic preparations. Participants were also given an opportunity to exchange notes on each others work in organic agriculture.

### ***Web Multimedia Design Course***

Our Office Manager Ramesh successfully completed a Web Multimedia Design Course conducted by SA International in collaboration with Elcot, Tamilnadu. This was a two month course which included Internet Terminology and services, Web page creation, Photoshop, HTML, Dream Weaver, Multimedia web page design, Gif Animation etc. It was a very useful course for Ramesh and we hope to use his skills in our website work regularly.

# CIKS TALK

*Seminars, Discussions, Presentations, Workshops, Fairs...*

## ***Sustainable Access for Rural Areas through Internet (SARI)***

On 3rd January, A.V. Balasubramanian and K. Vijayalakshmi attended a meeting convened at IIT, Chennai to discuss the project for - "Sustainable Access for Rural areas through Internet (SARI)".

On 28th January, A.V. Balasubramanian attended a meeting at IIT where the partners of the SARI project met with representatives from Harvard University and MIT Media lab for discussing possibilities of collaboration. Balu made a presentation regarding the development of content in Indian languages that is relevant to rural Tamil Nadu.

## ***FRLHT Meeting on Kitchen Herbal Gardens***

On 22nd January a group of four members from CIKS (A.V. Balasubramanian, K.S. Sudhakar, S. Arumugasamy and E. Damodaran) attended a one day meeting organised by FRLHT to develop a programme for setting up one million Kitchen Herbal Gardens in the Tamil Nadu state. The meeting was held at the M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation at Chennai and attended by officials of the Ministry of Health from the Central and State Government as well as representatives from NGOs.

## ***Workshop on Medicinal Plants***

Sudhakar of our centre participated in the National Symposium on Medicinal Plants organised at the St. Joseph's college, Trichy on 5th and 6th February. He presented a paper on Knowledge of Medicinal plants among Nattu Vaidyas and women in the Kattankulathur block (our field area).

## ***Festival of Germany in India, Bhopal***

A.V. Balasubramanian participated in the international symposium on - "Global and Local knowledge Systems" that was organised by the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, (National Museum of Mankind) at Bhopal on February 19th - 20th as part of festival of Germany in India Celebrations. He presented a paper - "The relationship between folk and classical knowledge in Indian Knowledge systems".

## ***Visit to Biocontrol / Biopesticide Units and Organic Farms in Erode***

Our research assistant Mr. Jayashankar undertook a two day visit to Erode and surrounding areas. During this trip he visited several farmers in different villages who had successfully used Panchakavya. He also visited the village based biopesticide unit of Sri Chellamuthu. It

was very interesting for us to know that Sri Chellamuthu has made a very profitable business out of selling plant extracts. He also visited the biocontrol unit of Sri Rajendran.

## ***Biodiversity consultation at ADS, Karjat, Maharashtra***

Subhashini Sridhar attended the 3 day workshop on biodiversity consultation hosted by Academy of Development Science at Karjat, Maharashtra between 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> March. Several NGOs working in the area of seed conservation participated in this 3 day consultation. Participants shared their experiences relating to problems of seed conservation efforts. Plant varieties protection bill and biodiversity bill were discussed. Efforts to strengthen community seed banks, means to acknowledge innovative farmers, protection against biopiracy, methods to reclaim genetic resources, creation of seed networks, certification of seeds were some of the issues discussed during this consultation.

## ***Exhibition on Organic Farming***

Arumugasamy and Neela megam participated in a one day workshop and exhibition on organic farming and herb cultivation organized by Horticulture growers association at Erode on 31<sup>st</sup> March. The work shop was well attended and our staff interacted with hundreds of farmers.

## ***Participation in the International Conference on Biodynamic Agriculture***

Two of our researchers Sudhakar and Subramaniam participated in the International Conference on bio-dynamic agriculture organised by the biodynamic association of India in Bangalore from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> of March. The conference attracted participation from various NGOs, government agencies, plantation groups and other enthusiasts of organic and biodynamic agriculture.

## ***Meeting to Review FRLHT Programmes***

At the invitation of FRLHT, A.V. Balasubramanian attended a one day meeting at Bangalore for reviewing the proposed five year work plan of two divisions of FRLHT namely - the traditional systems of medicine group and the laboratory group.

## ***KYM Board of Studies Meeting***

A.V. Balasubramanian has been invited to be a member of the Board of Studies of the KYM institute of Yoga studies and he attended the first meeting of the Board held on 21st January.

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## VISITORS BOOK

*A look at who's been dropping in at CIKS*

- On 11th January Dr. Patrick Gomez, Professor and Head of Department of Botany, St. Joseph College, Trichy visited us and invited us to participate in the National Symposium on Medicinal Plants to be held in Trichy in February 2001.
- On 3rd February Dr. Maria Picci of Italy from Human Ecology Workshop, Courtallam visited us.
- On 7th February, Ms. Shakunthala Rani, Chair person, Craft Education and Research Centre of Kalakshetra Foundation visited us.
- On 8th February, Dr. Patrice Cohen, Head, Department of Social Sciences, French Institute Pondicherry visited us.
- On 8th February Dr. Usha Krishnan and Ms. Prisciilla, faculty of Botany of Stella Mary's College - wanted our help in students projects as well as our involvement in teaching a course - "Indian Systems of Medicine" for final year Botany students.
- On 9th February Sri Gopi Warriar of Business Line visited us to Interview about the National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan.
- On 11th February Ms. Madhu Kishwar of Manushi visited us.
- On 28th February Dr. E.S. Mahendraraja of Gnanammal Integrated Research Farm, Kandy, Srilanka visited our centre.
- On 12th March Ms. Shonar Joshi of Aurobindo Society visited us to discuss regarding resurgent India project.
- On 13th March Mrs. Valli Annamalai visited us to discuss about organic treatment for a neem tree affected by fungus.
- On 15th March Dr. Vijay Chariar, Secretary PPST Foundation, visited our centre.
- On 15th March Dr. Balchander Tembe of the Department of Chemistry, IIT Mumbai visited our centre.

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