

## Centre For Indian Knowledge Systems

### Report of Work Done During the Period April 2024- March 2025

#### 1. The Sustainable Agriculture Value Chain Development Project

The Sustainable Agriculture Value Chain Development project, supported by the Supraja Foundation, Hong Kong, is underway for a three-year period, from November 2022 to October 2025. This initiative is implemented across three districts of Tamil Nadu—Tiruvannamalai, Dindigul, and Pudukkottai—encompassing 10 taluks, 14 blocks, 72 panchayats, and 175 hamlets. The project aims to establish sustainable linkages between the production and marketing of value-added products like tamarind, coconut, honey, kodo millet, foxtail millet, little millet, and groundnut. It also actively promotes the creation and operation of green enterprises.

#### Key Stakeholders and Beneficiaries

Five Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) that are actively involved in this project:

- **Tiruvannamalai district:** Cheyyar Farmer Producer Company Limited (CFPCL) and Chengam Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company Limited (CSAPCL)
- **Dindigul district:** Kurinji Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company Limited (KSAPCL) and Ayyampalayam Farmers Producer Company Limited (AFPCL)
- **Pudukkottai district:** Pudukkottai Organic Farmer Producer Company Limited (POFPCL)

Alongside these FPCs, five Farmers Interest Groups (FIGs) from the same districts are also actively involved. The project has successfully onboarded a total of 4,964 beneficiaries, with women comprising 43% (2,134 individuals) across the three districts.

#### Capacity Building and Enterprise Development

58 project orientation meetings and 25 training sessions were conducted for beneficiaries. These sessions covered pivotal topics such as sustainable agricultural technologies, value addition in millets, coconut, groundnut, and tomato, green manure seed production, and organic practices. Exposure visits were part of the training program to enhance the knowledge of beneficiaries, specifically to FPC directors and CEOs. These visits included trips to organic vegetable cultivation sites, agricultural exhibitions, and National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM). Monthly meetings for FPC Directors were consistently held at their respective FPC offices.

Two FPCs received direct support for packaging material, design, and label printing. The project also established 5 green enterprises, one for each farmers group. These enterprises comprise units for enriched farmyard manure preparation, two neem seed processing units, a green manure seed production unit, and a coir rope and mat preparation unit.

Equipment provided for value addition included:

- Millet murukku and idly/dosa batter machines
- Vacuum packing machines
- Automatic filler machines
- Sealing machines
- Inkjet printers
- Two cattle feed production units
- A pneumatic single-head oil filling machine
- Air compressor
- Hand sealer

### **Financial Linkages and Compliance**

A significant credit linkage of Rs. 170 lakhs were facilitated for two FPCs through NABKISAN Finance Ltd. and Society for Rural and Environmental Development (SRED). All five FPCs successfully completed their statutory compliance for FY 2023–24, which included accounts audits, annual filing, and GST filing. FPCs are actively engaged in procuring raw materials such as millets, tamarind, coconut, groundnut, honey, and fruits directly from farmers, undertaking value addition, and marketing the processed products.

### **Monitoring and Outreach**

Monthly review meetings were held regularly to monitor project progress effectively. The project also contributed to knowledge dissemination with the release of a publication titled “Traditional Rice Varieties of Tamil Nadu – A Compendium” in English. The team participated in the Supraja Partners Meeting held on January 27-28, 2025, in Bengaluru. Recent assessments included an impact analysis by Monk Prayogshala Research Services Ltd., and an evaluation visit by a two-member team from Supraja Foundation to Chengam SAPCL on March 17, 2025.

## **2. Strengthening Chengam SAPCL: A NABARD-Supported Initiative**

This project, implemented under NABARD’s Producer Organisation Development Fund (PODF) scheme since April 2023, focuses on extension of handholding support of Chengam Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company Limited (CSAPCL) in Chengam Taluk, Tiruvannamalai District.

As part of this initiative, comprehensive training programs were conducted for the Directors and CEO. These sessions covered topics such as sustainable agricultural technologies, value addition in millets, coconut, groundnut, and tomato, green manure seed production, and organic farming practices for various crops. To further enhance their understanding of improved agricultural practices, exposure visits to organic vegetable cultivation fields were also organized for the FPC Directors and CEO.

To ensure smooth functioning and effective decision-making, regular monthly meetings for the FPC Directors were consistently held at the CSAPCL office. The company has successfully completed all

statutory compliance requirements for the financial year 2023–24, including accounts audit, annual filing, and GST filing.

### **3. CIKS and MCRC Collaborate on Traditional Rice Variety Conservation**

The Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems (CIKS), in collaboration with the Murugappa Chettiar Research Centre (MCRC), is implementing a five-year project, running from April 2023 to March 2028. This initiative focuses on the conservation, cultivation, documentation, and scaling up of Traditional Rice Varieties (TRVs).

#### **Samba 2024 Season Activities**

During the Samba 2024 season (July 2024 – January 2025), CIKS conserved 171 traditional rice varieties across 1.45 acres at its Technology Resource Centre (TRC). Following seed-to-seed cultivation practices, the harvested seeds were securely stored in the centre's seed bank. Additionally, 47 boutique rice varieties were cultivated on 5.9 acres, with their seeds now in the dedicated seed storage room. Detailed documentation of characteristics was completed for both the 171 conserved TRVs and the 47 boutique varieties. Seeds were cultivated organically using natural inputs like organic manures and growth regulators, and protected through sustainable, non-chemical pest and disease management practices. To protect the crops from wild pig attacks, a range of preventive measures were implemented. These included lighting and sound systems, human hair application, bursting crackers, drone-based organic repellent spraying, barbed wire fencing, and manual crop monitoring.

#### **Navarai 2025 Season and Seed Distribution**

For the Navarai 2025 season (January – April 2025), six boutique rice varieties were cultivated over 4.23 acres, and these crops are currently in the vegetative stage. The project successfully distributed 1,044 kg of seeds from 13 traditional rice varieties to 105 farmers.

#### **Training, Procurement, and Knowledge Sharing**

10 sessions on organic cultivation methods of traditional rice were conducted across various districts including Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur, Cuddalore, Ulundurpet, Krishnagiri, Pudukkottai, Nagapattinam, Mayiladuthurai, and Ramanathapuram. Furthermore, 10.71 metric tons of seeds from 7 traditional rice varieties were procured from farmers for distribution in the coming year. As part of the collaboration, a two-member team from MCRC visited the CIKS Technology Resource Centre and trained staff on the preparation of biochar and humic acid. Reinforcing the project's knowledge dissemination efforts, a publication titled "Traditional Rice Varieties of Tamil Nadu – A Compendium" was released in English.

#### **4. Enhancing Market Reach: Chengam SAPCL's Mobile Initiative**

To strengthen its marketing efforts, the Chengam Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company Limited (CSAPCL) has been implementing a project since December 2023, with support from NABARD's Micro Credit Innovation Development Fund (MCID) scheme. Through this scheme NABARD has sanctioned physical marketing of products- a movable cart to the CSAPCL. This initiative aims to strengthen CSAPCL's market presence in Chengam Taluk, Tiruvannamalai District.

#### **5. Enhancing Vegetable Biodiversity: The Varietal Diversity Project**

The Varietal Diversity Project, initially a one-year pilot from October 2022 to September 2023, has been extended for another year. Based on an initial survey, seeds of suitable traditional vegetable varieties were collected from farmers and stored at the CIKS - Technology Resource Centre (TRC). After thorough germination tests and assessment of other seed quality parameters, traditional vegetable seed kits, each containing 20 different varieties, were distributed to 100 members in Chennai. To further empower participants, an advanced-level training program on terrace gardening with traditional vegetable varieties was held for women Self-Help Group (SHG) members on July 31, 2024. Seed kits were also distributed to attendees during this training. A series of follow-up visits were conducted to assess the performance of these traditional vegetable seeds in their new environments. Currently, 20 varieties across 13 traditional vegetable types are being conserved at both the CIKS - TRC and in the terrace gardens of selected beneficiaries and farmers, contributing to broader varietal diversity.

#### **6. Support for Sustainable Agriculture Activities from WOKA Foundation**

The WOKA Foundation of USA extended their support for a three-year (from December 2022 to November 2025) period for sustainable agriculture activities of CIKS. This vital support primarily covers human resources and various aspects of Traditional Rice Varieties (TRVs) conservation, characterization, scaling up, and biochemical and nutritional analysis. Beyond TRVs, the funding also focuses on building the technical and soft skills of CIKS team members.

##### **Skill Development Highlights**

Some of the specific activities taken up as part of skill development are:

- On June 19, 2024, a First Aid training session was held for CIKS team members.
- A Social Media training session was conducted by Mr. Aravind, a Designer, at the CIKS Office in April 2024.
- Vaidya Poorvashri Pendse led a workshop on "Ayurveda, food, and Home remedies for treating common ailments" on September 13, 2024. Eight team members attended this workshop, which included both theoretical and practical sessions.

- Mr. Anand Ramachandran, an expert in the field, conducted another workshop on this theme on October 19, 2024, attended by 9 CIKS team members.

Based on a recent review, the WOKA Foundation has extended its support for an additional year, through October 2026.

## **7. Revitalizing Traditional Rice Varieties: Namma Nellu Programme**

In 2024-2025, our core objectives were to conserve germplasm and promote Traditional Rice Varieties (TRVs). This involved enhancing seed production and processing, adding value to products, and raising awareness. We made significant progress in these areas, ensuring the resurgence and sustainability of TRVs.

### **Conservation and Cultivation Efforts**

We successfully conserved **171 TRV varieties** and produced high-quality seeds organically, across 1.45 acres at the **CIKS Technology Resource Centre (TRC)** in Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu. Over two seasons, 47 traditional rice varieties were cultivated on 6 acres at the CIKS Farm. We meticulously documented 24 characteristics for these TRVs, including plant height, leaf length, tiller count, panicle length, and key dates such as flowering and harvest, along with grain and straw yield. A pilot survey across 8 districts of Tamil Nadu and Karaikal assessed the current status of TRVs, leading to the collection of 15 additional TRV seeds. To ensure quality, seed germination tests were conducted to provide farmers with the best possible seeds.

### **Scaling Up and Farmer Empowerment**

Our assistance enabled farmers from **nine districts in Tamil Nadu** to begin cultivating TRVs on **over 10,000 acres**. To support these farmers, we organized orientation meetings, training sessions, and monitoring visits. Market connections were established with six farmer producer companies, various traders, and a private limited company, empowering farmers to start marketing TRV grains and rice. We also distributed seeds of **41 TRVs to 612 farmers** across 14 districts, facilitating quality seed production across 680 acres.

### **Value Addition and Product Development**

To diversify product offerings, Ms. Nalina Kannan led training sessions on preparing value-added products from TRVs, such as **vadagam and rice cookies**. Equipment for the value addition and bakery units has been installed, and we're currently producing two value-added products and five different cookie varieties.

### **Capacity Building and Awareness**

Various initiatives were conducted to build capacity and raise awareness. These included a **seed sowing festival**, sustainable TRV cultivation training for staff, capacity-building workshops for farmers, and awareness programs for students. To effectively manage challenges, various techniques, including

the use of crackers and nighttime monitoring, were implemented to deter wild pigs in TRV fields. We also conducted experiments aimed at protecting TRVs from pests and diseases while increasing yield, following the principles of Vrکشayurveda. We're proud to report that the **organic certification for CIKS land was renewed** following a thorough inspection by the organic certification agency IMO in Bangalore.

To further promote awareness, we showcased TRVs at various expos and fairs. A press conference, attended by 25 reporters from television channels, newspapers, and magazines, highlighted our efforts to revive TRVs, resulting in significant media coverage. In collaboration with Pasumai Vikatan, we hosted a state-level workshop on TRV cultivation and value-added product preparation, drawing 33 participants from 13 districts of Tamil Nadu. Our notable publication, **“Traditional Rice Varieties of Tamil Nadu: A Source Book,”** has garnered significant interest, with 442 downloads between April 2024 and March 12, 2025, from individuals eager to learn about the benefits and richness of traditional rice cultivation.

These activities are being supported by several individual donors and as well as by the Turbo Energy Pvt Ltd as part of their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility).