

They prove farming too is rewarding

T. Ramakrishnan

MORAPPUR/MELMARVUATHUR: At a time when the debate is on at the national level as to how to make agriculture an attractive proposition, Tamil Nadu has to offer at least two examples of young farmers who have realised that agriculture too can be rewarding.

Not only they are eager to chart a different path by going in for crops other than paddy but also ready to adopt less-practised and even costlier methods such as micro irrigation. Needless to say, they make efforts to acquire new knowledge in farming, even though they come from traditional agricultural background.

V. Deivendran of Annamalaipatti near Morappur hails from a water-starved and backward district of Dharmapuri. Till eight years ago, after acquiring a degree certificate, he was like yet another rural lad – going to cities in search of jobs. When he found that his search was not yielding any success, Deivendran decided to take to farming, rather, out of compulsion.

This 36-year-old farmer, who says he owns about 3.5 acres of land, initially went by the conventional method of raising paddy, even though Morappur, the block under which his village comes, is identified at the national level as one of the over-exploited areas in terms of groundwater. About six or seven months ago, he came in contact with officials of the Centre of Excellence for Change (CEC), an organisation formed by officials from a variety of government bodies and institutions of higher

education and which also collaborates with those in charge of the Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water-Bodies Restoration and Management project.

Deivendran's exposure to the CEC representatives made him reflect the way he had been doing farming. The CEC officials advised him to raise horticultural crops and adopt micro irrigation. They have also helped him avail himself of the State government's subsidy scheme.

J. Parthasarathy of Perumperkandigai near Melmaruvathur of Kancheepuram district is another example of an enterprising farmer, who is willing to go an extra mile.

His area is relatively better placed than Annamalaipatti of Dharmapuri district in terms of water availability. Yet, he sees benefits in the adoption of concepts such as system of rice intensification, which involves less nursery area, water and labour and fewer seeds.

When the CEC officials visited the village some months ago to disseminate information regarding the alternative cropping method, he was among the early to respond positively. "At least there is 25 per cent increase in yield," he says, whose landholding size is around 30 acres. There is government support available for SRI too.

Parthasarathy, who has raised only paddy for the last 18 years, is planning to grow maize in a part of his land. "I would not have done it but for the CEC officials' advice, which was rendered at my doorstep," he says.