

SSI farmer: SSI: More with Less

Hurshiksha Mohanty, a successful Organic SSI farmer:

Hurshiksha Mohanty is an inhabitant of Biradi Sahi village of Biruda gram panchayat of Nayagarh block in Nayagarh district of Orissa. Today, he is acclaimed as a successful SSI farmer and leads a happy life with



his wife and another fifteen family members. Although he learnt most of the farming techniques he applies now from his mother, but he owes his success of being an 'SSI farmer' to NIRMAN's field staff, who helped him in interventions and landscaping his piece of land and in adopting integrated farming system.

His village is situated in the small fertile valley region formed by intersection of hilly ranges in the West and its North Eastern parts. The soil is alluvial, mixed red and black clayey and acidic. With the limited knowledge, he had inherited through generations;

Hrushiksha has been growing paddy, vegetables, pulses like black gram & green gram, sugarcane 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 2010 by NIRMAN, he learnt about the SRI approach in sugarcane cultivation; the new concept of sugarcane farming along with possibilities of intercropping system and the know-how of preparation of various organic manures and pest repellent solutions attracted him to adopt the SSI ways of farming. Later during an on-field training-cum-demonstration program, he underwent an observation-cum-in-hand practice that provided him with both theoretical as well as practical knowledge on the different components of SSI, preparing organic manure, etc. In fear of wasting his piece of land, he was initially reluctant to do land shaping and spacing etc. practices, but later he agreed for adoption of SSI over one acre with 3' X 2' spacing.

He has been cultivating sugarcane as a cash crop for the last 10 years. But, he shares his experiences regarding profit remains around Rs 6000/- after 10 months of hard and regular labour input and intensive care. He used to spend a lot, estimates around Rs 78850/-. Besides the land lease, his expenditures remain high upon seeds, fertilizer and on hired labour for land preparation, transplantation, earthing up etc. The harvest remains around 26 ton per acre with a profit about Rs 7500/-.

After intervention of NIRMAN, he adopted the SSI approach of cultivation over an acre on trial basis. From land preparation to bud chipping, nursery raising to transplantation and manure application, each steps were well guided by NIRMAN staff. He cultivated the most adoptive cane variety that is CO 6907. He transplanted the seedlings on 02/02/2010. He did earthing up 2 times and irrigated 16 times (due to drought situation in Kharif 2010). He found tillers up to 13 numbers in the beginning and later 6 canes per clump. His expenses on seed relatively decreased to one-third. Again, he found investments on hiring labour, fertilizer applications, irrigation etc. are comparatively lower than the conventional approach. He applied mostly FYM, vermi-compost, *jeevamrut*, liquid manure etc. and He estimated his total expenses on one acre SSI farm to Rs 54625/-. But, his real pleasure was with the harvest. He harvested a total of 63 ton cane from the one acre land with which he gained Rs 108800/- after selling the jaggery. His harvest remains as 'record production' among the sugarcane farmers. He expressed his happiness with a net profit of Rs 54000/-. "I gained Rs 23000/- through intercropping", he adds with the profit.

He compares himself as a conventional sugarcane grower in past with transformed SSI farmer at present. "I used to work excess along with huge investments on previous method of cultivation, but this time with SSI adoption, my expenses were decreased and my harvest was comparatively higher at top; now, I am capable to save for my children's future" he shares. He has already adopted SSI for 3 acres for this year and his practices are on.

He has prepared himself to construct a vermi-compost pit to serve the organic needs of his sugarcane, paddy and vegetables. His dependence on the market for chemicals, pesticides, seeds, etc. has reduced to a very great extent. He also prepares a mixture of neem extract, garlic paste and kerosene for use as pest repellent.

Most of the labour required in the production process is contributed by the farmer himself and by his family members. After adopting SSI, he does not spend much time on the land. He manages his farm efficiently and has reaped economic, environmental and social benefits from it. The practice of SSI through organic farming system approach has given his family food and economic security. He is not dependent on external inputs or market anymore. Further, he generates a supplementary income from the sale of vegetable and other products that are in surplus after meeting the needs of his family.

He has become a resource farmer in the area and visits to nearby village, to aware and motivates the farmers to take up SSI. His plot has also become an exposure piece for the nearby villagers. Seeing his success, many of the farmers have shifted to SSI ways of farming. In this contiguous region, there are around 51 SSI farmers in NIRMAN implementation area.