

Report on e-session with rural youth on Innovation in Agriculture; Profitable Agriculture

E-session on Innovation in Agriculture; Profitable Agriculture was conducted on 17th December 2020 by PTVAIM's COEI in collaboration with Learning Space Foundation. This session was conducted by Mr. Milind Vaidya and Mrs. Suwarna Vaidya, a couple from the village Reel in Ratnagiri district who have won several awards nationally as well as internationally for maximum rice production in available piece of land. This session was attended by 17 youth and young farmers from Palghar district who are all educated and have small cultivable lands which are not giving optimum produce at this point in time.

Ms. Mahabal, Convenor of PTVAIM's IIC introduced the speakers. The session was continued in interview format. The first question she posed was how did this couple make their sustenance agriculture model into a commercially viable model. Mr. Vaidya answered at length and discussed how it took him over 5 years to study, experiment and arrive at a successful, commercially viable model. He mentioned how innovation and research are critical to bring economic viability. He also discussed how it was important to maintain and work on increasing the quality of the soil. He discussed his model and the various plants and crops he keeps planting through-out the year so as to enrich the soil naturally, bring balance as well as bringing optimum utilization of every section of land available. R. Mahabal then asked him specifically about optimizing rice production on restricted piece of land. He discussed at length the best pre-rice crop to increase rice friendly nutrient levels of the soil, then he spoke of which brand of rice seedlings to use, how to do effective water management and how much space to keep for each shoot to grow effectively. R. Mahabal then asked the couple about other small occupations that can be taken up allied to farming. The couple stated that diary and eggs are the best subsidiary occupations and can be conducted by women and old persons as well. The biproducts of this business such as dung, and shit pellets of hens are excellent fertilizers and can assist in improving quality of soil. Lastly the couple explained the way in which they manage their finances. How they organize cash crops in such a way that they not only fund any experiments and innovation they do on the farms but also bring them sizable profit. In conclusion the couple stated that Indian farmers have to become smart farmers now, they must understand management principles and apply them for time and space management on their farms. They must also understand financial management. If they learn all of above and become observant then they too shall be able to practice commercial agriculture and with the help of creative and innovative approach, bring significant improvement to their lives, the quality of their farms and thereby larger community.

The session was greatly loved by the attendees and they drew a lot of inspiration from it. The language of instruction was Marathi to make it easier for the rural youth to understand. The session concluded with a question-and-answer round in which the rural youth raised several questions especially about the business model and the combination of agriculture and modern technology.



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