Food Forest in Tamil Nadu, India

Development Stage

Concept — Fundraising — Implementation — Operation — Scaling

This project aims to promote model organic food forests among farmers associated with the AHIMSA association which has worked tirelessly over the past three decades to support communities in Tamil Nadu. reNature will support AHIMSA to develop two Model Farms that will serve as a training hub for the local farmers. One 2.7 ha plot is located next to the AHIMSA office in Thiruchirapalli district, and the other 5 ha plot is located at Thiru Valagum Farm in Cuddalore district. Both plots will focus on rice and groundnuts as commercial crops, alongside a Food Forest with fruits, vegetables, herbals and other intercrops such as millets. AHIMSA has a groundnut processing facility on site, which will support value addition for the farmers.

LOCATION:
Tamil Nadu, India

SIZE OF PLANTED PLOT:
7.7 ha

SIZE OF POTENTIAL AREA:
960 ha

KEY CROP:
Paddy rice and groundnuts

INDUSTRY:
Agribusiness and food

GOAL:
Demonstrating regenerative, climate resilient landscapes to establish social and income security for rural communities.

MAIN FOCUS:
Establish sustainable organic food and self supporting livelihood systems to mitigate rural poverty.

PARTNERS:
AHIMSA and Thiru Valagum Farm

Finance & Planning

80,000
Investment

Mr Victor Ignacy
Initiator

Assignment & Impact

Number of expected beneficiaries

The 2 Model Farms will directly involve 260 local farmers. Once the project has scaled it will impact 5000 community members.

Development Challenges

The local community is facing loss of biodiversity and entrenched poverty, which must be challenged with environmental and social-economic action. Traditional farming systems will be transformed to create sustainable rural livelihoods. Improved local organic micro-climates with trees, crops and farm animals, will support a balanced climate whilst direct and affordable food supplies from farm to consumer will become more accessible. The urban areas close to the Food Forest project will have access to more nutritious food supplies.

Intervention

AHIMSA will establish two Model Farms which will incorporate organic groundnuts and rice as commercial crops. Both plots will be established to serve as a training ground for the community to learn about regenerative agriculture techniques in subsequent phases of the project. The plot at AHIMSA will be developed from existing crop land, whilst the organic crop land at Thiru Valagam can be adjusted to incorporate a regenerative design. Both Model Farms will act as a mirror for the Farmers Groups to develop agro-forestry systems.

Financing

reNature 2 x Model Farm: est.	€ 80,000

Objective

Mitigate rural poverty by promoting sustainable livelihood and food security with farmers through regenerative agriculture. During the project, farmers groups will be integrated into the approved scheme. The renewed food chain will be based on a coherent landscape environment and an equitable business model.

Inspirational Impact

The understanding and implementation of healthy farming and an equitable food value chain will lead to a better diet and security in food supply in the rural and urban areas. Following the implementation of the initial two Model Farms, the project will scale this to a five-year project to 960 hectares of land, reaching around 1.920 farmers and landowners. In the longer term project, each farmer will be assisted to develop a one acre Food Forest and organic paddy and groundnut cultivation on their land.

5.000	61% More	45% More	23% More
Community Members	Biodiversity	Soil Humidity	CO2 sequestration per ha/year

Environmental Impact

This project will have multiple different fundamental effects on the environment. AHIMSA is well versed in the principles of regenerative agriculture and recognises their potential impact. Developing organic methods with the farmer groups and establishing biodiverse Food Forests as local micro-climates will have a positive effect on the wider macro-climate. A recuperating soil, careful water management, a wider crop rotation, a greater variety of trees and shrubs, and integration of holistic grazing will all contribute to a restored ecological and socio-economic environment.

Social Impact

The two Model Farms will involve many hundreds of farmers as the project scales. The project staff will offer the know-how for motivation, respond to the needs of the farmers and unite them on an equal basis. The project will be linked to various agriculture related departments, local NGOs, schools, women and farmers self help groups. Two locations, AHIMSA and Thiru Valagum Farm, both with a Model Farm with slightly different climatic differences, give rise to reach diverse farmers groups. At present the Indian government supports organic farming, so the time is right to catalyse sustainable practices.

Economic Impact

Local farmers are experiencing economic pressure where cultivation practices are based on realising a maximum yield. Additionally, large quantities of mainstream food are not beneficial for the environment and people. Better food quality will result in cost reduction through improved health. These quality foods need to be cared for throughout the food chain. An equitable agricultural economy between producers, processors, traders and consumers will support farmers to cultivate nutritional products.

Impact Metrics

Outcome Metrics

1) Reduce land degradation
2) Enhance CO2 uptake through increased biodiversity
3) Improve economic resilience, livelihood and food security
4) Attain or maintain the organic standard

Evaluation Method

1) Use the FAO Tape methodology to establish a baseline assessment of the community
2) Assess soil fertility and quality
3) Assess increased levels of biodiversity
4) Monitor the number of farmers involved in the project and their attainment of organic certification