

AGRICULTURE AND ORGANIC FARMING GROUP INDIA

(AOFG - India)

Annual Report 2008 - 2009

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1. Introduction

AOFG India started functioning since 2001 with NGO support services of promotion of organic agriculture in rural development, fund raising from Government sources to NGOs and lobby activities. AOFG India Board during 2006 decided to promote a new initiative of rural development activities involving small and marginal farmers on context of economic liberalization and market economy of India. Since June 2006 AOFG India is on the process of building a model project on farmer limited emerging out of farmer organizations set up, nurtured, owned, operated, and managed by the farmers with professionals as its paid employees.

During February 2008, October 2008 and January 2009 AOFG India organized workshops on public private partnership in agriculture innovations at New Delhi, Kochi and New Delhi in association with Planning Commission, Government of India, Rajagiri school of social sciences and Agriculture Finance Corporation Limited. One of the conclusions is the promotion of farmer limiteds in rural areas providing opportunities for agriculture production, value addition and storage and marketing benefiting small and marginal farmers, income generation and rural development.

AOFG India promoted few select areas of coffee, cotton, apple, other fruits and spices as entry crop in promoting farmer limiteds in building infrastructure for value addition, storage and marketing. Secondary agriculture is the focus in promoting farmer limiteds and mainstreaming the small and marginal farmers in economic liberalization and market economy of the country. AOFG India project development has organized the farmer organizations of cotton farmers to set up a marketing company called Zameen organic Pvt. Limited, apple growers farmer limited for apple, fruit growers limited for fruits, Western Ghats farmers limited for coffee and spices to demonstrate the new initiatives in organic agriculture for rural development. The farmer companies are linked up with Yes Bank, Indian Overseas Bank and Rabo Bank in securing credit and working capital requirement.

The year started with the expansion of the existing projects in the States of Kerala, Andhrapradesh, Maharastra, Himachal Pradesh, Uttrakhand and North East India. 35 NGOs continue to get support from AOFG India and are geographically spread over North East India, Orissa, Jharkhand, Andhrapradesh, Uttrakhand and Kerala States. The focused programs to benefit the 35 NGOs are capacity building, human resource development, organic agriculture in rural development, technical training, marketing, documentation of traditional knowledge for validation. Technology development and its application have taken centre stage in all the promotional activities. The participating NGOs has shown considerable interest in getting training on manpower development in organic agriculture in rural development, extension, quality production, value addition and marketing by setting up local markets directly addressing poverty reduction and area development. One of the key factors of development promoted by AOFG India is the promotion and setting up of farmer organizations and farmer private limited companies.

Eighteen NGOs are now become independent and having an annual budget of Rs. 5/- Lakhs each to promote its own activities without the help of AOFG India. One of the key areas of activity is promotion organic, production, organic certification and marketing.

AOFG India and its own project and field implementation program on Farmer Limiteds has moved forward and has set up Zameen Organic Pvt. Ltd (Cotton), four farmer Limiteds for the Western Ghats Area of Kerala State. Details on farmer limiteds can be viewed from [Http://www.aofcindia.org](http://www.aofcindia.org).

2. Study program

AOFG India has initiated a field study program on small and marginal farmers and their role in National Development, food security and reduction of poverty. The study has shown that the small and marginal farmers are at the mercy of middleman, money lenders, input suppliers and they always fleece them and driving them into suicides. The alarming news of farmers committing suicides in the cotton belts and other areas of the country has been a pointer to explore the social and economic dynamics of rural livelihood, resource utilization and its appropriation. Suitable model programs are required with an End to End Approach in deliverable quality extension, input availability, production, value addition, farmer's organizations and marketing. AOFG is promoting agriculture and natural resource based projects to study the impact of farmers venture as a tool for poverty reduction, livelihood opportunities and rural development.

3. New Initiatives

The new initiatives in the area of a model program have gained momentum: cotton, coffee, spices, fruits, pulses and cereals. The projects are under implementation through a mechanism of direct and partnership mode supported by 10 local project implementation units.

The projects are:-

1. Apple collection points in the Himalayas, Himachal and Uttarakhand.
2. Extension and expansion of Coffee & Spices project in Western Ghats, Kerala
3. Fairtrade and organic farming in India: Cotton, Maharashtra & Andhra Pradesh

The new initiatives are designed with a goal of achieving and realizing farmer associations, ownership and decision making of an "End to End Approach" in extension, input production, quality production, value addition and marketing.

A total of 15,000 farmers are active partners to the projects and is on the process of setting up of TEN farmer producer companies besides the cotton marketing company of Zameen Organic Private Limited.

The projects are implemented by involving over 30% tribal population. However, the overall scope of the project is small and marginal farmers and bulk of them is from the lower ranks of the society. Infrastructure creation for value addition and marketing is vital to the project and is being set up and run by the full ownership of farmer associations and farmer producer companies as the case may be.

The projects are promoting organic as well as fair trade certification. This is an attempt to assist the farmer for remunerative prices, environment friendly and socially acceptable with a concern by the consumer communities. The project has created an atmosphere of highly remunerative prices to farmers without hurting the consumers. The elimination of 3 to 5 Middlemen in the supply chain has contributed to better price to farmers while retaining the common price being paid by the consumers.

4. [Biodiversity and environment](#)

AOFG India is working along with 35 NGOs in the difficult regions of India. The livelihood problems are reflecting largely on the biodiversity and environment. The communities are unable to protect and conserve the environment and biodiversity. Natural resource management is negligible and the result is less productivity and less income from all sources resulting in increasing poverty conditions.

AOFG India and the NGOs from North East India have taken up several measures for the promotion and protection of the environment and biodiversity. AOFG India is assisting the Department Soil and Water Conservation, Government of Nagaland in setting up a project with GEF (Global Environment Facility) funding. The GEF projects are promoted and monitored by UNDP New Delhi.

5. [Shifting cultivation](#)

Shifting cultivation is one of the traditional methods of crop introduction and crop production practiced by the indigenous communities living in India. The practice was good when the fallow period was longer to over 25 to 30 years. This practice is still prevailing in North East India parts of Orissa and Andhrapradesh States. AOFG India has linked dialogue with ICIMODE, Kathmandu to promote studies and promotional activities for better crop production and marketing of tribal farmer's produces.

6. [Forests and Forest management](#)

The forests of North East India are very precious. The forests are part of the rainforests of the Indo-Myanmar bio-sphere spread over 200,000 square kilometers. The area is a biodiversity hot spot as per Conservation international and National Forest Research Institute, India. Vital importance has been accorded by Government of India and a Moist Rainforest Research Institute has been established at Jorhat, Assam State by Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests. The area is populated by 200 odd numerous indigenous tribal communities and the land rights are protected under Indian Constitution. However, unfortunately, the State Forests Department of the Seven NEI States has given least importance to the Constitutional rights of the tribal communities by using the forests as revenue to the Department by timber trading and taxing on the NTFP. This has given a lot of resentment among the tribal communities. The much promoted and largely funded Joint Forest Management (JFM) is in the hands of the Forest Department and communities who are

protecting and preserving the forests has not given any importance nor support and involvement in forest conservation and protection of the forests. Community management of forests has been a good opportunity since the forests are not physically and legally owned by the Department. The destruction of forests are blamed on to Jhumias (Shifting cultivators), but the fact is otherwise. AOFG India is educating the communities for better management of the forests, NTFP directly and through the Net Working NGOs.

One of the important areas in India for AOFG India is the Jharkhand, Tribal Orissa, Tribal West Bengal, Tribal Madhyapradesh, Tribal Andhrapradesh and Chattisgarh States. Majority population is the indigenous tribals. Some of these areas and the land rights are protected under the Indian Constitutions. Promotion of village owned community forestry is a wonderful opportunity in promoting biodiversity, conservation and use of NTFP for poverty reduction among the indigenous population.

7. [Rain-fed Farming Areas](#)

The un-irrigated, rain-fed regions were largely by-passed by the Indian Green revolution. Out of the 142 Million Ha cultivated land in India, 34% land area are covered by conventional farming with irrigation facilities and produces 55% of total food production whereas, 66% of land areas are classed under rain-fed region which produces 45% of total food production. The area is 90 Million Ha and majority of farmers living in these areas are small and marginal farmers and indigenous communities. The new initiatives of AOFG India are geographically positioned in the rain-fed farming areas. Cultivation and farming activities are the only means of livelihood to these people. Compounded issues of desertification, loss of biodiversity and environment, non conservation and lack of management of natural resources, increasing poverty conditions are on the increase in these areas. AOFG India and its efforts may prove useful to other NGOs and institutions.

8. [Education, training and HRD program to NGOs](#)

Technical training on human resource development, social organizations, project management, and technology dissemination were imparted to all the 35 NGOs during the current year. 175 Staff members are trained by AOFG India. 105 Executive Members of 35 NGOs are trained in organization management, fund raising and lobby activities. Regular informative circulars are sent to all the 35 NGOs on funding support and various schemes of the Government.

9. [Training on organic agriculture in rural development](#)

AOFG India Technical Team on Organic visited all the 35 NGOs to conduct on the spot training program on organic agriculture in rural development. OARD is a focal theme of AOFG India. Capacity building and human resource development in OARD is vigorously taken and the NGOs are fully geared up to promote such activities in the villages. Now we have taken up the promotion of fair trade certification and fair trade marketing. State level seminars have been conducted at Imphal, Kohima, Guwahaty, Shillong, Bhubaneswar, Hyderabad and Ernakulam.

We are now linked up Rajagiri Institute of Social Work, Rajagiri Institute of Management and Technology for professional training support.

10. [Farmers training program](#)

35 NGOs are assisted to promote farmers organizations and conduct farmers training program in their respective areas. The target was to train 500 farmer leaders by the NGOs. The farmers training program includes use of local manuring, preparation of farm yard manure, compost, vermin compost, vermin culture, use of local plant based pesticides and input production, marketing and distribution. The training programs are conducted with an object to build farmers as progressive and front line farmers who can train their fellow farmers in all important aspects of livelihood opportunities.

11. [Farmer's Self Help Groups \(SHGs\)](#)

The AOFG India project and all the Associated NGOs are encouraged to promote and set up Farmer's Self Help Groups and micro credit savings and disbursement programs. In many cases, the SHGs are a mixed group with over 75% members is women. The current numbers of F-SHG are 1050 with a membership of 15,750 Members. 7,800 Members are women. They are promoting savings, credit, production, packing and marketing activities for income generation. Wonderful achievement has been made by many of the SHGs is in income generation and poverty reduction activities. Marketing is one of the important area and serious capacity building and trainings are required. Local market development and local marketing will be promoted with adequate training and promotional activities. Value addition and processing is yet another important are which requires attention. AOFG India is in the process of setting up of 4 farmer associations of small and marginal farmers with a membership of 10,000 farmers. Also we are on the process of setting up of two state level farmer trusts to promote various activities.

12. [NGOs and business development](#)

A new thinking is being promoted by AOFG India in terms of production linked, value added marketing. Value addition will help in overcoming the distress sales. This is optional for the associated NGOs in promoting technology application for local production, processing and marketing. Rural development can be achieved only by institutionalizing marketing of local produces at the farmers place itself. The bulk of the profits in commodities are pocketed by the middleman. Therefore, promotion of business development is one of the important concepts promoted by AOFG India and 11 NGOs from the group are getting involved. However, the SHGs are being promoted by all the 35 NGOs and the respective SHGs are implementing savings, credit, production and local marketing activities. These efforts are gaining momentum and getting wider acceptance in the rural villages. AOFG India is assisting the NGOs to work with Government of India through the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The 42 Research Laboratories of CSIR is developing technologies and the AOFG India and the Net Working NGOs are eligible to get and obtain suitable technologies for income generation, production and development activities.

13. [NGO Resource Support Center, New Delhi](#)

AOFG India is being an NGO networking organization and placed at New Delhi. The member NGOs are frequently coming down to Delhi for various purposes, submissions of projects to Government of India Ministries including consultations. Fund raising for the promotion of field projects are very important to demonstrate most of the activities promoted by the NGOs and AOFG India. The Central Government Ministries are one of the sources of project funds. Therefore to discuss, submit and negotiate for projects, NGO Officials and representatives has to come to Delhi as and when required. The NGOs does not have own accommodation and support facilities at New Delhi and have to depend upon hotels and private facilities and is very expensive. The present Office of the AOFG India is not sufficiently spaced to accommodate the people for overstay and office works. Accommodations at Hotels are very expensive. Further, a news letter on funding opportunities from Government Ministries and Departments are very useful to our NGOs. After a project submitted, follow up actions are required to get a project approved and funded. Support services in the form a liaison works for NGO projects are required. To meet all these needs, an NGO Resource Support Center is proposed at New Delhi with minimum office facility, liaison support, support services of expert consultants, and accommodation for three persons at a time with a vehicle for movement in Delhi and a quarterly funding news letter. Efforts are continuing to search a one time fund for this purpose. In spite of all constraints, AOFG India could facilitate the sanctioning of 21 Projects during the current year with an overall outlay of Rupees 51.00 Million from Government Ministries. AOFG India is working hard to find a suitable funding agency to support a project for this purpose. Currently the NGO Resource Center is functioning from Mayur Vihar Pahse I.

14. [Board members of AOFG India 2008-09](#)

1. Mr.E.M. Koshy, Chairman
2. Dr.(Ms)Lily Gangmei, Secretary
3. Mr. Manish Kumar, Treasurer
4. Mr. Bose Samuel
5. Mr.B. Rath, Member
6. Ms. P.J. Rachel, Member
7. Ms. Jely Gangmei, Member

15. [AOFG India Project Funding Support](#)

AOFG India projects and programs are funded by contributions from donors in India, Government and SHGW The Netherlands. SHGW and FFT NL is supporting all activities of farmer limiteds and infrastructure development. We are grateful to SHGW and FFT NL particularly Mr. Meindert Witvliet who is guiding us in all our activities. We also thank Mr. Edwin and Mr. Wim of FFT NL.

The Cotton Project is funded by CORDAID NL. The Cotton Seed Production Project is supported by PI Foundation, London

16. [Financial auditors of AOFG India](#)

M/S Amit R Gupta & Associates are the auditing firm for AOFG India. The financial audit is carried for one financial year from April to March every year. The current budgeted program expenditure for the year 2008-09 is Rupees 325.00 Lakhs.

17. [Bankers to AOFG India](#)

Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) Janpath Branch, New Delhi - 110 001 are the bankers to AOFG India. The AOFG India Bank Account with IOB, Janpath is: S/B A/C No. 31771. SWIFT Code: IOBA IN BBA 065 Fax: 91+11+ 23321868.

E.M. Koshy

Chairman cum Managing Trustee

AOFG India