

Farm Technology Dissemination during Sriniketan Utsav (Magh Mela)

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Best Practice

1. Title of the Practice

Farm Technology Dissemination during Sriniketan Utsav (Magh Mela)

2. Objectives of the Practice

Farm technology dissemination during *Sriniketan Utsav (Magh Mela)* aims to give exposure to the farmers regarding the latest science & technological aspects of agriculture through exhibition. It helps the farmers to meet the agricultural experts for their necessary farm information as well as solving farm problems through interactions. This practice also provides the opportunities to students in getting real life exposure of different problems and helps them to develop knowledge and skills by actively involving in dissemination of farm technologies.

The principles of "seeing is believing" and "not aware – not known, not known – not practiced" are the basis of this practice. This practice underlines the importance of bridging the gap between farming community & experts. Students get benefit in terms of a real-life exposure to linking theoretical knowledge and actual farming practices through interaction with the farmers.

3. The Context

In the year 1922, *Gurudev* Rabindranath Tagore established Institute of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan. *Sriniketan Utsav* or *Magh Mela* along with an exhibition was formally started on 23rd *Magh*, 1328 of Bengali Calendar (6th February 1922). To mark the foundation day, a fair is organized every year on 23-25 *Magh* (6-8 February) at Sriniketan. Fair is based on display of different agricultural products grown, implements used in agriculture as well

as the rural handicrafts. Functions of folk culture are the other attractions of *Sriniketan Utsav*. Creation of the flow of economy in rural areas is also an objective of organizing this *Mela*.

The main objective of holding this *Mela* is to bring village dwellers, farmers, rural artisans and scientists and practitioners of agriculture in a common ground to provide an exposure to the latest technological aspects of farming and other rural enterprises and vocations as well as to provide the rural artisans a platform to earn income through selling of their products. *Gurudev* had clear understanding on farmers' inability and inertia that restricts them to accept the newly developed practices, which can improve the farm fabric of the area. So, *Gurudev* planned a structured extension system in a different form, and *Magh Mela* is a sort of same system for disseminating latest improved farm technological information to the rural community. *Visva-Bharati* is still continuing with the ideals of *Gurudev* Rabindranath Tagore and disseminating farm technologies during *Magh Mela*.

4. The Practice

Palli Siksha Bhavana (Institute of Agriculture) along with *Rathindra Krishi Vigyan Kendra* engage on theme-based dissemination of farm technologies. Some of the recent themes were, Integrated Farming System, Sustainable Agriculture, Use of ICTs in Agriculture, Sustainable Rural Livelihoods through Diversified Agriculture, etc. After selecting the Theme, the faculties of the institute, subject matter specialists of *RKVK* and students get engaged to identify the relevant newly developed technologies for dissemination; accordingly, posters,

models, specimens, flow charts, farm publications like leaflets, folders, etc. are prepared / arranged for display in the exhibition during 3-days *Mela*. Final year UG and PG students are entrusted to run the exhibition under the guidance of faculty members, to disseminate latest farm technologies and discuss the farm related queries of farmers. A huge foot fall of farmers of neighboring villages is evident. Farmers are provided farm publications free of cost.

Moreover, farmers are invited to display their best produce and a competition is organized to felicitate the farmers for exhibition of the best crop produces.

5. Evidence of Success

The success of this practice can be traced in two ways: firstly, creating interest and awareness among farmers about the latest farm technologies and secondly real-life orientation of the final year students about the ongoing farming practices. In the first count, it is quite evident that an urge among farmers for getting latest farm information as well as inquisitiveness to translate this information into practice could be evident from the number of foot fall in the agricultural exhibitions during *Mela* days; follow-up visits of the farmers to Institute of Agriculture and the level of adoption of latest farm technologies in their farms. In the second count, students of agriculture are involved in gathering experience during *Magh Mela* as a part of their Rural Agricultural Work Experience Programme (RAW) and develop photo-features and reports on the basis of their experiential learning. The exposure they get through their participation in *Magh Mela* immensely

helps them to relate their learning of theory with real life agriculture.

6. Challenges Encountered and Resources Required

Technology transfer cannot be a three-days programme as it needs sustained efforts and at the same time orientation of students about real life farming cannot be limited within three days of *Mela*. Institute of Agriculture is continuing its extension activities and RAW programme for the students; manpower, conveyance and finance always appear as the major challenge. Only exposure to latest farm technologies are not sufficient to transform the agricultural fabric of this area. There must be backward and forward linkage mechanisms to be established for timely availability of quality inputs for farming and marketing of farm produce with remunerative income of farmers, respectively. Although Institute of Agriculture has been catering these through Rathindra KVK; however, state line departments play key roles.

Only a three-day programme is not sufficient for farmers to adopt latest technological options. Establishment of a Plant Clinic, Animal Clinic, Soil Health Clinic are of immense importance which will provide all weather services to farmers. As a whole establishment of an Agriculture Technology Information Centre (ATIC) is of prime importance. Digital dissemination of latest farm technologies can offer opportunities to serve the farmers requirement in real time.