

Promotion of EM Technology among Farmers in India

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Abstract : Farming communities participating in rural development projects implemented by BAIF Development Research Foundation, Pune, India were introduced to the use of EM technology. Initially the technology was demonstrated successfully on rice, tomato, garlic and vegetables in the project sites of BAIF in five states of India. The response of farmers so far have been encouraging, especially in the project areas in Gujarat and Karnataka, and efforts are underway to increase the uses EM is put to and widen the user base.

Presently, the major use of EM is in recycling biomass for crop nutrition. The highly fibrous biomass, seldom returned to the soil in the past, is treated with EM to make organic manure. Although this coarse biomass does not result in high quality Bokashi, the composted material is of satisfactory quality to be used for crop nutrition. Besides compost making, EM is also used as a foliar spray for vegetables. Farmers have reported up to 15% increases in crop yields by the application of EM in compost or spray, and higher prices for their produce because of better colour and keeping quality. For fruit tree nutrition, EM-jaggery solution is applied to leaf litter-dung mixture and incorporated around the base of the tree or buried in trenches. Farmers who fed their cattle with standard Bokashi as a feed additive have observed increase in milk yield and efforts are being made to widen this use. Soil Bokashi, another EM product, is used as a growth medium for raising planting material of fruit and forestry species.

The promotional efforts have had a positive effect and request for EM has been growing in recent times. A proper mechanism for the regular supply of EM for these rural areas has not yet been established. It is hoped that local People's Organisations, currently managing various development activities initiated by BAIF, will take up the responsibility of retailing EM in their respective areas. Opportunities also exist for Self-Help Groups of women and landless people in rural areas to have income generation activities such as producing and selling Bokashi and fermented extracts to landholders.
