

Agroecology Scientific Day 2024 Workshop n°7, Session n°4

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Title: Promoting Agroecological Farming Practices for Better Nutrition: Lessons Learned from the NICE Project in Bangladesh

Abstract:

Introduction: Agroecological farming practices are increasingly recognized as a sustainable approach to improving nutrition and food security, especially in urban and peri-urban areas. In Bangladesh, the Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) project has been at the forefront of this movement, working to bridge the gap between rural production and urban demand for safe and nutritious food. This is being achieved through the establishment of Nutrition Farmers' Hubs, predominantly managed by youth and women, in the Dinajpur and Rangpur districts. These efforts are aimed at addressing the nutritional needs of urban dwellers while providing sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable populations.

Methodology: Nutrition Farmers' Hubs in rural areas, where groups of farmers were trained in safe and nutritious food production following agroecological principles. A total of 9,870 farmers received training in agroecological practices, with significant participation from youth (4,053) and female farmers (2,202). Additionally, 3,000 farmers, including 1,138 youth, were trained specifically in safe and nutritious food production. The project established a robust supply chain involving 12 covered vans and 80 mobile vegetables vans, which transport produce to city kitchen markets in Dinajpur and Rangpur. Renovation of city market infrastructures and the establishment of a new marketplace predominantly operated by women further supported these efforts.

Results & Discussion: The supply chain infrastructure, comprising covered and mobile vegetable vans, has improved access to these foods for city dwellers while ensuring that farmers receive fair market prices. The formation of women and youth groups has empowered these vulnerable populations by providing them with sustainable income opportunities. The renovated market infrastructures have not only improved health and hygiene conditions but also contributed to the resilience of local food systems against natural calamities. The involvement of local government stakeholders has been instrumental in ensuring the sustainability and scalability of these initiatives.

However, challenges remain, including the need for continued capacity building among farmers, market stabilization, and the scaling of agroecological practices to meet the growing demand in urban areas.

Conclusion: By bridging the gap between rural production and urban demand, the project has created sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable populations while improving access to healthy, diverse foods for city dwellers. The lessons learned from Bangladesh highlight the importance of agroecology as a pillar for sustainable urban food systems. Future efforts should focus on scaling these practices, strengthening market linkages, and fostering collaboration between stakeholders to ensure that agroecology continues to contribute to better nutrition and resilience in food systems globally.