



## COVID-19 Pandemic and Sustainable Agriculture: Prospects and Challenges

Webinar 21 of the Praxis Voices from Margins Series

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### Panelists:

**Bhairab Saini** is an organic farmer from Panchal village in Sonamukhi block of Bankura district of West Bengal, and is a 'rice revivalist'. He started farming in 1994 along with his father. After ten years of chemical farming, he learnt about the harmful effects of chemicals and decided to reverse completely to organic farming. Since 2009-10, in addition to organic farming, he also started seed conservation, starting with paddy, and is conserving wheat, mustard, millet, jowar, bajra, pulses, vegetables, maize since 2013.

**Ms Deepa Chinnakannan** born and married in a farmer's family is actively engaged in farming along with her husband Chinnakannan; over 14 yrs. in Periyapulivarasai village, Krishnagiri district, Tamilnadu. All along Ms. Deepa followed the regular chemical fertilizer-based farming practices until she came in contact with Krishnagiri Development Project (Guided by PiC) and since 2018, have been actively involved in natural farming practices. In less than two years now, Ms. Deepa has been instrumental in taking forward the natural practices not only at the family level but also through the Farmers interest groups in her village. As part of natural farming training on a pilot basis in one acre of Agri land have got a yield of 30 bags of Seeraga Samba Paddy in 2019 and have now replicated the same with other varieties of paddy & crops too. Ms. Deepa is an active natural farmer-cum- resource person in her area augmenting natural farming practices.

**Vidya Baburao Rudraksh:** Lives in Dighol Amba village in Ambejogai block of Beed District, Maharashtra. She and her husband have been farming since 1993, on 15 acres of land. For five years when they began farming, they used conventional chemical fertilisers on their crops and by 1998, recognised the need to switch entirely to jeevamruta and vermicompost. They have never had to used chemicals ever since. Beginning with cultivating four crops, Vidya now grows as many as 15 crops today - eight crops in the Kharif season and three in the Rabi season. Besides agriculture, they are also engaged in two more allied occupations – dairy farming and a small business of processing and value-addition to two of their crops, ginger and turmeric. Vidya is a recipient of the Jijamata Krishi Bhushan, an award presented by the Maharashtra government for women's contribution in the field of agriculture, in 2017. She also held a panel discussion with students of her alma mater, Yogeshwari College of Science on 'relations with the soil'. Vidya is a believer of '*Jithla tithe kujudyaycha*' principle – all the fallen matter from plants is left to decompose there itself in a way that green manure is created!

**Soumik Banerjee:** Independent Researcher and Practitioner of Agro-ecology & Heirloom Seed Conservation; currently engaged in conservation research of Indigenous varieties & Landraces of Paddy, Maize, Cotton, Millets, Wheat, Barley, Pulses Oilseeds through In-situ Conservation with farmer groups in eastern & central India. He is also independently working with Adivasi communities practicing Shifting Cultivation in eastern & central India towards Guided Fallow and Forest Gardens.

**Bhanuja** hails from Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh. She has a rich experience of working with women farmers and started the organization Rural and Environmental Development Society (REDS). Through the organization, she has been working for the livelihood and rights of women farmers and has also been connecting them with various schemes that focus mainly on their development. She is also the in-charge of MAKAM and Convenor of the Rythu Swarajya Vedika of Andhra Pradesh.

**Ajai Kuruvilla** has been a natural farmer near Oddanchatram, Tamil Nadu since 2013. During this time, he has experimented and evolved ways of natural farming that gives excellent yields and which can transform the livelihoods of the rural community. He has further been engaged in mentoring and collectivising farmers. More recently he has also been helping these farmers trade their produce at a fair price enabling local farmers markets, moving their produce across state and international borders. Ajai has also been associated with leading social work organisations. His work includes working on inclusion related issues, agricultural and rural development, climate change, disaster management, child right and education.

**Leo F. Saldanha:** He is a full-time Coordinator of ESG. He has gained wide-ranging experience in the areas of Environmental Law and Policy, De-centralisation, Urban Planning and a variety of Human Rights and Development related issues, working across many sectors for over a decade. He is a keen campaigner on critical environmental and social justice issues and has guided several campaigns demanding evolution of progressive laws and effective action. He has creatively supported various distressed communities to secure justice through public interest litigations and advocacy efforts, arguing as party in person several public interest litigations, many of which have resulted in remarkable judgments. In 2007, he co-authored the book "Green Tapism: A Review of the Environmental Impact Assessment Notification-2006" (2007) with team members at ESG. He has since co-authored "Tearing through the Water Landscape: Evaluating the environmental and social consequences of POSCO project in Odisha, India" (2011), "Forfeiting our Commons: A Case for Protecting and Conserving Challakere's Amrit Mahal Kavals as Livelihoods-Supporting, Biodiversity-Rich and Ecologically-Sensitive Grassland Ecosystems" (2013), and a comprehensive review report of Environmental Decision Making in Karnataka State, in particular the State Environmental Clearance Committee (2014), amongst others. His papers and articles have appeared in many leading newspapers, journals and magazines. Recently, he has contributed papers in "India's Risks: Democratising the Management of Threats to Environment, Health and Values" (OUP, 2014) and "Living Rivers, Dying Rivers" (OUP, 2015). Leo facilitates a variety of learning programmes on environmental and social justice concerns for a wide range of audiences. He was the Country Coordinator and Faculty of the "Cities in the 21st Century" and "Health and Community" courses of the International Honours Programme, USA (2002-2009) and Co-Director of the Minnesota Studies in International Development, University of Minnesota (2014-2017). He has a background in Environmental Science and has been invited as a speaker by organisations and universities across the world.

**Tomy Mathew:** Tomy grew up in a farming family in the Wayanad District of Kerala. Tomy Mathew heads Elements, a business endeavour committed to organic and fair trade. He is the founder promoter of Fair Trade Alliance Kerala, a small farmer collective of 5000 farmers in the Western Ghats of India, engaged in environmentally sensitive stewardship of the soil anchored on biodiversity, food security and gender justice.

**Tom (Praxis), Moderator:** In this webinar fatigue we are still doing for voices unheard and dialogue we are engaged with that gives us energy as well as the feedback from many of you who have been attending these webinars giving encouragement, we must continue this. Even in normal times we are unable to hear these voices, let alone in these difficult times that we are going through. The repeat engagement of each one of you and the way in which you have been taking this forward, be it through social media or other means is also an encouragement. It is not that hundred odd people that are attending here but the reach is much more. And that makes webinars useful to continue. This 21<sup>st</sup> edition, COVID 19 Pandemic and Sustainable Agriculture: Prospects and Challenges is brought together by Praxis and Partners in Change. When we talk of Sustainable Agriculture, it goes beyond usual debate on organic vs. chemical vs. non-chemical. It's a bigger canvas involving ecological, health and economic. When we look at prospects and challenges, it is important we a combination of all these. This pandemic may have given us opportunity on the health front. People are now more aware what matters most is basics, what they say, *roti, kapda and makaan*. Pavlonian hierarchy of needs food comes first and what kind of food we are eating that comes first and gives us an idea that more and ore people will engage in sustainable agriculture, organic food and engage gradually with the idea what it is produce good food, who all are part of that chain, supply that healthy organic food on your table. How all aspects are covered, how we are engaging with environment, economy of people associated with it, and to safeguard the well-being of us and everyone around. We have a range of paelists who are farmers practicing a range of sustainable farming- from not using pesticides to Zero Budget natural farming. So, it comes with various names but the essence is the same. And we have people who support the idea of sustainable agriculture.

**Stanley, Praxis:** Highlight of the Study (Krishnagiri Development Project) Ennegollu Panchayat, Veppanapalli Block, Krishnagiri District Interviewed 29 people during April – May 2020 10 farmers, 19 other workers. Effects due to lockdown • No or limited access to Seeds • No access to market to sell the products because of lack of transport • After the lockdown was imposed, the price dropped below the Minimum Support Price level which means the farmers were forced to sell at low prices (Rs.200 worth goods sold for Rs.60) • Lack of market options and Non-functionality of regular Market. Sold the products to available local vendors • Unable to get essential things due to loss of Income or low Income • Delay in harvest as farmers can't able to pay the same wages as before • Access to local agriculture labourers but paid less than the fair wages

Voices from Farmers "Due to lack of transport and market we sold our yield to lower price, unexpected loss for us" "As I am practicing natural farming I don't have any difficulties of in inputs or pest control but lack of transportation and market has affected us immensely" "I gave 25kg of yield to just Rs.60, I didn't even earn half the money I invested" "Heavy loss due to decrease in vegetable prices"

**Bhairab:** My name is Bhairab Saini. I am a farmer since 1994. I used to engage in chemical farming. But since 2004, I have given that up and moved to sustainable agriculture using organic methods. I learnt about this from Dr Debal Deb in 2004 and since thin have not looked back. Since 2009-10, in addition to organic farming, I also started seed conservation, starting with paddy, and am conserving wheat, mustard, millet, jowar, bajra, pulses, vegetables, maize since 2013. I believe that seed cannot be monopolised by companies. It is essential that farmers have control over seeds and conserve it. In many cities, we hold stalls where we sell our organic rice. I believe sustainable agriculture is the only option we have for the future. Chemical farming has a lot of bad impact on farming and environment. But it is not just a question of environment, but question of the survival of the human race. Farmers are convinced to go for chemical agriculture under pressure of companies, who motivate them by promise of profits. Because of the COVID-19 lockdown, famers have had to suffer a

lot. COVID-19 had an impact on vegetable farmers as during the 1.5-2 months of lockdown, they were unable to sell their produce, except in the local markets. Many people let their vegetables die on the plants while others were simply plucked and given away. I personally did not face this challenge as I grow vegetables only for my family's consumption and seed conservation, not for sales. This has affected their sales of vegetables like gourds which need to be sold on a daily basis.

**Deepa: Greetings.** I am Deepa. I want to share the challenges the farmers face while converting to Organic practices. We are doing natural farming for health benefits as group of 20 farmers. The first and foremost thought is that by doing natural farming we are going to get very less yield, what is the use of practicing it then? Anyway, we are going to spend similar labor, time and care, etc. I would say if the government provided any subsidiary for organic inputs farmers would be motivated to do natural farming as a part of the expense is supported. Most of the farmers practicing chemical farming, despite the high expense ready to buy Urea and other chemical fertilizers as the return and yield are more compared to natural farming. With Subsidizing farmers would come forward to initiate natural farming at least for their personal use and allows farmers to try natural farming.

We are practicing natural farming despite the low yield for family's health benefit and children's food especially. In the market, the rate is almost the same for organic and non-organic we don't get big profit. Only Rs2 or 3 we get from it. We continue to practice natural farming as it increases the fertility of the soil and solely for the health benefits. I strongly recommend Agricultural Centers which currently provides other fertilizers should start to provide subsidized organic Inputs like Panchakavya. This ensures the accessibility as farmers are familiar with Agri centers.

**Vidya:** I'm a zero-budget farmer also an organic farmer and I feel that whatever soil is tested at KVKs or labs, those tests reveal what all we should use in regular chemical farming but in this type of farming (organic), there is not much information available from labs. I also feel that in the zero-budget farming, the trees that we plant in plenty, gives us an opportunity to deal with a lot of excess carbon that is produced from these farms and it offsets this amply. I feel that since some farmers in this vicinity, including in my farm have so many trees, we contribute to a lot of carbon credits. A third thing I feel is that the nutrition levels of the food produced on our farms is high. Our wheat for instance has 18% more nutrition, although prices may not match. But the beauty of this type of farming is the increased nutritional value of crops to contribute to our immunity power overall. This should be encouraged especially now since in the context of Coronavirus, immunity power is very significant. If there is some stricter norm to ensure that this type of farming happen, then several improvements are possible. Many people want to do ZBNF.

**Soumik:** I have been working in Jharkhand for last two decades and I have worked with Adivasi communities in Rajmahal hills that are into organic cultivation and they don't use any chemicals and outside seeds. So, unlike the different areas that are facing COVID 19 in terms of availability of inputs, here we don't see any such problems because people are not depended on outside seed, fertilizer and pesticide. Land is all rainfed, there is no irrigation and no tractor or anything used. So, the point is that when we go towards sustainable farming, we are not dependent on markets or inputs from outside which are fluctuating due to different reasons. Communities are practicing this kind of sustainable agriculture since thousands of years and people are not paying attention. They were seen as unscientific but now we see that in the times of COVID, we realise that they ways are much more sustainable, healthy and climate resilient. During Covid 19 when we are concern about health and immune system, we realise the importance of sustainable agriculture. Government should encourage organic pesticides and sustainable agriculture through schemes. It is the need of

the hour. We are connected biological life forms. We cannot remain isolated and disconnected from nature.

**Bhanuja:** In COVID-19 the challenges for women farmers had increased the work pressure had increased & maintaining the domestic work had increased. Women are only burdened with preparing any organic pesticides that are needed and men do not contribute to it. In the vegetables, millets or products grown during covid the products had been used as distributing in relief measures as they were chemical free based on community natural farming there are 13 clusters this have been working on this. Recommendation – In order to overcome in this challenge, considering Andhra Pradesh's model using the 'Rythu Bharosa Kendram (RBK)' if all the organic inputs needed for performing organic farming are made available through this medium then accessing and procuring these inputs would benefit the farmers at village level. The medium should also provide a means for simplifying the both practical and theoretical needs of organic farming for the farmers.

Making the organic inputs available will help the women farmers and this would reduce the pressure on women farmers. Even though 85% of the farmers are women farmers but most of these farmers do not own lands. The men from the family own the land and hence accessing the subsidies is a major challenge for women farmers. Any amount or subsidies or amounts related to Rythu Bharosa cannot be received by women farmers as the lands are owned by men. Transport is also one other issue as male farmers have possible means of accessing the market even during the lockdown. But as women farmers we are unable to do the same. Due to COVID-19 procuring seeds in a timely manner from the market is a challenge for women farmers. Transport is also one other issue as male farmers have possible means of accessing the market even during the lockdown. The main solution is providing all this in RBK and promoting women friendly equipment for women farmers

**Ajai:** Everyone feels that natural farming does yield sufficient produce, yield per square area would be lesser, the possibility of quicker returns is lesser. Our experience has been rather different because right now in Oddanchatram related catchment of farmers, is the largest farmer procuring market in Tamil Nadu and also caters to the Kerala markets. The natural farmers are the highest producers per square area. There are areas completely produced by natural farming now. For eg. Are farmers produce 8-10 tons of papaya, which is almost all the papaya that goes out of our area. Or for example, brinjal, we are highest producers per square area in our catchment and the reason has been that we have been able to demonstrate that it is possible to be involved in natural farming and increase our productivity considerably over a quick period of time. One caveat in this, farmers who are getting into natural farming what we usually advise them is to get bio inputs, concentrates of microorganisms that enable soil nutrition. Because they need to see results first. Unless they experience that it is possible to get higher yield using organic methods only, they will come towards natural farming. The other thing is, over last three years pests have become highly resilient to present generation of pesticides. What is happening is they are using a cocktail of 15-20 pesticides to bring about pest control. That is very expensive and it is not even controlling pests sufficiently. While when we use natural methods, we use initially biologically active components we are able to demonstrate a much stronger sense of pest control than what is seen using pesticides. 3-4 years ago, I was the only one in this area producing in scale, today there is a cluster of 300-400 farmers, the fact is that we are not able to sell all are produce organically. 90 percent is actually going back to Oddanchatram market, only 10 percent we are able to sell organically. Even this 10 percent is working out to be more than 10-15 tons per week. This is where the opportunity is. During the Covid we have farmers markets. We were already in touch with organic stores and trading concerns but there is hardly any growth in their business model. The pricing is 15 per cent what is the retail pricing. Now what we started doing is to start to sell all our produce without going to the Oddanchatram market. At a price lower than the retail price. Being sold directly to the market. In each of the primary farmer markets started selling 2-3 tons in 2-3 hours. Started sending to nearby

cities. Selling at competitive price points. The only way forward is to maximise the sale of produce directly to consumers. During covid what happened that Oddanchatram market was stopped, from sending 1-1.5 tons of veg to Chennai every week we have started sending 10 tons of vegetables every alternate day. Because this market splintered the traders were abusing the ambiguities there in prices, veg procured 2-3 rupees from farmers but we ensuring that the farmers were a minimum support price. Beyond that we were pushing the prices as well that the farmers are benefitting even during the covid. During we could sell maximum produce. There is a huge opportunity today. Immunity is the prime concern today dependent on healthy food. Opportunities for sustainable development.

**Leo:** I'd like to focus on how governance of farming is central to diversity in farming and access to healthy food at the consumer end and there is equity and gender equality. Covid pandemic has informed us quite brutally about the importance of health, where we do not see things from an anthropocentric point of view but try and rather overlap selfish gene with rather inclusive eco-centric planet in which we are but one species. To constantly remind ourselves that when we farm we are actually interacting with multiple species and whole range of biodiversity to best our relationship with them so that we get what we want without destroying what they need. That's the kind of relationship should be central to farming. However, we live in a world where there are giant corporations, who have their mind what farming should be. They are largely from the world view of building proprietary ownership done in the most uncouth manner like companies thriving on genetically modified crops and control farmers. There are foundations that support them. If there has been resistance to that idea it has come from smaller marginal farmers primarily. Large farmers benefit a lot and they are also politically embedded and this political reality must be kept in mind. You will never have large farmers speaking out for all farmers, very rarely if you find them. And if small farmers have to speak up for their interests, they really have to mobilise a lot intelligently and systematically with a great deal of trouble. All India Kisan Sabha mobilised two years ago in Mumbai, gathered farmers from across India to speak to the country to emphasise that the economic system in place is just not unfair but brutal. During covid we saw there was very little in support for farming. The so-called package deal from the government re-aggregating failed model from the past as a result we have farmers everywhere in distress today. With grains in storage and migrants hungry, there is deep set in-humanism that has crept into governance and that's one of the problematic aspects of what kind of democracy we are. We maybe ritual democracy but not functioning. This is critical for our farming community which is not embedded in the choice of decision making. With dependence on zoom etc. there is a deep-set inequality and to ensure their participation. Structurally inequitable farming choice decisions have been. It is not about Green revolution, it was a response to a crisis. The choice of the farmers was not articulated well by leaders in multiple forums. It was only seen as economically viable never discussed whether it was ecologically viable in inter-generational perspective. What happened in late 60's, 70's land reform movements we can see how easily it is being withered away, how it is being commodified, farm lands being converted to assets of financialisation. So, when land becomes financialised, not a recent phenomenon, droughts and floods, financial packaging farming, farmers have killed themselves on account of massive debts and yet we don't have politics to say why don't we solve all these problems. Now we don't know how many farmers are under stress because of covid. 1992 Panchayat Act passed. Agriculture and agricultural related services first most important tasks for Panchayat. If you are serious about farmers choice, then give infrastructure of choice. Build it around Panchayat Raj institutions. What is the structural form of governance that we must go back to? We must allow agro-ecological system in which natural farming is but one method. Leave the choice to farmers. Farmers are professors who teach us to live with planet and ensure that we grow healthy food. Covid has brought to the front

that we are so intricately linked land air water soil. Zero budget natural farming dictating by government is didactic and needs to be questioned.

**Tomy Mathew, Founder Fair Trade Alliance:** The defining image of Covid 19 in India is the exodus of ppl to the villages. Last 60 years is about rural appropriation by urban areas. Appropriated rural human resources and at the time of the crisis they were told to go back. Which fallback back mechanism are they are going back to? It is agriculture and more than anything else the pandemic tells is that cannot get back to agriculture and the systems that in the first place drove them away from the villages. They also cannot get back to a food system that is lying as the root cause of the pandemic itself. And hence we say post covid we cannot talk of agriculture and food systems and all of a sudden sustainable agriculture is on everybody's lips. Everyone believes that's the road forward. I would like to propose that we don't have to fret about how to teach farmer how to do sustainable farming. The disconnect between us and our farming is at least two generations. We have to trust the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the farmers but the problem lies elsewhere. The problem does not lie in the supply side. I think it has to be dealt with from the demand side. The problem not that organic produce not being sufficient. It is the market conditions. Market is creating conditions for unsustainable farming and no amount techniques or policy frameworks for organic farming is going to solve the problem. It has to be adjusted from the side of the demand and we have to begin by reversing the rural appropriation. For in the food prices that we asked our farmers to produce at, we are promoting rural appropriation. Unless that is reversed, we can talk of sustainable agriculture. Farming as we know survived either on exploitation or subsidies. It was feudal kind of exploitation that provided food cheap or it was huge subsidies of capitalist for the developed ones in northern hemisphere that made food possible. Both those systems are clearly unsustainable. In Indian context 300 million middle class, be made to pay dues to the rural population. Middle class itself is a product of rural appropriation and it is important this 300 million middle class made to pay dues so that we don't take food for-granted. We don't need to prescribe to our farmers we need to create a level playing field, levelling a market that is entirely human creation. Economic arrangement between farmers and rest of farmers being distorted. It has to be re arranged in a fair and equitable manner. Reverse migration will increase the population dependent on agriculture. Its just not going to be pressure on land but also on the resource base and this time we need to be guarded against the organic certification regime, that now we sanctified by government not by just budgetary provision but by also by Food Safety and Standard Authority of India, that each will decide what is sustainable. Post pandemic reality cannot make us go back to a system that existed before. The pressure that we create on nature and soil, we know pandemics will be the order of the day. Market distortions that prevent sustainability needs to be addressed. Middle class need to pay that will be the first step towards post Covid agriculture initiative.

### **Questions:**

#### **Questions specific to organic farming techniques, marketing, certification**

**Question (Esha ) to Bhairav:** Where do you put up stalls?

**Answer (Bhairav):** Delhi, Chandigarh, Hyderabad. Even in Rajasthan. Women of India Organic Festival is an annual festival organised by the WCD ministry. We put stalls in that too.

**Question (J Gopalan Question) to panelist Ajai** Whether is it possible to sell organic vegetables without organic certification? It's dangerous to put our trust in a certification process that is owned and controlled beyond the local area.

**Answer (Ajai)** - In India most often in the organic market place, the produce is sold in trust than through the strength of a certification related process that monitors what's organic or not.

**Question (Manjula):** What crops can we cultivate in these drought prone areas. Am from Harur side and there is water scarcity

**Answer (Ajai) to Manjula** - Much can be cultivated even with little water access... We can select crops that require less moisture... We can increase the use of mulch in farming and this can ensure sustained access to moisture for the plants... Reduce area of cultivation. Last few years we had a major drought in our area. I hardly had access to 10mins of pumping water. I reduced our area of cultivation to just about an acre and focused on doing a higher intensity of cropping through multiple layers. I was able to harvest between 1 and 2+ tones of veggies from one acre every alternate day.

**Question (Rakesh):** My question to Ajai is what are your views on alternatives to burning of agricultural waste which pollute Northern India especially during winters?

**Answer (Ajai):** Alternatives to burning, use agricultural residues as much and composting these.

**Question (Rakesh):** But how to motivate farmers to compost? it is time consuming.

**From Ajai:** There are very simple ways of composting. Mulching itself is a process of simple displacement of agricultural residue to enable sensible outcomes. the action has many many sustainable outcomes that include moisture control, weed control, composting, enhanced access to essential nutrients.

### **Questions on the economics and politics of organic farming**

**Seyed Babak Moosavi Nejad: Q for Tomy.** Can you briefly mention the characteristics of rural appropriation?

**Answer (Tomy):** From your dams to your minerals to your forest wealth to cheap food for your industrial and autocratic class.

**Seyed Babak Moosavi Nejad to Leo:** Can you expand on the third point you made?

My whole argument was on the concept of governance which holds together the whole concept of one health - together, it holds together food, ecology and health together. The UN and WHO has been doing it, but I don't know why they did not do it during the COVID pandemic too. Cos WHO seems to have created a fear complex across the world and India has taken fear to a totally different level. The other thing I was was Farming here in regions like South Asia, the space where agro ecological ideas evolved, is essentially diverse, especially small and marginal farmers. So governance system should support such diversities and the sustenance of such diversities. It should not create systems which cuts away diversities and moves to monocultures. Or even worse, I don't know if you have heard of the MASHAV programme that Israel is pushing in India, which technologies or technocratises farming to such an extent that drones and cell phones will instruct farmers on what to grow. It is almost as if the farmer is part of a machine. And this is being supported aggressively in chemical pesticide supported farming - that is proprietary farming as well as natural systems, even in Andhra Pradesh for promoting ZBNF. This is frightening and we should worry about it. Third point I raised was on the demand side - how do you construct an idea of what is healthy food. Healthy food should also be affordable. It cannot be that only the rich eat good food and the rest of us eat bad food. We have seen outcomes of this in places like United States where half the people eat terrible food despite being the richest country in the world. So wealth accumulation does not guarantee that everybody eats healthy food. It needs a very conscious socio political system to ensure that every child, woman, man eat accessible good food and there are some countries that have done it very

well. These countries to learn from. In India, some states have done it and we can learn from them too. The fourth and last point I made was none of this makes sense unless equity is central to it. Equity in terms of how resources are shared, how land is distributed. So if we are moving away from land reforms and moving towards sophisticated feudal structures, through corporate farming and just because corporates are growing natural foods, like in the US, it does not mean that it is equitable. It essentially means that we are returning to feudal structures. And the other aspect is look at Patriarchy, which is embedded in Indian agricultural sector. Just because you grow organic and natural food, doesn't mean that you are not patriarchic. You continue to be that, especially, we also heard comments from our friend from Andhra Pradesh, who said women did all the work, while the men just sat. So when you shift away from machinery to organic farming, where you use the least amount of fossil fuel, the physical work increases that doesn't mean the physical work has to be borne by women and children. So unless that changes, things don't change. These are some key ideas I described in my intervention.

**Question (Monika):** Why farmers are not getting high prices rate of their grains?

**Answer (Bhanuja) -** The gain is less as there are middlemen involved in the process. The products are procured at a very low price from farmers and the middlemen involved in the process have the advantage of branding the product and when it reaches the consumers they procure it at higher prices which has only benefitted the middlemen. Both farmers and consumers do not benefit from it.