

Capacity Development: Field day report

Activity title: Promoting cactus (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) as drought resilient feed resource under different agro-ecological production systems across India. Project 3: sub project 2

Action site: Bhopal (India)

Sub activity: Introduction of Cactus (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) as a multi-purpose

Source of funding: ICAR – W3/Bilateral

Activity leader: Mounir Louhaichi

Objective: Increase cactus awareness, dissemination and adoption for improved drought resilience, and to enhance capacity building of all partners.

Target audience: Smallholder farmers, livestock keepers and extension agents

Activity mapped to CRP: CGIAR Research Program on Livestock

Lead Center: International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)

Flagship: Feed and Forage



Field day agenda

Date: 23 November 2017

Location: Bhopal (India)

10:30 AM to 11:00 AM	Welcome and Introduction Dr. Ashutosh Sarker
11:00 AM to 11:30 AM	Field visit — Cactus plantation and use demonstration Cactus plantation
11:30 AM to 12:30 PM	Discussion Discussion about the importance of cactus, practices in cactus plantations, cactus use as a feed crop, cactus as a tool to generate income. Discussion with Farmers, ICARDA. Dr. Sarker Dr. Sawsan
12:30 PM to 01:00 AM	Wrap Up

Minutes

The farmer's day at Bhopal, India was organized on Saturday, 23 November, 2017. Attending the farmers' day were Drs. Ashutosh Sarker and Sawsan Hassan (ICARDA representatives), and 31 farmers (Appendix 1).

Dr. Sarker, Regional Coordinator, ICARDA South Asia & China Regional Program highlighted the importance of cactus as green fodder for animal feed and as an ideal alternative to control water erosion. He gave a detailed outline of the activities being carried out by ICARDA and encouraged farmers to actively take part in the planting of spineless cactus on their land. The research conducted by ICARDA and national partners in India has proven the suitability of cactus as a crop and animal feed in the Jhansi region. He highlighted the role of ICARDA in increasing efforts to promote spineless cactus, as well as encouraging farmers to grow spineless cactus for feeding animals during the dry periods. He mentioned that cactus dissemination started four years ago and since then, the number of farmers growing cactus has steadily increased. This reflects the great potential of cactus as both a crop and livestock feed resource in India.



Fig 1: Scientists of ICARDA and IGFRI sharing their experience of cactus in India.

Dr. Sarker mentioned that ICARDA already disseminated cactus to few farmers in Bhopal. He invited all the participants to a field tour to witness the cactus plantation performance in the farmer's fields.



Fig 2: Cactus planted in the farmer field in Bhopal, India

Dr. Sawsan welcomed the participants and explained ICARDA's mission to target poor farmers in the dry areas in order to improve their livelihoods. They highlighted the importance of cactus as a multipurpose crop for the dry areas. They also mentioned that the adoption of cactus is now worldwide as it has been proven that cactus has the potential to mitigate climate change, to reduce the green fodder gap and to also enhance farmers' income. Drs. Sarker and Hassan also stated that ICARDA's objective to give full support to farmers, who should also maximize ICARDA's and IGFR's research initiatives aimed at improving their food security and livelihoods. Dr. Sawsan explained the benefits of cactus as a green fodder, and highlighted how it has shown growth adaptability to the dry conditions. She mentioned the fact that cactus is very easy plant to establish and that it grows well with very little inputs. She explained how to use cactus as green fodder, and how positive impact on the growth and survival of animals and she concluded that cactus can be tool to generate more income.

The farmers showed interest in planting cactus, and they thanked ICARDA for the efforts to introduce new technologies that will help them enhance their livelihoods.

Authors

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