

Shila Devi, Eco-Friendly Farming Pioneer

Darbhanga District, Bihar

Shila Devi lives in Godiyari village, by the Bagmati river which floods its banks every year.



People in her village have been adversely affected by unexpected weather changes, decreased agricultural yield and therefore, income, at a time when input costs of chemical fertilisers and pesticides are very high.

Swayam Shikshan Prayog facilitated Kanchan Seva Ashram (KSA) to mobilise community in sustainable agricultural practices in climate change-affected and disaster-prone communities in 2013. KSA identified and

selected 20 women from the area to participate in a training programme on sustainable practices in agriculture in Lucknow. Shila Devi was one of them, and this proved a life-transforming experience for her.

Shila Devi has one cow and one acre of agricultural land where she and her husband, Shri Ram Chandra, cultivate mustard, wheat, onion and vegetables. In Lucknow, she learnt how to prepare bio-compost using local leaves as well as natural pesticide, and decided to prepare her own. When she started using the bio-compost, neighbours asked her about the 'new medicine.' Shila Devi shared her knowledge. The response was very positive as pest attacks reduced and yield increased. She felt encouraged to prepare larger quantities of the pesticide for outside sale. She says, "This bio-pesticide is the best alternative to chemical pesticides buy from market that is costly, damage crops, environment and affect our health."

How to make bio-pesticide

Neemleaf (Azadirachtaindica) - 1 kg,
Green Chilli – 200 gm, Jaggery - 100 gm,
Rejected dry tobacco leaves – 500, Akaunleef - 1 kg, Cow urine – 10 litre, Gur 150 gm, 10 litre cow urine. (Mix this ingredient in 10 litre cow urine and keep it for 20 days and use it).

The production cost of the bio-pesticide is Rs. 10/- per litre but Shila Devi is able to sell it for Rs. 30/- per litre. In six month, she has been able to purchase one buffalo mainly in order to use its urine to meet growing demand for the pesticide. She now earns Rs. 3000/- per month by selling bio-pesticide and Rs. 6500/- per season from vegetable sales.

Around 40% of the farmers in Goriyari are using this pesticide and she has trained eleven women in other villages to make this pesticide for their use and for sale.

As a leader of Ahilya Mahila Mandal (Self Help Group), Shila Devi has been encouraging community to take small steps to address issues relating to the impact of climate change and floods on agriculture affected by floods and climate change. She has set in motion an interest in eco-friendly farming practices such as the use of bio-pesticide and vermin compost, that is improving soil fertility and crop health. Most important, she has trained eleven other women in this work, all within one year.

