

TAFE Honours Progressive Farmer turned agri-scientist

24th March 2011

Chennai based tractor major, Tractors and Farm Equipment Limited (TAFE) honoured Sri Venkatapathi Reddiar of Pondicherry for his major contributions to Agriculture in general and Rice cultivation in particular by conferring the title of “Vezhan Vitthagar” in recognition of his pioneering work that has resulted in his acquiring several patents.

Inspired by various inputs and advice from TAFE’s J Farm and Mr. SS Nagarajan, JFarm’s Agricultural economist, this progressive farmer, who dropped out of elementary school, has evolved and emerged as a now well known and knowledgeable agriculturist who heads his own agricultural research centre viz., “Lakshmi Narayana Crossandra Innovation Centre”. Sri Venkatapathy Reddiar, in his acceptance speech, paid rich tributes to the exemplary support and advice he had received from Mr Nagarajan and the staff of J Farm.

Sri Venkatapathi Reddiar and Mr SS Nagarajan and J farm first came into contact nearly 4 decades ago and this association empowered him to improve productivity and returns on his own farm through the cultivation of IR50 variety of paddy, the success of which, led him to experimenting with various varieties and even tissue culture to produce newer and improved varieties of crops. His next accomplishment was the development of a new Crossandra (Kanagambaram) variety which was highlighted in a series of articles published by J farm. This spotlighted his accomplishment and resulted in a number of farmers vying for his advice on improving returns from their farm through horticulture.

Reddiar later reduced the area under paddy cultivation and increased area under horticulture and progressed to researching areas such as budding, tissue culture and rose cultivation. He attributes his success to the motivation provided by J farm and its agricultural extension work.

He soon mastered the nuances of developing varieties of Crossandra with the help of translated research papers on the subject. This effort resulted in his obtaining patents for the new varieties and also receiving an award from our former President Dr Abdul Kalam.

J farm, situated at Kelampakkam near Chennai is an adaptive research farm established by Sri A Sivasailam, First Chairman and Managing Director of TAFE, in 1964 in memory of his father and pioneering Industrialist Sri S Anatharamakrishnan, who was the Chairman of the Amalgamations group of companies of which TAFE is a part. Spread over 200 acres, J farm has the distinction of introducing a number of crop varieties in rice, vegetables, pulses and mango to farmers in South India. It is a matter of

justifiable pride for the farm that the “White ponni” now consumed across Tamilnadu was introduced and popularized by J farm.

Apart from its success in introducing a number of rice varieties such as IR8, IR20, IR50, CR225, CR1009, Ratna, Jaya, Kannagi, Neikitchadi, Pusa33,J13 etc, J farm also developed J 18 variety of rice commonly called “Super Ponni” for organic farming, that yields fine quality rice and a super fast variety J 66 that comes to harvest in just 80 days after planting and is ideal for the kuruvai season.

J Farm has not limited itself to Rice but has aimed at improving farm returns through the introduction of pulse varieties such as T 9, ADT 3 and ADT 5 as well as developing and popularizing a mutant variety of the traditional Rumani Mango that yields spherical crimson fruits. The model orchard at the farm spread over 20 acres with about 2500 trees actively demonstrates that this mango can be a profitable crop even in drought prone areas.

J farm distributes small quantities of high yielding seeds together with a package of recommended farm practices to get maximum yield. The farmers, who obtain seeds from J Farm, then help neighbouring farms in growing the variety and thus ensure propagation of the variety. Agricultural extension services carried out at J farm include responding to farmers queries, publishing articles and disseminating information through the electronic media.

J farm was established in 1964 to provide better returns to farmers through adaptive research and to strengthen the hands of the government in achieving self sufficiency in agricultural production. The farm has been managed as a voluntary not for profit organization as part of TAFE’s overall Corporate Social Responsibility to its key stakeholders viz., the farmers and has rendered yeoman service to farmers in this part of the country.

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