

Combining New and Local Knowledge



Every day presents multiple challenges for cotton farmers in the Akola District of Vidarbha, Maharashtra, India: continuous crop failures, pests, increasing input costs, and debt. The farmers could overcome some of these challenges by adopting modern farming solutions, but they are suspicious of modern methods.

The Better Cotton Initiative and its Implementing Partner (IP), Arvind, understand the farmers' dilemma, and are working with them to improve their farming practices. BCI and Arvind have adopted an approach with the farmer which incorporates their indigenous technical knowledge with new solutions. The approach aims to generate trust and confidence among farmers, and offer them an opportunity to share and learn from each other's experiences.

BCI and Arvind organise participatory activities in which technology and development challenges are analysed and farmers themselves put forward solutions. One such activity was convincing farmers of the advantages of Non Pesticidal Management (NPM) measures over regular pesticides use. BCI and Arvind introduced the farmers to a suite of different NPM methods. They encouraged farmers to experiment with different strategies to suit the conditions on their individual farms.

Some farmers learnt how to use locally prepared and affordable sticky traps. Other farmers discovered how to use botanical pesticides, such as neem seed kernel extract and neem oil. And another group of farmers learnt intercrop, trap crop, and border crop planting methods.

When the farmers applied these new methods they saw results in their fields. They used considerably less chemical pesticides and they saved money. After sharing these results with each other, many have now adopted intercropping and trap cropping as a way to prevent the spread of pests. One of the farmers, Shashikant Mahalle, shared his experience:

"I heard about these new practices from the Arvind/BCI team and initially it didn't seem relevant to me, but it was once I heard the experiences of my fellow farmers that I decided to adopt the same practices."

**PROUD
TO BE ANIP!**

Arvind