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# THE WONDERS OF A HOLY CONNECTION

The agri scenario is changing fast in Latur, thanks to PPP initiatives between the government and corporates



Latur, a name often recognized with the dreaded earthquake that caused a catastrophe two decades ago, is gearing up to challenge the most advanced agriculture economies on the productivity front thanks to a grand alliance between corporates and the government. Although the alliance has only started on a pilot basis as of now, the farmers have already started benefitting from the collaboration. With increasing productivity in soya bean, Latur district is all set to become the biggest producer of the commodity. The most astonishing fact attached to this achievement is that only 10 years ago, the farmers in the region didn't know soyabean as a crop.

Latur and Usmanabad, the two eastern districts of Maharashtra, with almost equal proximity with Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, have traditionally been bastion of oilseed crops. Earlier, it was groundnut, then came sunflower and now soyabean is the most preferred crop for a



Farmers Awareness Program at Hisori village in Latur.

decade now. The best thing about soyabean is that its roots contain nodules, which cause nitrogen fixation, which makes the productivity of this commodity somewhat self-sustainable. However, the average production of soyabean per hectare in Maharashtra is 12.43 quintal only whereas the same in some other leading agriculture economies is more than its double. (Table below)

Soyabean Production	Quintal/hectare
Maharashtra	12.15
Latur-Usmanabad-Beed (With PPP Intervention)	25-27
US	26.60
Brazil	27.00
Argentina	25.10
China	17.80

But in Latur-Usmanabad-Beed belt, which cultivates 18% of the total area under soyabean in Maharashtra, there are villages which spring surprises on the productivity front. “These villages are continuously producing 25-27 quintal of soya bean per hectare with intervention from government sponsored PPP projects”, claims Mr. Amol Dhawan, In-Charge of farmer procurement in the belt with ADM Agro, a food processing multinational company having soya crushing plants in Latur. This intervention comes in the form of various farmer awareness programs, farmers’ training, soil testing and supply of right fertilizer and seeds to the farmers at right time. ADM Agro and Tata Rallis are the two companies, which the govern-



A worker telling farmers about the usage of pesticides under the Farmers Awareness Program in Dapegaon village in Latur.

ment has chosen for its PPP projects in the area. Among these two companies, multinational company ADM Agro is working for soyabean and Tata Rallis for Tur. Interestingly, Latur got its name after the commodity Lal Tur (Arhar) but nowadays Tur has been pushed by soyabean as an assistant crop which shares its space with the later in the same field.

With a fund of Rs. 66 lakh for the pilot projects in 210 villages, the US multinational company has been organizing different programs in the villages apart from collection of soil samples from there. The soil is tested in

the IFFCO lab free of cost and on the basis of the ‘soil health card report’ (a term repeatedly used by PM Narendra Modi as his one of the pet projects), the company provides free advice to villagers about which composition of fertilisers should be used to increase the productivity of the crop. Banks and leading agri commodity exchange NCDEX are also playing very significant roles for better price realization and collectively, the partnership between all these parties have made Latur a story, India should look upon with respect.