

Syngenta launches 'The Good Growth Plan'

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Syngenta launches The Good Growth Plan



Syngenta recently announced six commitments to address the global food security challenge. The Good Growth Plan has specific, ambitious and measurable targets which focus on boosting resource efficiency, rejuvenating ecosystems and strengthening rural communities. This new initiative aims to address the challenges we face with respect to scarcity of natural resources that will increase the existing pressure on farmers who are working to meet the world's needs for food, fuel and fiber and define food production in the coming decade.

According to Kanupriya Saigal, Manager Corporate Affairs- External Communication and Branding- South Asia and Seetharam Annadana, Traits Development Lead, South Asia, "We know that agriculture is the mainstay of the economy in South Asia and will continue to be for at least the next few decades providing employment to almost 60 percent of the population. Coupled with this, the biggest challenge of the 21st century would be to feed more mouths demanding improved nutrition in a sustainable manner. With South Asia estimated to add more than half a billion people by 2050, the farmers will have to grow crops more efficiently, conserve existing land, improve biodiversity and most importantly integrate the vast multitude of smallholders currently holding less than two hectares into the mainstream of the developmental process."

They go on explaining the details about the commitments and the plan as under:

- Make crops more efficient: Increase average productivity of the world's major crops by 20 percent without using more land, water or inputs
- Rescue more farmland: Improve the fertility of 10 million hectares of farmland on the brink of degradation
- Help biodiversity flourish: Enhance biodiversity on 5 million hectares of farmland
- Empower smallholders: Reach 20 million smallholders and enable them to increase productivity by 50 percent

--Help people stay safe: Train 20 million farm workers on labor safety, especially in developing countries

--Look after every worker: Strive for fair labor conditions throughout our entire supply chain network

Per hectare productivity is low in South Asia compared to other regions. 98 percent of the available agricultural land is already under cultivation and more than 80 percent of the increase in production will have to come from yield increases. For ensuring nutritional security, it is not only important to increase per capita availability of foodgrains but also to ensure the right amounts of food items in the food basket of the common man. Poor water management in many countries of Asia has resulted in land degradation in irrigated areas through salinization and waterlogging. This can cause yield decreases of 10 to 25 percent for many crops and may prevent cropping altogether when it is severe. It is estimated that 3 percent of the world's agricultural land is affected. In South Asia the proportion is however 8 percent.

Agriculture in South Asia is dominated by small farmers. If we take the example of India, Landholdings declined from 2.30ha in 70s to 1.32 ha in 2000-01 and if this continues...average size would be a mere 0.68 ha in 2020 and 0.32 ha in 2030. Currently 86 percent of Indian growers have landholdings of less than two hectare but cultivate 44 percent of the farmland and their contribution to farm output exceeds 50 percent. Smallholders present a huge potential for productivity enhancement.

Thus all the challenges focused on in the Good Growth Plan are relevant to South Asia. This is why the project is crucial for our territory. We already have several examples in South Asia that reflect some aspects of the Good Growth Plan.

We are making crops more efficient and also helping in empowering smallholders through our Tegra™ riceoffer in India and Bangladesh. Tegra™ first piloted in South India in 2009 and is an integrated rice growing system resulting in yield increase of up to 30%, improving grain quality by 7% and more importantly saving almost 28 days of labor. Tegra enables growers to outsource seedling production, addresses the key challenges of labor scarcity and provides education to increase productivity. In 2012, 4000 farmers had adopted Tegra and is expected to grow exponentially by several fold in 2013.

Another initiative is GroMore to make crops more efficient and empower smallholders in South Asia. This is also an integrated solution for rice comprising simple protocols offering timely advice 'in the language of the farmer' to establish and protect the crop, delivering immediate yield increases of up to 30%.

Project Nirmiti in Odisha India is another program that aims to empower small farm holders and utilizes a network of local residents to make agricultural knowledge, inputs and services available to smallholders in rural India to improve farming practices, productivity and livelihoods. The project focuses primarily on rice and brings together agricultural companies, enterprising individuals and new technologies to improve farmers' lives. So far 45 entrepreneurs have been appointed to cover around 700 villages. Around 8000 smallholder farmers have already been registered on the program.

Techno-Commercial Centers in Madhya Pradesh India is one more example aimed at empowering smallholders. Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) formed by the government with an aim to help India's smallholders access technology and achieve economies of scale in purchasing, marketing and other key areas. The Syngenta Food Security Agenda team is supporting the government of Madhya Pradesh State in the restructuring of three FPCs.

The commitment to look after every worker is clearly reflected in the Syngenta Me and Mine program in India. Our work to address the problem of child labor and overall working conditions in agriculture in a proactive and comprehensive way started in 2003 through a global partnership with the Fair Labor Association (FLA). Syngenta was the first agriculture based company to do so. Syngenta launched an India-wide program called 'Syngenta Me & Mine' in August 2009 to build tangible and practical commitments from vegetable seed growers so they had a sense of ownership in the outcomes for their families and communities. It has reached 22.5 thousand growers and their families. The program has monitored nearly 47 thousand seed production farms, covering around 2.10 lakh farm workers.

Syngenta is committed to product stewardship to ensure our products are used as safely as possible throughout their lifecycle from design to disposal. In 2012 through our extensive efforts in India Syngenta equipped more than 1 million growers and 1850 channel partners with knowledge on Safe Use and Handling of Crop Protection products through 17,000 farmer meetings/demonstrations.

Extensive research has revealed a widespread societal view that farming needs to become more responsible. While governments are seen as primarily accountable for ensuring reliable food availability, Syngenta believes it is incumbent on business to play a larger role in fostering a long term approach to food security. This means using our substantial investment in R&D to advance technologies that not only protect but also enhance the environment and benefit rural communities.