

THE HINDU BusinessLine

GGRC joins hands with WWF India for sustainable cotton project

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In order to help cotton farmers achieve higher yield and improve quality of the crop Gujarat Green Revolution Co Ltd (GGRC) joined hands with World Wide Fund for Nature - (WWF India) for 'Sustainable Cotton Initiatives in Gujarat' project.

About 4,500 peer farmer groups from nine cotton growing districts of Gujarat will be covered under the project. GGRC will implement the project in the State on cluster approach basis with the help of field officers and agronomists and registered micro irrigation suppliers. The intervention will be for a maximum three years.

WWF will have two modes of operations to implement the project. Under the first mode, the farmers will be directly trained, while in the second mode, farmers will be required to use an android app to get the guidance on their crop.

"We have seen that chemical fertilizers often decimate bio controls, hence, we are encouraging the use of water soluble fertilizers. They will be costlier but they would require only half the quantity of urea or other chemical fertilizers. Hence, the net cost will almost be the same. This will improve yield and its quality, thereby fetching better returns for the farmers," said S K Nanda, chairman & managing director, Gujarat State Fertilizers & Chemicals Ltd (GSFC). GGRC is an arm of GSFC.

As per the WWF-India estimation, while there will be likely 30-35 per cent decline in pesticide use, the average targeted yield increase is about 15-20 per cent.

Also, the farmers will be given assistance of global supply chain with support from the network of global retail major IKEA. IKEA is providing financial support to the WWF's Global project on Sustainable Cotton farming. GGRC's

field team will be responsible to create detailed project matrix with farmers' name, area under cotton, expected yield, while IKEA and WWF-India will receive the information for further analysis and finalization of the outcome.

Key outcomes of the project will be reduction in application of chemical pesticides in the project area, optimization of water application to cotton in the project area, balancing the use of chemical fertilizer, improving gross margin for the farmers and increase the use of liquid bio-fertilizer and bio-pesticides.

WWF-India has also implemented similar projects in Punjab with 11,000 associated with it, Telangana with 22,000 cotton farmers and Maharashtra with about 7,500 farmers. Gujarat will be the fourth state to implement the proj