



# Annapurna Times

## Area Planted to Rice Increases

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In the fall of 2008, the farm's irrigated rice area increased to nearly 16 acres, the most that the farm has ever planted. This was possible partly because of summer rainfall that replenished the farm's ponds, and heavy monsoon rain in November and December that kept the ponds full. Transplanting rice seed-

*(Continued on page 2)*



Women pull rice seedlings for transplanting

### Mission Statement

Within the context of producing food for the experimental, international township of Auroville, the stewards of Annapurna aim to discover, develop, demonstrate and document methods of food production that are organic, regenerative, healthy and humane, emphasizing traditional techniques and the conservation of indigenous biodiversity.



Transplanting rice seedlings

## Area Planted to Rice Increases (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

lings took 4 months, or one week per acre.

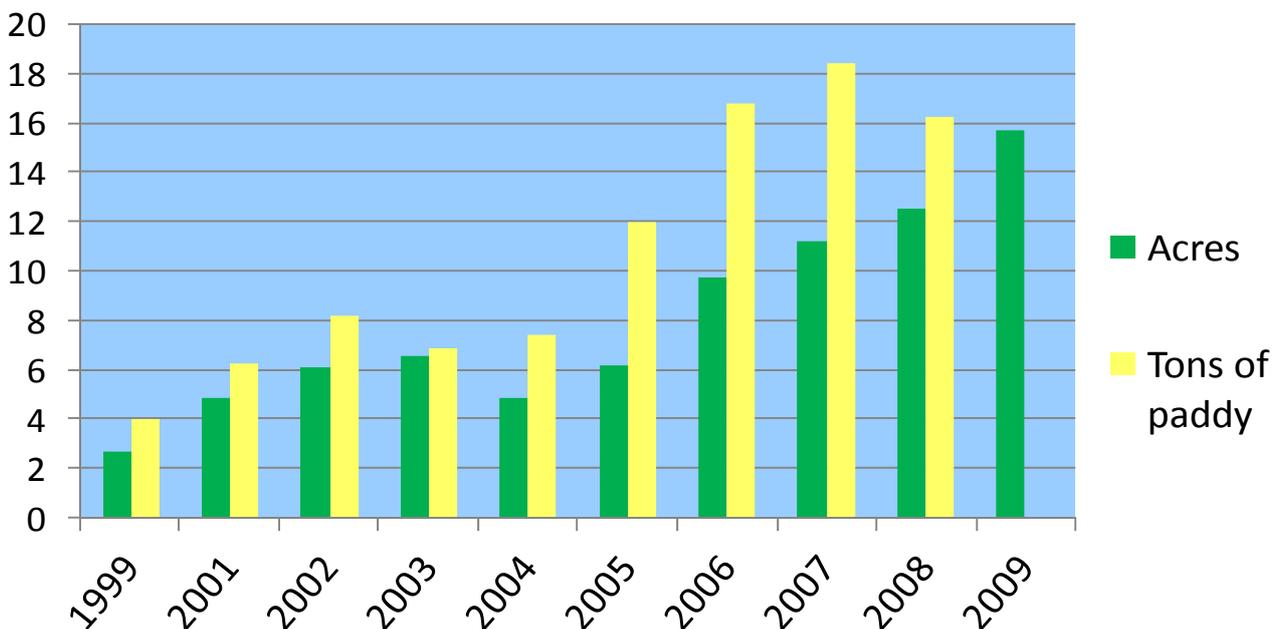
However, as can be seen in the graphs on this page, expansion of acreage does not always lead to more gross production. Production is also a function of the timing and amount of rainfall (which stimulates the growth of green manure and the crop), the quantity, timing and type of inputs applied, the condition of the soil, the timing and number of weedings, wind, and the plant varieties grown.

Other factors that influence production are the affordability and availability of labour. In order to attract and retain labour, wage rates were increased by over 20% in 2008. But labour is not only becoming more costly — it is also becoming scarce. Increasingly, it is difficult to find people who are willing and able to perform agricultural labour. Many young people are neither inclined nor accustomed to perform agricultural production or processing. Clearly, among the greatest challenges facing India's farmers in the near future will be to attract, retain and afford the labour required to grow their crops.



Women weed the paddy

### Acres planted to paddy and paddy production 1999-2009



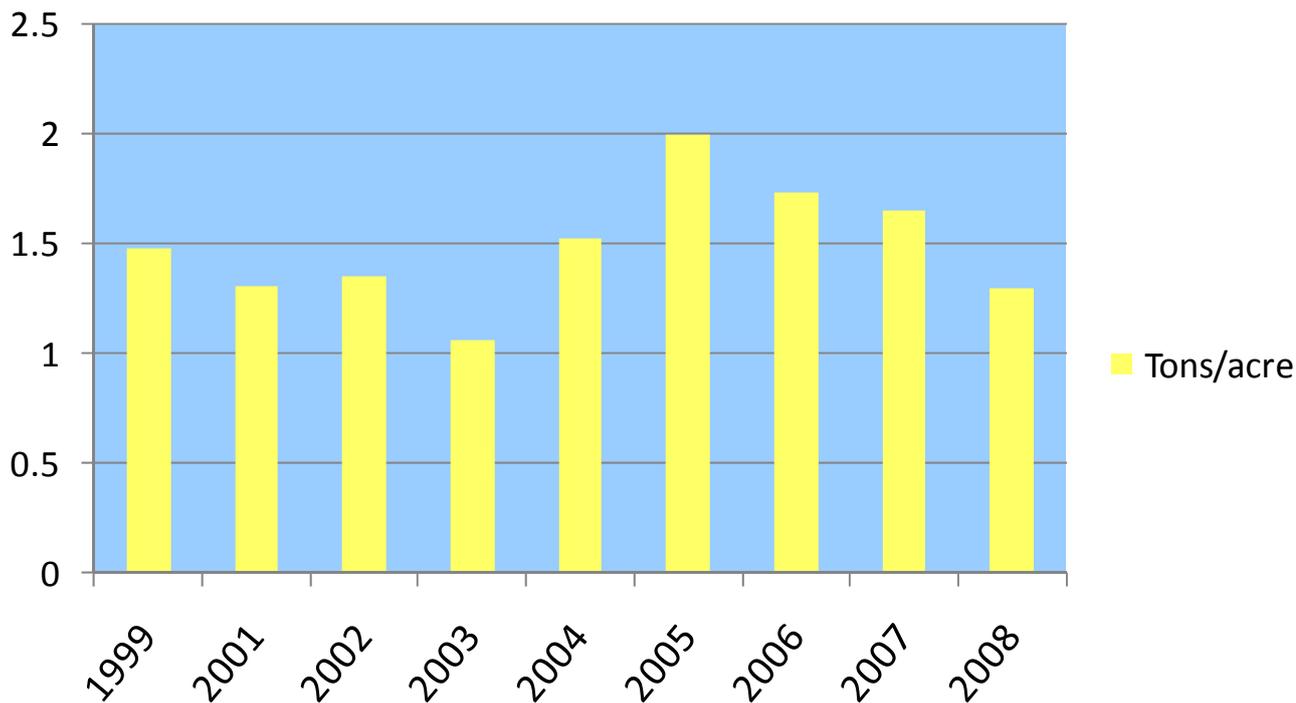
## Paddy Thresher

With the area planted to paddy increasing nearly as rapidly as labour wages, it is necessary to mechanize as much of the harvest as possible in order to accelerate the process and minimize the cost. After many months of research, the farm recently purchased a thresher. It is noisy, incredibly dusty and dangerous, but it is fast and it requires only a small crew to operate. After many modifications by Andre, the machine made its trial run on January 19th.



Selvam and Kalimurthy feed the beast

### Tons of paddy harvested/acre 1999-2008



## Arrivals & Departures



Coromandel



Minar



Lucy



From l to r: Sultana, Shano, Kalai, Brooks, Badal

In August, 2005, Coromandel, age 9, expired from complications caused by blood parasites. In December, 2005, his brother, Minar (a k a Putt Putt, Putty Putt and Putty Putt Putt), age 6, also succumbed to health problems caused by blood parasites. After losing those dogs, we began medicating all of our dogs to protect them from blood parasites. In November 2007, Lucy strayed onto the road in front of the farm and was killed by a vehicle.

On April 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008, Sultana delivered 13 puppies. Two of the puppies, Badal (a k a Marble) and Kalai (a k a Bela) remain on the farm. Homes were found for the other 11 pups.



Sultana with newborns

## Other Crops

Although the farm is known primarily for producing rice, millets and dairy products, Annapurna also grows a variety of fruits and vegetables on a small scale.

The garden yields lettuce, basil, pumpkins, papayas, and bananas. Trees scattered throughout the farm produce custard apple, bullock's heart, guavas, limes and coconuts. Banana production increased considerably after the banana plot was shifted to a location that is irrigated with wastewater from the kitchen.



## *Electrification Unleashes the Farm's Potential*

In 2008, the farm was connected to the Tamil Nadu state electricity grid. The farm needed electricity because the price of diesel, which powered the pumps and grain processing equipment, had become prohibitively expensive, and because a dramatic increase in the cost of labour makes it necessary to mechanize as much as possible. Electricity also brings many possibilities for power tools, refrigeration and food processing equipment. So far, only the godown and kitchen have been connected, but the farm has applied to the electricity board for additional connections to run pumps at the ponds and the borewells.

Several grain processing machines that the farm acquired over the past years have replaced the small, hand-powered stone mills that were previously used for dehusking grains and polishing millet.



*Andre welds adjustments for the new paddy thresher*



*Kandavel pours paddy into the hopper of the rubber roller*



*The de-stoner & grader with aspirator for cleaning grains*

## *Employee Profile: Shanthi*

Shanthi, a 32 year-old resident of Vanur village, has worked at the farm for the past year. Shanthi assists with cheese processing and packing, and also works in the garden and fields.

She has 3 children; 2 sons, and Ramiya, her 15 year-old daughter who has a hearing disability. Ramiya has been taken out of school, but has attended tailoring class and would like to start a tailoring business at home.

Shanthi's husband is a carpenter.

When asked why she works at Annapurna farm, rather than in nearby factories, Shanthi explains that she dislikes the chemicals that are used in the factories, and she prefers farmwork because she has done it since her childhood, when she worked on her family's land.



*Shanthi (L.) and Ramiya*



*Shanthi in the garden*

## *Annapurna Certified Organic by IMO Control*

In June, 2007, Annapurna farm's fields, facilities and processing equipment were certified organic by the INSTITUT FÜR MARKTÖKOLOGIE, or IMO Control, a Swiss agency that certifies organic producers and processors around the world. After reviewing Annapurna's application, supporting documents and records, IMO awarded organic certification to the farm without a conversion period because Annapurna had been managed organically for 20 years.

The farm's dairy has not yet been awarded organic certification because the farm cannot afford to feed the cows certified organic grains. However, we expect that IMO will eventually certify the farm's dairy, because the small amount of feed that is purchased for the cows is probably organically grown, although not certified as such.

Organic certification by IMO assures consumers that products from Annapurna have been produced without agricultural chemicals, genetic engineering and synthetic growth hormones, and have been processed with equipment that is used exclusively with organically grown products. IMO's standards also assure consumers that farm animals have been humanely treated.

## *Selvam Joins Annapurna*

In September 2006, a 19 year-old young man named Selvam started working at Annapurna. Selvam's mother died when he was very young. His uncle placed him in a boarding school in Auroville. After finishing his studies, Selvam spent two years in a residential training program in organic farming at Buddha Garden in Auroville. (Google **Buddha Garden Auroville** for more information about Buddha Garden.) After completing the training at Buddha Garden, Selvam decided to start a dairy. He took a loan, bought five cows and started producing milk which he delivered by bicycle to his customers' homes. Unfortunately, Selvam's neighbors didn't appreciate having a dairy in their community, so he was discouraged from continuing his milk business. So Selvam sold his cows and expressed interest in working at Annapurna. For the next three months, he rode his bicycle ten miles everyday to work at Annapurna.

In December, 2006, Selvam moved into a vacant house at Annapurna. He is very soft-spoken, reserving his energy for his work. Selvam is involved in the fieldwork,



*Selvam applying liquid manure to the rice crop*

the dairy and the vegetable garden. He also likes to work with the liquid fertilizers, made from cow urine, cow manure and brown sugar. Selvam is very fond of animals, and raises a flock of fancy pigeons.

We are fortunate to have Selvam on the farm, and we are grateful for the program at Buddha Garden that trained him and nurtured his enthusiasm for farming.

*Images*



*Ambika and Saingani chop tur dal stalks to mulch the garden*



*Velu (l.) and Kalimurthy unload compost in the garden*



*Manjula and Ambika transport paddy seedlings*

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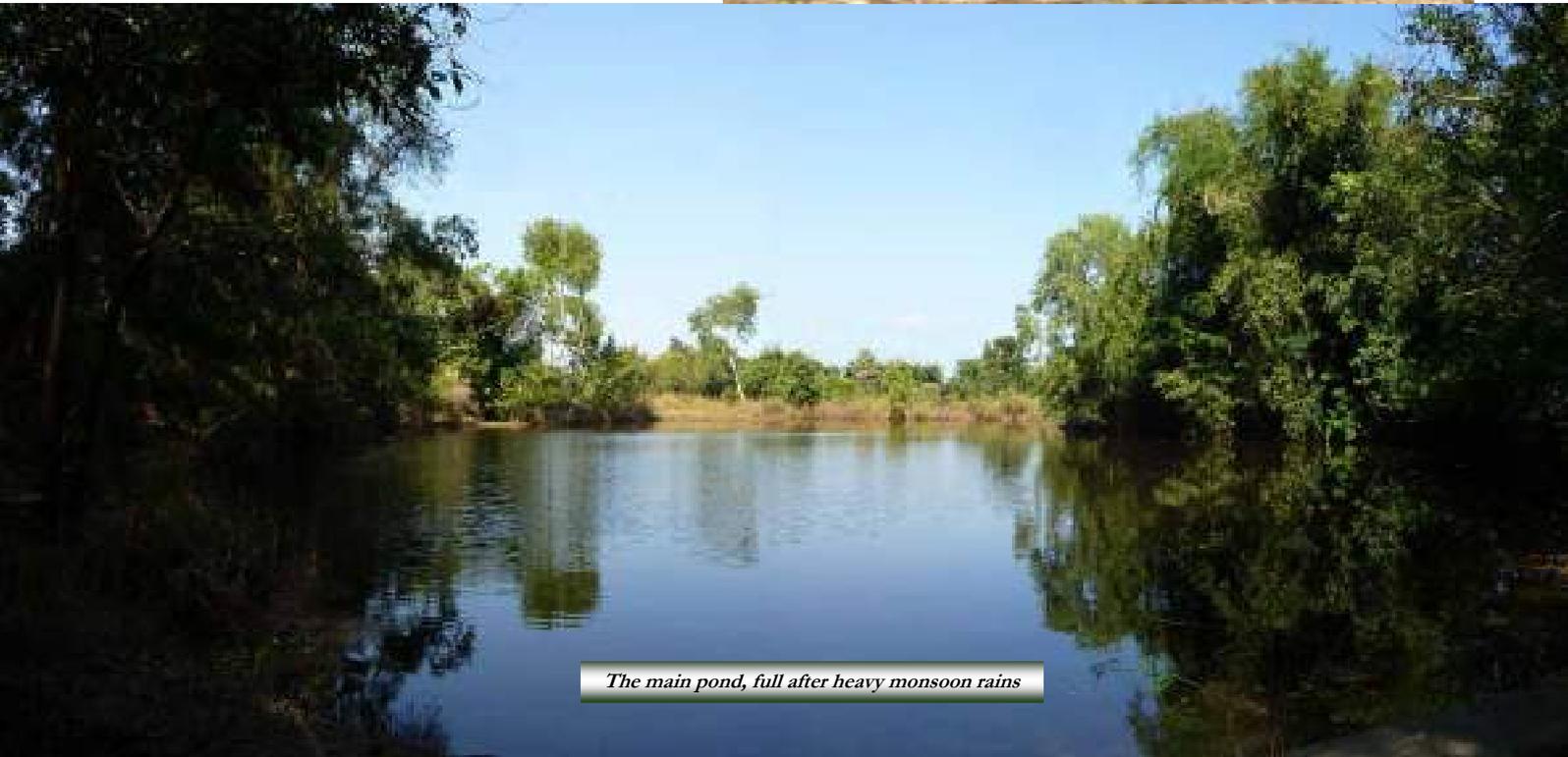
## Organic Matters!

**We're on the Web --**

[www.auroville.org/journals&media/annapurna/annapurna.htm](http://www.auroville.org/journals&media/annapurna/annapurna.htm)

## Supporter Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the friends who have assisted the farm since our last newsletter in 2005: Dutch friends, Dieter Beyer, Georg Schubert, the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of New Haven, Connecticut, USA, Paul and Laura.



*The main pond, full after heavy monsoon rains*