



While writing this we are looking back on another very dry summer... yet since a few days we are getting at last some long awaited showers and that gives some reprieve and hope.

We are doing all we can to start the paddy season but the water harvesting ponds have only now received the first inflow of rain water. We could not keep up with the scheduled plan of sowing small batches of rice because the field preparation, which needs a lot of water initially, was going too slow with these dry conditions. Besides this, the green-manure which was sown in July with the first light rains has not developed. Green manuring (where one grows a crop to enrich the soil before the food crop) is an important part of the soil fertility cycle to grow the rice.

Right now, we have 1 functioning borewell with a 15 hp motor, pumping water up from over a 100m depth. This happens whenever there is 3 phase electricity, which right now is 6 hours per day and sometimes a little extra time during the night.

The good news is that at last, after a lot of effort, we were able to clean up the second bore hole which was clogged because of calcium carbonates that had built up a few years back. Andre is working hard to reinstall another 15 hp pump and we hope this well can help us to serve as a second back-up when rains fail us. Since now ponds have some water, we can again switch over to the harvested rain water, but to be able to use the ponds to their optimum we need to have enough backup water sources to start and finish the crop when that is needed.

The paddy varieties which we grow at Annapurna are traditional varieties, need a growing season of 140-150 days to mature and are season bound. This means there is a limited time one can sow these rice varieties. If sown out of this period (September, October) they will not develop properly. We grow these varieties since they have a nice taste, are more resilient, and grow well under organic conditions. Right now, we are doing a trial with a more modern variety which was developed by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in the beginning of the eighties specifically for our soil conditions, which has a somewhat shorter duration and is not season bound. With such variety we hope to give ourselves a bit more breathing space in an erratic season like this.

The paddy tests with which Madhuri has been engaged during the summer have given us some interesting observations but no clear conclusions to be able to feel confident to improve yield levels of the rice. We continue this effort by observing the field reality. Madhuri is also looking into various ways of bio pest control to see if we can improve in that area. ”





Since the Corona-19 pandemic there has been a lot of talk about food all over the world and in Auroville as well. What can we do to make ourselves more connected to our food reality, become more sustainable, appreciate our local food better and make real steps towards food self-sufficiency as a community?

For most of its history the earth was totally governed by the availability of food. Cultures rose and disappeared with their capacity to organize food for the citizens.

In the current age of plenty and unending technical developments we have been somehow made to believe that we are beyond the scarcity of food.

This pandemic has given us a very gentle reminder that this is not really the case. In fact, I think we are more vulnerable than ever, with more people than ever being totally alienated from the origin of their food and having no idea how to grow and process raw food into edible food.

One of the major problems which right now govern food all over the world including Auroville is that everything is measured in

monetary value. Food has lost its real meaning / intrinsic value, and has become a commodity in this age of the mind and consumerism.

Our everyday life on the farm is determined by measuring the income and expenses while keeping up certain standards. This is fundamentally wrong and will not let us move into a food abundant community. If you would start to measure in and output in your backyard kitchen garden you will certainly end up in the minus. In those cases, we do not do this; we take our time as relaxation and fun together and whatever we harvest we see as a bonus.

On a farm the approach has to be very different and every input is costing dearly which drives up prices. In Auroville we expect very high food standards since we are supposed to be an example but still keep looking at prices of conventional agriculture where things are done quite different.

I do not have a direct solution and I also see that economic viability drives us; it helps to keep farmers on their toes.

I think we first need to value food for its intrinsic value and then the economic value can be added to be able to measure, organize and be aware of costings. It could be a bit like how we look at our health maybe; we look at health first for its real value after that we look at cost and can make decisions about the cost of it. In this process the core value is our health and not the expenses towards it.

The Corona pandemic has given us a little jolt and I hope this is going to grow into a shift of thinking and prioritizing. Annapurna will be happy to participate in the discussion to make changes in the way we look at food.

After all, "Annapurna" is derived from Sanskrit meaning the giver of food and nourishment. Anna (अन्न) means "food" or "grains" and purna (पूर्ण) means "full, complete and perfect."



Annapurna has been offering its roadside land for other Auroville activities since many years for a more useful purpose and to have a better control of the area which is very prone to be used by trespassers.

The farm is not using much of the land but it is important as a buffer to protect us from the road and Pondicherry industrial estate. It is important to keep a good tree cover on the land for this protective purpose.

Over time we have made various proposals to different groups and people but projects were always rejected for one reason or the other.

This is a very typical Auroville phenomena where ideas get blocked. Instead of pointing the finger at anyone and getting frustrated, I find it an art to step back and find ways to creatively move on. I personally believe that things do not manifest because it is not the right time and one has to let go, accept and recreate to remain in the flow of larger life. From there new possibilities spring up; it's fun.



And so, it happened that we got a request from Prasad from Auromira (an Auroville construction unit) who wanted to get involved in farming. Prasad is now part of Annapurna Farm, is quite independently busy setting up a poultry on one of the roadside plots. The agreement is that Prasad invests money from his own sources and plans to make the activity pay back his investments. Once investments are recovered and the unit becomes profitable, we will look together where Annapurna as a whole needs investment to strengthen the farm.

Right now, he has started poultry for eggs and is venturing into chicken for meat. He is also looking into fish culture. Prasad does notice that there is a lot to learn before becoming successful and takes it with a smile.

In this way we are not stepping on anybody's toes and our main objectives of protecting the area from trespassing and making it more productive are achieved. We hope more people might want to venture into an agri-related activity with Annapurna Farm.