

Cambridge

While at Cambridge, it has been difficult to continue with my blogs in a regular fashion. However, there has been much thought and a great deal of discussion with my team at home. And I am pleased to report that we are being supported fully by communities in moving on in many directions.

The most important development is the seriousness with which the communities have responded and are working hard to plant and grow food for consumption of their families first. But as the produce is growing in quantity, mechanism has to be put in place for collection and sales of these items.

Many steps have been taken in order to make the dry and ostensibly barren land into fertile, food growing area. The one thing that has been bothering me is that in Sindh, we find the landlords orchards flourishing; however, even though village may be in the midst of orchards, nothing would be cultivated there. Either the hari or the farm labour was not encouraged to grow, even though it is the same farm labour that toils to make profit for landlords. It occurred to me that either the villagers never had enough courage to build on what they think is the landlord's land, or because of the hard crust, they assumed that the land was barren and will not bear any results if plantation was taken up.

As we began to work on the village, we found that in most places, water was available quite easily and the area was conducive to growing produce. On an experimental basis the hard crust was removed to 12"-18', treated with water and organic compost and we found that indeed the soil below supported growing of vegetables, fruit etc.

Also, while making excavation for a low cost water storage tank at grade, it was found that water was available quite close to the ground surface and as the artisans dug, the water level kept on being maintained. And if we did not line the tank, it would be ideal for breeding small fish. So that is the beginning of small fish breeding by groups of families. And now that the fish are growing well, a process of fish drying has been started so that all surplus fish could be stored or sold.

The solar dehydration of vegetables and fruit, which has been taken up by communities enthusiastically, has shown good results. If organized properly this provides huge opportunities for ensuring food security along with income generation.

Now that the social franchise system is taking root, there would be possibility of extensive sales during off season time for various vegetables and fruit etc.