

Ladakh Vikalp Sangam on Food and Agriculture

19-20 September 2021

Organised by LAHDC, Agriculture Dept, Local Futures, Snow Leopard Conservancy – India Trust, Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation, and Kalpavriksh

Action Points for Advancing Organic, Sustainable and Equitable

Ladakh is a unique landscape with special food, agriculture, crafts, trade and other livelihoods evolved over centuries. However, in the current context of large-scale development and modernity, many of Ladakh's traditions, knowledge and unique traits are witnessing a rapid decline. With the added context of Covid, it is pertinent that Ladakh renews its sense of self-reliance and well-being by promoting local livelihoods that are grounded in community practices and wisdom, are ecologically sustainable, and can provide diverse livelihood options to communities, especially youth and women.

It is with this backdrop that a Ladakh Vikalp Sangam on Food and Agriculture was organized on 19-20 September, at Saboo village near Leh. It sought to create a space among community members, civil society, government and other relevant groups on how we envision a holistic vision for Ladakh on food, agriculture and other related livelihoods. The Sangam also aimed to initiate a process of consultations and dialogue among all relevant actors to come up with an action plan for the short, medium and long-term, that can be implemented to sustain, revive and promote organic agriculture and local food in Ladakh. A key Sangam objective was how to further operationalize the Mission Organic Development Initiative of Ladakh, linking it with relevant government schemes, discuss possibilities for sustainable, community-led agrotourism, and initiate drafting of an overall vision for agriculture and food.

The Sangam participants deliberated on:

1. Key issues being faced in agriculture, food, and related livelihoods
2. Examples of inspiring work from Ladakh on agriculture and food
3. A Well-being Index that could provide both a vision for the future of Ladakh's food and agriculture, as also a tool for evaluating the progress of the Ladakh Organic Mission and related actions
4. A road-map of actions based on such a vision, including linkages with the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana and other relevant schemes
5. Possibilities for agro-tourism activities that could provide sustainable livelihoods to communities

The Sangam also involved displays and sale of organic produce and relevant publications, and a short field visit to a progressive farmer in Saboo village.

Following are the follow up actions proposed at the Sangam, along with proposed agencies / organisations that could take up the responsibility for these actions.

Actions and Responsibilities Emerging from Ladakh Vikalp Sangam on Food and Agriculture

19-20 September 2021

Note: some groups mentioned below were not at the Sangam and have not yet been asked

1. MISSION ORGANIC AND RELATED ACTIONS

S.No.	Action Plan	Responsibilities	Time Frame
1.	Establish Organic Farmers' Market – Providing space for organic farmers in various regional centres of Ladakh (Leh, Khalsi, Nyuma, Diskit) to sell their produce	Council / UT Ladakh Proposal draft: LF/SLC (with ex-President, Ladakh Farmers' Assoc)	Proposal to add to 2022-23 budget: Nov/Dec Est. Markets: July 2022
2.	Document existing techniques – video, audio, and written accounts of farmers with innovative methods	Local Futures	Winter methods (cold storage, greenhouses, etc) Proposal by October, 1st set of videos by December
3.	Install ECOSAN toilets (Public toilets/Homestays/Hotels)	Council / UT Homestay owners / hoteliers with ALGHA	
4.	Set up empowered and inclusive Apex Committee for Leh – for implementing and monitoring Mission Organic, comprising govt agencies, farmers, NGOs	Council / UT	
5.	Stop import of agricultural produce that grows in Ladakh in summer (link also to Action 17 on pesticides to create awareness)	Council / UT	
6.	Promote full year use of Greenhouse / provide 90% subsidy on Greenhouses for poorer families	Council / UT Progressive farmers NGOs	
7.	Procuring local food at MSP; PDS/ Midday meals/ Residential Schools	Council	
8.	All non govt institutions - Monasteries, Hotels, consumer groups	LBA / ALGHA (for hotels/GHs) / NGOs	
9.	Procuring local food in all Govt events at MSP	Council / UT	
10.	Consulting Ministry of Defence for Army supply	DIHAR (with backing from farmer groups / NGOs)	

11.	Support progressive farmers / youth wanting to get into organic farming	Council / UT	
12.	Document crop / animal diversity & create Seed Bank Community Level seed banks (protected against theft/piracy by companies, etc)	SKUAST /CAZRI/DRDO Community/ LNP & other NGOs	First community example Lehdo (Tashi Namgail / LF), discussions by LF and reporting back
13.	Greater organic focus by Research Institute; linking progressive farmers to them	SKUAST /CAZRI/DRDO	
14.	Note on implementation of Organic Mission by other related schemes – NREGS, SFURTI, Nutrition Related	Council +Local Futures + Kalpavriksh	End-Oct
15.	Geographical map of unique food / agr of Ladakh (including wild foods)	LAMO+ Kalpavriksh	
16.	Promote FPOs that are farmer run and democratic (check govt requirements for Ladakh specific exemptions)	Council/UT / NABARD?	
17.	Test pesticide level of food coming from outside, and do media campaign	SKUAST/CAZRI/DRDO	
18.	Do comparative nutrition level testing of Ladakhi foods vs. those coming from outside	SKUAST/CAZRI/DRDO / National Institute of Nutrition?	
19.	Conduct annual food festival to promote unique Ladakhi cultivated and wild food, in different parts of Ladakh	Council/ HCFC (Dr. Sonam Wangchuk)	
20.	Encourage Animal Husbandry in farm areas for manure availability	Council / UT	
21.	Help establish milk related co-op society not present (e.g. Sham valley) ... local ones, not Amul/Nestle etc (need to explore alternative models of coops)	Council / Village institutions Kalpavriksh to explore alternative models	
22.	Research on local breeds and promotion / revival of declining breeds (e.g. Dzo)	Council/UT with NBAGR / Farmer & pastoral groups	
23.	Promotion of sheep wool & Yak products (esp. for Changthang)	Council/UT / Pastoral groups	
24.	Ecological assessment of agricultural programmes (old and new)	Snow Leopard Conservancy – IT	
25.	Guidelines to grow seabuckthorn to	DIHAR	

	avoid negative ecological impacts		
26.	Land use policy, including reserving agricultural land against non-agr use, and managing land use change to be sustainable	Council / UT	
27.	Water management, storage, recharge, conservation, including lift irrigation with renewable energy, groundwater recharge, etc	(need to find institution) LREDA / HIAL? (Kalpavriksh to ask Arid Community Technologies)	
28.	Research on Agriculture and Climate adaptation Promotion of climate resilient crops like millets	DRDO/SKUAST / Council/UT / HIAL?	
29.	Integrate agriculture/food issues and experience in school curricula, including agrobiodiversity/kitchen gardens	Council / UT SECMOL?	
30.	Set up Ladakh farmers' association to promote and advocate organic farming and local foods	Farmer groups / NGOs	

2. AGROTOURISM

1	Guidelines for Agro tourism based on ecological, social, cultural, economic criteria	Council / UT/ SLC / ALGHA	
2	Create some models for agrotourism, incl. documenting existing ones (e.g. Sham, Nubra, Gya)	Council/UT / NGOs / Julley Ladakh	
3	Promote Food and Craft heritage trails, Festival, and Work away/ volunteer tourism (including full year cycle of activities)	LAMO / Local Futures / SLC	
4	Initiate urban agrotourism	ALGHA	
5	Generate and spread information and promote agrotourism using various means	LF / Tsewang Rigzin?	
6	Tourist preference survey: how many tourists will go into agrotourism if available	Padma Rigzin	
7	Village preference survey: do they want agrotourism, and of what kind?	Padma Rigzin (with SLC)	

3. WELL-BEING INDEX

1.	Further Development of the Index	Kalpavriksh +	
----	----------------------------------	---------------	--

		SLC	
2.	Village Level Discussions- Consultation before finalizing discussing the index with villagers as well as all other stakeholders (like administrative departments, LG, UT administration)	SLC	
3.	Adoption by Council / UT after going through consultative process	Council / UT	
4.	Use for Civil Society Monitoring	All the organising NGOs (SLC to lead)	

Immediate follow-up actions:

- a. Note on research proposals/priorities for DG ICAR (before 27th)
- b. EC to obtain existing research reports of govt institutes
- c. Note to EC re. policy shifts and exec decisions re. procurement of local foods (by early October)
- d. Proposal for documentation (Local Futures)
- e. Proposal for mapping of foods / agr heritage (LAMO)
- f. Proposal for finalization & consultations on well-being index (SLC/ Kalpavriksh)