



Agroforestry systems for producing nutritious food for smallholders in Odisha, India

by [Javed Rizvi](#) · June 25, 2018

A new project in India promises better diets for farmers

The World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) South Asia Regional Programme recently launched a three-year project: Enabling Smallholders in Odisha to Produce and Consume More Nutritious Food through Agroforestry Systems. **The project is fully funded by the State Government of Odisha and will be jointly implemented by ICRAF, the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, Government of Odisha, the India Council of Agriculture Research's Central Agroforestry Research Institute and National Rice Research Institute, and the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology.**

The project was launched with an inception workshop at Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha State, opened by Saurabh Garg, Principal Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, and attended by more than 60 participants, including senior government officers representing the departments that will support the project.

Saurabh assured the ICRAF representatives of full cooperation and support from the State Government.

“What better partner can we find other than ICRAF?” he said. “We would like to continue this partnership not only through the current project but also in future endeavours of the Government of Odisha on agroforestry.”



Signing ceremony of the agreement between the Government of Odisha and ICRAF. Dr Javed Rizvi of ICRAF shakes hands with Ms. Sujata R Kartikeyan, Commissioner/ Director, Watershed Mission. Looking from left to right: HK Panda, Director (Technical), Watersheds; Gagan Kumar Dhal, Agricultural Production; Commissioner Shri Pradeep Maharathy, Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment; Saurabh Garg, Principal Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment; and AM Muthukumar, Director of Agriculture. Photo: World Agroforestry Centre

The project will be working with over 5000 households from 140 villages in two districts: Bolangir and Nuapada. Most of the target villages in the two districts rely on rainfall rather than irrigation and are inhabited by tribal communities. The average size of landholdings is less than 1 hectare.

Specifically, the project will create awareness about the consumption and benefits of diverse, nutritious farm produce, such as fruit and vegetables and tree-based produce, such as pods, nuts and leaves. The project team aims to accelerate adoption of agroforestry systems that will enhance production of nutritious food and generate employment and income for farmers to support the Odisha Government's strategy of reducing in-country migration. The team will also assess the impact of introduced interventions on communities and the productivity of the various agroforestry systems to support better decision-making for wider adoption by farmers. A focus of the project will be on building the capacity of farmers, the wider community and others to help sustain the benefits from the project after it has closed.

Speaking at the workshop, Ravi Prabhu, ICRAF's Deputy Director-General Research shared the organization's regional and global experience in agroforestry. He emphasized how working in partnership with a range of stakeholders more speedily unfolds the potential of agroforestry for improving the nutritional security of farmers.



Left to right: Ms. Sujata R Kartikeyan, Commissioner/Director, Watershed Mission, Department of Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment, Government of Odisha; Sachin Ramchandra Jadhav, Labour Commissioner; Saurabh Garg, Principal Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment; Gagan Kumar Dhal, Agricultural Production Commissioner, Government of Odisha; Ravi Prabhu, Deputy Director-General Research, ICRAF; MM Hossain, Dean, College of Forestry, Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology, Bhubaneswar; and HK Panda, Director (Technical), Watersheds. Photo: World Agroforestry Centre

Introducing the project to workshop participants, Javed Rizvi, regional director of ICRAF South Asia, shared its objectives and approach. He described the two major opportunities which the project would be exploring: first, increasing and diversifying the existing agricultural production systems by introducing suitable multi-purpose trees, either on the boundaries of fields or intercropped; and, second, influencing the mindset of communities to shift from open grazing to stall-feeding of livestock during the fallow season.

Communities in the area mostly grow only one rice crop a year, which provides an excellent opportunity to introduce a second, short-duration legume crop and fruit and fodder trees. This would almost immediately make the new agroforestry system more productive and nutritive, and generate more income and employment.

The project has a strong component of individual and institutional capacity development to build a strong knowledge base within the communities through training progressive farmers to become agents of change.

Rizvi had earlier signed the project agreement with the Government of Odisha, on 28 February 2018, in the presence of Shri Pradeep Maharathy, Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, Shri Gagan Kumar Dhal, Agricultural Production Commissioner of the Indian Administrative Services, Saurabh Garg, and Sujata, Commissioner-cum-Director of the Watershed Mission of the Department.

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Javed Rizvi



Dr Javed Rizvi is an Agricultural Scientist with more than 25 years of research for development and teaching experience in different countries. Javed comes to us from our sister Centre ICARDA where he was working as the Country Program Manager overseeing ICARDA's largest outreach program in Afghanistan. Over the period of 13 years with ICARDA (4 in Iran and 9 in Afghanistan), he managed several large multi-disciplinary agricultural programs including aspects of research, extension, technology transfer, and capacity development to improve food and nutritional security, diversification and intensification of crop-livestock-silviculture production systems, soil-water conservation, alternative livelihoods, and small scale processing and marketing of agricultural and forest products through community based organizations. He has more than 50 research publications and a book published by Chapman and Hall, London to his credit.