Good agricultural practices help spread benefit

In Sundarban, agricultural activities with modern equipment and practices are difficult to implement due to its habitat and terrain. Farmers are habituated to using high rate of N: P: K, others fertilizers and pesticides for increased production in limited time due to lack of knowledge and also lack of proper official training. Indiscriminate use of different chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides affects soil health, air, water etc. The farmers earlier didn’t quite comprehend the effects of climate change on various aspects of life. They had no idea about the practice of sustainable food production. In such a scenario, Climate Smart Agriculture had been introduced in those remote habitats in Sundarban where Nature Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS) has been involved in the conservation and protection of Mangroves. Climate Smart Agriculture includes local seed preservation, seed segregation and seed treatment, use of local and natural bio-pesticides and fertilizers, single line transplantation (SLT), Skip row, bird perchers etc. Under West Bengal Accelerated Development of Minor Irrigation Projects (WBADMIP) in Amtali, Gosaba Block, in the South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, an interesting thing happened. A farmer, Tarun Kumar Mandal had been involved in agriculture, but had never practiced or had no information on seed segregation and seed treatment before raising of the paddy seedlings in the seed bed. Here, as a part of climate smart agriculture, a mix of salt water and egg composition had been administered for seed segregation. This method helped segmentation of unhealthy and immature seeds from healthy and mature seeds. After getting the hands on training on seed segregation and seed treatment here, he took his own initiative, bought salt from a local shop and replicated the method he had learned. It made such a huge difference! He was assured of getting a good result in his seed bed and the germination of seeds was healthy and disease free. He followed this method in the Kharif and in the Rabi season for paddy cultivation. In the Rabi season, he faced another problem due to the grazing of herds of goat and cattle in his paddy field. He could not afford to protect his field from the grazing due to financial constraints. As a part of a solution to this problem, NEWS suggested the use of a specially prepared liquid. This is a liquid prepared with the help of fish scales, (scales, fish entrails etc. without the thorns) and molasses (same quantity of each item) that is stirred and stored in a plastic sealed drum for 20 days for the purpose of rotting. Occasionally, some stirring of the liquid was required. After 20 days the foul smelling liquid is collected and about 5-10 ml of the liquid is mixed with about 1 lit of water and sprinkled on the seedlings and vegetables. Cow, sheep and goats, grazing on this patch of land stay away from the seedlings because of the foul smell. This liquid also acts as a growth hormone and promotes growth of vegetation to a large extent. The farmer is happy as this concoction has yielded good results and his produce is safe. He is today a happy man and also willing to learn more and put more such methods into practice.