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KITCHEN GARDEN AND THEIR ROLE IN COMBATING MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES

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INTRODUCTION

India ranks 101 in Global Hunger Index out of 116 countries, and is the second largest producer of the food in world with highest rate of undernutrition (underweight, wasting and stunting). Most of the women and adult girls are anemic which impacts the nutritional status of child due to lack of feeding practices. Despite of many steps for providing food security and combating malnutrition over the past four decades through many schemes and programmes most of the people go hungry everyday.

Multiple strategies helps to combat the issue of food security where community gardens/ Nutrition gardens/ Kitchen gardens helps to improve the nutritional status by meeting their requirements. They are the good source of providing nutrients especially poor household and most of the rural people have ample space as they are mostly into agriculture.

Role of kitchen garden: Fruits and vegetables plays important role human nutrition as they are the important sources of bioactive nutrient and non-nutrient components which reduces the risk of many diseases. They can be suitably grown in kitchen gardens or nutrition home gardens as short duration crops. It not only saves money and time but also provides healthy, useful and environment friendly hobby for whole family. They help us in recycling of household waste and can be used as compost for crops development. It is the easiest and best ways of ensuring access to a healthy diet which contains adequate macro- and micronutrients in food. It has its higher impact in rural areas where there is low purchasing power and distant markets compared to urban areas where transport facilities are low. It directly provides food and nutritional security by making access to food where it can be harvested instantly, prepared and fed to family members whenever required. They are increasingly important source of food and income for poor households in peri-urban and urban areas.

The daily requirement of vegetable is around 300 grams as per dietary including all the three types of vegetables namely include green leafy vegetables, other vegetables and roots and tubers. The present production of vegetables in our country can provide 120 g of vegetables per day. The Krishi Vigyan Kendra has being conducting



various trainings and demonstrations to the farm women in order to ensure better per capita availability at household level and increased level of knowledge regarding establishment of kitchen garden.

Establishing a kitchen garden is a solution to combat micronutrient deficiency in an affordable way. It helps to improve nutritional standards of low-income rural families through integrated household food production. It ensures food security, employment of youth and an alternative way generating income. They helps to empower women also reduces poverty and bring socio-economic returns through reduced health costs. It also helps to have good feeding practices at home which impacts the child health and helps to combat most of the micronutrient deficiencies in child as their age is crucial period for their development which impacts the further development. It helps in the improvement of physical, psychological and social health which has long-term impacts on well being of an individual through improved intake of fresh fruits and vegetables. It ensures to consume the seasonal foods without affecting their income levels.



Programme role: Bharat India Jodo has developed a model of ‘Reliance Nutrition Gardens’ (RNG) which are cost effective and aimed at providing nutritious, organic and diverse fresh vegetables to marginal rural families throughout the year. Through this programme the cultivation of functional and medicinal food has increased in the households and its impact on food security has been calculated using Food a Consumption Score (FCS) of WHO. FCS was in the acceptable range for more than 96 percent of children across 6-18 and above 18 years of age. There was a 32 percent (91 before to 62 after percent) decrease in anemia cases in women over a span of 24 months.

Role during COVID Pandemic: It has played a major role during the COVID pandemic time due to lack of access to the food from outside and lack of import and export from other places. Kitchen garden helped many families especially rural to have nutrient food.

