

# Why not produce Organic Milk ?

When we discuss organic, only fruits and vegetables come in our mind. Very less people know that even Milk can be Organic. Recently I got a chance to visit a small city in Karnataka where Organic Milk is produced by a group of farmers under the direction and guidance of Dr GNS Reddy who has a vast working experience in the development sector. Dr Reddy is a Founder & Managing Director of AkashayaKalappa an Agri based company established around 5 years back at Tiptur Karnataka. My trip to AkashayaKalappa was facilitated by Vijay Mahajan Founder of BASIX Social Enterprise Group which is working on the Livelihood generation in 22 states of India. From last almost 1 year BASIX is working in J&K as well. BASIX plans to involve local youth and budding entrepreneurs towards "Dairy Farming" and for this purpose MrMahajan asked me to visit Tiptur which is a small city located around 150 kms North of Bangalore .

## Visit to Tiptur :

Tiptur is located in Tumkur district of Karnataka. People in Tiptur are mainly associated with coconut farming. On 9th September I visited Tiptur, first I visited Akashaya Kalappa office located in the town. I was given a detailed presentation how this social enterprise works. AkashayaKalappa was registered as a company only 5 years back by Dr Reddy , but it has done remarkable work within this brief period. Dr Reddy is himself a trained Veterinarian who worked for 30 long years in BAIFF Research Foundation Pune. BAIFF was founded by Mahatma Gandhi in late 1940's and is working in Rural development sector in hundreds of villages across several states of India. Dr Reddy explained how the idea of AkashayaKalappa was conceptualized. Earlier I was under this impression that Akashaya Kalappa (AK) might be having a big dairy farm in Tiptur , but actually AK does not own any dairy farms. The farms are owned by the farmers who have been organised and are continuously guided by

the AK's staff . Akashaya Kalappa (AK) instead owns a 7000 Litre capacity Organic Milk Processing Plant where milk is packed and processed after being collected from the farmers working with AkashayaKalappa.

## Farmers create dairy farms :

After working for 30 years in social development sector for 30 years, Dr Reddy took voluntary retirement from the post of Vice President in BAIFF in 2012. It was in 2012 when he decided to relieve people from funding dependency syndrome. According to Dr Reddy farmers in India have become beggars and there is a need to create new economic cadre. Some working models have to be set up in this direction so that more and more farmers, individuals and entrepreneurs follow the said model. The farmers have to come out of the dependency syndrome and to achieve this , farming community needs to become self sufficient especially during procurement of seeds, fertilizers , and other things which are needed for agriculture and allied activities that includes Dairy Farming as well. To create dairy farms around Tiptur was not an easy task for Dr Reddy, he had to convince each and every member of the farmers . The farmers usually live in villages who have farming land located near the village. The 30 plus dairy farms located around Tiptur are located outside villages and Dr Reddy not only motivated farmers to set up the dairy units in their farms but the farmers were motivated to shift their families to these farms as well and this was a great challenge for Dr Reddy. Presently the farmers live inside the premises of these farms. The dairy units around Tiptur are equipped with all the modern gadgets which can be compared with dairy farms of Europe and US. The farms are self sufficient vis a vis fodder demand. Not a single dairy farm owner procures fodder from other places. The fodder procurement costs a lot for farmers having dairy farms but this is a totally different case in Akashaya Kalappa farms. The animals

in the dairy farms are not fed with factory made feed.

## Organic Fodder :

I found lot of fodder like Maize , Millets , Gini , Napier , Molegna sticks , Mulberry etc grown within the premises of Akashaya Kalappa dairy farms. All these varieties of fodder are purely organic. Pesticides or chemical fertilizer is not at all used to grow the same , instead the organic manure and compost material available within the farm



is used as manure. Each farm has its own biogas plant. The gas is not only used by the family living in the farm but the same is used to provide electricity to the farm through a Genset which runs of Bio Gas .The electricity thus produced is used for running water motors , pumps and 500 litre Milk Chilling plant. Cows or buffaloes are usually tied with ropes in dairy farms. They get bruises as the flooring is very much hard , rocky or concrete but this is not at all allowed by Akashaya Kalappa. The cows roam freely with a piece of land which is fenced. In one of the farms where there were around 14 cows , I found around half acre of land meant for cows to roam . This land was fenced properly .Cows were fed under a shed , having thick rubber sheets which is used as bedding.

## Sunil's farm :

The dairy farms controlled by Akashaya Kalappa are not large farms. Akashaya Kalappa works with small farmers. The average farm is located on 4 to 5 acres of land. The average strength of cows in these farms is not more than 25. I visited SLR farm located around 8 kms from the Tiptur town. This farm is owned by one Sunil Kumar 23. Sunil informed me that he established the farm around 18 months back. His family owned few cows in the village , but Dr Reddy's concept touched Sunil's heart and got motivated to establish a modern dairy farm. Sunil has 4.5 acres of land where he takes care of some 16 cows who are the cross breed between Holiestin and local breed. At an average each cows gives 10 litres of milk. Sunil told me that he earns Rs 70,000 to 80,000 every month by selling the milk to Akashaya Kalappa. Sunil has studied until class 12th only and due to poverty / backwardness he could not continue his studies , but today Sunil like other village boys didn't shift to Bangalore to do petty jobs , instead he lives in his own village , earns a good money , and gives job to few other villagers at his farm. I went to another farm located some 9 kms from Tiptur at Bamlapur village. The farm is owned by one Vasant Kumar who is graduate. Kumar has 18 cows in the farm. I saw Kumar's wife Purnimaa Govt lecturer milking cows. Vasant Kumar like Sunil has also made the dairy farm his home. Vasant lives in the farm along with his two kids , wife and two other employees. Like Sunil Vasant also uses modern techniques and machines to milk the cows. I could see chilling plant , bio gas plant and other modern equipment at Vasant's farm .

## Milk Processing Plant :

I also went to Milk Processing Plant owned by Akashaya Kalappa located around 13 kms from Tiptur town. The plant has been set up on a 24 acres of land. There is a team of 15 people in this plant which is headed by

one Jinoth Ram who is Tamilian having done his Masters Degree in Dairy Science. Jinoth is working at Akashaya Kalappa plant from last 2 years and before that he was working with some other similar plants in Tamil Nadu. The milk processing plant procures and processes around 5000 litres daily. The milk processed at Akashaya Kalappa Milk processing plant is 100 % organic which is supplied to Bangalore and Tumkur towns on daily basis. High quality Ghee , Curd and Paneer is also made from the milk in the plant. The milk is sold @ Rs 67 to Rs 70 in retail in Tumkur and Bangalore . The plant started its operation with 15 litres of milk that was carried by Dr Reddy in his car around 4 years back , but only within a period of 3 years the supply has touched 5000 litres and by March 2017 the Akashaya Kalappa targets to process 15000 liters of milk and very soon the company is going to expand their Milk processing unit as well.

While I was at Sunil's SLR farm a customer who purchases Akashaya Kalappa (AK) Organic Milk ringed one of the employees of AK who was accompanying me. The customer was on way to the farm to see how the organic milk is produced. After some 15 minutes he came along with his friends and relatives. I interacted with this customer namely Vivek Vinugopal Bhat , a civil engineer from Tumkur. He had lots of praise for Akashaya Kalappa milk . Vivek told me that from last 6 months his family buys this organic milk @ Rs 70 from a local dealer in his town. The Akashaya Kalappa Ghee costs Rs 1000 per KG and is branded as 100 % organic.

## Conclusion :

I would request budding entrepreneurs who plan to start their dairy business to establish Organic Dairy farms instead of traditional farms where the cows and buffaloes take fodder which is grown with the help of chemical fertilizers. These chemicals enter into the body of cattle which in-turn contaminate the milk. In organic dairy farms fodder is grown with the help of organic manure only.