

COVID RESPONSE

FARM2FOOD



IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

Experiential learning, building entrepreneurial ability and discovering leadership in local communities

Overview

Farm2Food is focused on building farm and food entrepreneurs, addressing nutrition, education and entrepreneurship in the communities it works with. Farmpreneur, its flagship program, enables children to establish nutrition garden in schools and home. These nutrition gardens help children learn principles of science and mathematics, develop entrepreneurial skills and improve their nutritional standards. For the school and community they offer improved midday meal quality and create learning relationships between children and community elders.

In the past 9 years, it has established more than 5000 school nutrition gardens impacting over 100,000 young people across the country. In 2019, Government of India adopted its School Nutrition Garden project for 1.2 million schools.

With schools being shut, Farm2Food's work could not continue as usual. The scale also had to be rethought.

One of the most vulnerable communities in Assam, where Farm2Food is present, are the tea garden workers. They are landless and their only source of food was the dry ration kits distributed by government.

Farm2Food was one of the Civil Society Organisations responsible for distribution of direct relief supply. They engaged with tea garden workers, supplying them with relief material and encouraging them to start their own kitchen gardens.



For this they engaged their young school Farmpreneurs who were well trained in initiating and maintaining their school kitchen garden enterprise.

They were now trained in disseminating Covid related information and safe practices to the community. They also took on the responsibility of teaching children of younger classes. This enabled learning and engagement for children in the absence of functioning schools during the pandemic.

LONG TERM SHIFTS

Engaged communities for economic and social revival

To revive local economy and build resilience in communities, Farm2Food is now focused on building cooperatives of agri-business enterprises that will be primarily women led. One of the first such enterprises is a cooperative to produce and market Araknut (Tamul) plates from Assam. Existing women SHGs are brought together under this cooperative to build sustainability and collective resilience.

Farm2Food is working with the state MSME ministry to support more such cooperative businesses. Farm2Food is also partnering with another Ashoka fellow led organization, The Goat Trust, to setup livestock trading cooperatives in Assam.

Farm2Food's belief is that collective enterprises serve more than just economic purposes. They bring communities together to rebuild a strong social fabric with better engaged communities.

Farm2Food has conceptualized and created a program to address the vulnerability that young adolescent girls face today. Seen as a burden on the family, they are either married off or trafficked in times of crises. Farm2Food recognizes this as a grave risk and intends to take preventive action with small village units. These units, setup in schools, will support adolescent girls to become Farmpreneurs. They will be trained in life skills, leadership, health and nutrition, and child rights. The adolescent girls, thus, will be seen as productive and essential members of the community. This will help break the chain of early marriage and trafficking.



Conclusion

Covid has necessitated a change in Farm2Food's direction of work. It highlighted the need to build collective resilience in communities.

For Farm2Food it implies moving away from a limited direct outreach with few thousand communities and schools to working with the state and community-based institutions at a large scale.

