Build a farm, grow a community

Farming has been a way of life Guntupalli Sai Vara Prasad’s family for generations. He has lived through the tough times and is now enjoying the benefits that plant science is providing his farm, family and community.

Prasad owns three acres of land and leases another 12 acres near Bandarupalli Village in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India; a region with a history rich in agriculture. On this land, he and his father, mother and wife cultivate paddy rice, chillies and cotton with the help of some additional hired farm workers.

Prasad has seen great improvements in his cotton crops since he began using new seed varieties derived from biotechnology. Before adopting the technology, the farmer faced destruction of his crop from pests and flowering was inadequate. “We would get only 6-7 quintals of cotton production but now 10 quintals is our average,” he says. “The biotechnology cotton has truly brought in a revolution in cotton production,” He adds that his chilli production has also improved with the adoption of hybrid seed varieties.

“The prosperity that we now witness in the agricultural sector is of course due to research and technology.”
Through increased productivity and farm profitability, both biotechnology and crop protection products have played an essential role in bettering life for Prasad’s family and others. “Prior to adopting the techniques of crop protection, all those who were dependent on agriculture had little income,” he remembers. “Now, due to higher yields, we have better income and we are witnessing better health, education and improvement in the overall quality of life.”

For example, the profits from the farm helped Prasad study law and he now practices as an advocate while still managing his farm. With the extra income he is generating from the farm, he is planning to send his children to a residential school where they will get a better education, develop good technical skills as well as study English.

“The knowledge that Prasad has gained has been invaluable. The farm has been able to reduce the amount of pesticides being used while gaining better control of infestations. That saves the farm money and improves crop yield resulting in higher profitability. “We are able to protect our health in a better way through the discerning use of pesticides,” he says.

Water management practices are also improving on Prasad’s farm. “Previously, water was simply let out into the fields, which resulted in crops being damaged and farmers incurring losses,” he states. “But now we make mud rows and let out water only to the extent that the plant requires. This way we are able to provide sufficient water for the chilli plants without wasting water.”

Prasad is proud to be a farmer and he acknowledges the contribution that research has made to improve his life. “The prosperity that we now witness in the agricultural sector is of course due to research and technology,” he says. “Earlier, even if a farmer worked from 6.00 am to 6.00 pm he would hardly have enough to fill his stomach; forget about feeding his family.”

Prasad sees an even brighter future ahead for agriculture, feeding a growing world and improving communities. “Population all over the world is ever increasing. To meet these growing needs we need to have more produce,” he explains. “We look forward to a new ‘green revolution’.”