

SAVE YOUR GRAIN

After harvesting and processing, grain is stored until it is marketed or consumed. Due to improper storage losses in quality and quantity take place. These losses are due to insect and rodent damage and environmental effects. These grain losses may seem to be slight and insignificant to an individual farmer, or perhaps inevitable.

Is this loss really slight..? A 5% loss of stored paddy may remain unobserved by a farmer. But on a national scale this loss works out to be a loss of millions of rupees.

For example in 1975/76 cultivation year the national production of paddy was 60,053,000 bushels. 5% of this is 3,002,650 bushels. At Rs. 40/= per bushel-the price prevailing today- this loss is Rs. 120,106,000/=. Calculated on the basis of the average yield of that season (44.13 bushels per acre) this is equal to a total crop failure on 68,000 acres.

Similar experiences and observations in India has prompted the Save Grain Campaign (SGC). Our problems being similar it is worth while discussing how this programme is operated in India.

In this campaign (SGC) State Governments are assisted by the Central Government to operate the campaign. The objectives of the campaign are -

- To create an awareness of storage losses.
- To supply equipment and knowhow in time.

Training programmes are the first step in creating awareness. These programmes are modified to suit literacy levels of the different categories of the community (e.g. farmers, traders, extension staff, administrative officers etc). Farmers, farm women and members of village level voluntary organisations are trained at Farmer Training Centres through lectures and demonstrations (supplemented by audio - visual aids.) In some areas a lady demonstrator attached to the Centre works in nearby villages, educating farm women in storage methods. The Centres cooperate with youth and womens organisations to take the message to the rural masses.

Public Demonstrations are held regularly by District and Village Level State Extension workers and voluntary organisations. All means of publicity such as posters, hand-bills, films, exhibitions, slide stories, puppet shows, wall slogans and pamphlets based on storage themes are used. Field demonstrations, with farmer participation wherever possible, on fumigation, rodent detection and control are conducted. Discussions follow and opportunities are provided for the development of community leadership. Farm communities are encouraged to adopt collective group action. Wider publicity is given through mass media and simple slogans painted on public conveyances.

In addition, 'Model' villages are selected where demonstrations in improved storage technology are carried out in 15% of the homesteads. These serve as the nuclei, from where the awareness is expected to seep to the rest of the farming community. Similarly 'Model' villages where nearly all homesteads are covered serve as nuclei for the surrounding villages.

The Indian Storage Institute conducts research (in the engineering, pest control and storage aspects) and develops simple storage techniques to suit different farming situations. They also improve and improvise on local practices using locally available material and expertise. Discarded tar barrels are also used to design simple storage structures.

The State Government ensures a regular supply of storage bins, rodenticides, pesticides, and other raw materials to the farmer. Private pesticide agencies are encouraged to open as many retail sale points as possible. The fabrication and maintenance of storage structures are undertaken by state and private organisations. Incentives to purchase improved storage bins are offered to the farmer, in the form of subsidies, loans, and a deferred payment scheme. In some States the subsidy on storage bins is 25-50%.

