

## **Convergence of Krishi Vigyan Kendra activities in changing cropping pattern of Salooni block of Chamba district**

The Salooni block of Chamba district is a backward area and consists of mainly the maize- wheat and silvi- pastoral systems. The area falls under the wet temperate region and some areas of the whole block are under the sub temperate, sub humid, mid hills. The economic condition of the farmers was very poor initially. The farmers, especially after receiving assistance from developmental departments gradually started shifting to apple cultivation. But due to marginal climate for apples in some areas apple did not prove to be much beneficial. As a diversification option the farmers are now opting vegetable cultivation as well as the cultivation of medicinal plants on a commercial scale. Off- season vegetable viz. Tomato, Capsicum, French bean, Pea, Radish and Broccoli have been introduced in the area. The Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Chamba was instrumental in creating the awareness amongst farmers of Salooni area regarding the importance of vegetable and medicinal plants cultivation keeping in view the potential of the area. The training of farmers was initiated since the inception of KVK in the year 1991. The process continued and the farmers started getting motivated. Initially the farmers were reluctant to take up the challenge anticipating risk factors and costly inputs involved in the transformation, but once the returns started flowing in their interests grew and large scale adoption has been witnessed. Besides this 48 demonstrations, covering an area of 13.3. ha at 18 locations were conducted on vegetable production technologies. The farmers of the area are in constant contact with the scientists of the KVK regarding different problems during the course of crop growth and suggestions thereof. The farmers are also linked with the Department of Agriculture, DRDA and also the wholesalers in big Subzi Mandis of Delhi, Amritsar and Pathankot.

The technology transfer module consisted of a large number of on- campus and off-campus trainings and frontline demonstrations consisting of high yielding varieties, exotic vegetables and medicinal plants. Identification of promising varieties, standardization of sowing times and promotion of the adoption of proper management practices were the priority technological interventions. The area under vegetables increased from few hectare to 698 ha in 1998-99 and reached 1130 hectares in 2004-05. The total production which was about 1186 MT in 1998-99 increased proportionally to 1997 MT in 2004-05. Till date the area and production have taken a quantum increase but the statistical information has not yet been compiled. As far as medicinal and aromatic plants are concerned the most popular among them is lavender, a perennial aromatic plant. The medicinal plants like Patish and Kutki are also equally remunerative in the higher reaches of the district. The attitudinal change towards vegetable and medicinal plant cultivation reflects increased response of farmers to training programmes organized by the Kendras. The farmers have formed Self Help Groups and have also installed oil extracting unit for lavender. For this the farmers had to come to either district head quarter or Pathankot in Punjab. But once the produce started fetching returns and the marketing of the produce was explored outside the state, the farmers have started planning their schedules accordingly and procure all the requisite inputs from the market well in advance.