

# National Consortium on SRI (NCS)

## Introduction

Introduction of the System of Rice Intensification has energized the demand for agro-ecological innovations in India. With its promise of achieving 'more with less' i.e. more yields and net incomes with less inputs- seeds and water in particular, SRI has caught the imagination of the civil society, researchers and policy makers. In addition to yield increase, the promise of SRI is seen more in the areas of enhancing household food security in vast stretches of rainfed areas, its potential to reduce water use in rice, as an agent for risk mitigation and as an effective adaptation strategy for climate change - achieving all these with lesser inputs and costs in a sustainable manner.

However, SRI is also widely debated, within and outside mainstream research institutions. SRI is a work in progress, with every year passing by bringing in new experiences and understanding. Over the last decade SRI has been adopted and adapted in over three million hectares across various agro-ecological regions of India. With its principles now being applied successfully to wheat, mustard, sugarcane, pulses and millets, SRI is shaping up as a System of Crop Intensification.

Currently, the uptake of this innovation has mostly emerged from outside the scientific establishment. While SDTT, NABARD, WWF and others supported over 300 civil society organizations spreading SRI widely across the country, a few pro-active state governments such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Tripura scaled up SRI in their respective states.

Several national symposia on SRI organized over the last decade by WWF-ICRISAT program in partnership with SDTT, State Governments, NABARD, PRADAN and others have provided a platform for sharing and learning. An informal consortium of organisations and individuals has initiated two rounds of policy dialogue with the Planning Commission. Such efforts by the consortium also contributed to developing policy strategies for scaling up of SRI in the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP through the sub-group reports on 'Upscaling Innovation Technologies' and 'Mission Mode Project on SRI'.

## National Consortium on SRI (NCS)

The 'National Consortium on SRI' is a process of consolidating all these efforts and to further strengthen the collaborative efforts. NCS denotes the coming together of a variety of stakeholders, having strength or competence in relevant areas of enhancing the scale of SRI practice and policy in the country. The NCS will work towards process of promoting science, practice and policy engagement on SRI and its principles to empower farmers to meet household and national food security even as they save water and other inputs.



### ***Purpose of the National Consortium:***

The primary mandate of the NCS is to add value to the efforts of individuals, organizations and collectives working in the spheres of science, practice and policy of SRI.

NCS promotes mainstream agro-ecological innovations that improve **food security, enhance farm incomes** through **sustainable eco-friendly and resource conserving systems of crop intensification. Novel institutional mechanisms will be evolved** that build on farmers' knowledge and enhance local capacities with active participation of researchers, government agencies and civil society.

### ***Functional Domain of NCS:***

- 1. Science of SRI:** This includes the identification of the enabling factors for the full expression of the genetic potential of the rice plant; conservation of natural resources; reduction in cost of cultivation; and improvement of soil health and nutrient mining.
- 2. Practices of SRI:** This includes an evaluation of the tangible benefits of SRI; understanding the realities of adopting and dis-adopting SRI practices; measuring the efficiency and efficacy of the use of inputs and conservation of resources such as seeds, water, fertilisers and labour as well as organic supplements; design and spread of suitable implements; and preparation of user friendly tools and resource materials.
- 3. Policy on SRI:** This includes influencing mainstream programmes and strategies for scaling up SRI; advocating for an innovative institutional architecture of extension for wider adoption and impact; convergence of multiple programmes; and evolving new forms of partnerships.

### **How is the NCS Organized ?**

NCS is a consortium of individuals, organizations and networks engaged in promoting SRI at various levels. It is an inclusive association of like-minded individuals. NCS is an open-ended network at the outer level with an invitation for anyone interested/engaging with the issues of SRI in India and other countries. Rather than any fixed membership, the consortium encourages voluntary participation, involvement and engagement with SRI and other agro-ecological innovations. NCS facilitates interaction amongst its members through judicious utilization of web-based resources to encourage learning and sharing amongst its members.

### ***Secretariat***

To enable NCS to achieve its purpose and objectives it is envisaged that one of the organisations active in the Consortium would anchor its *secretariat*. The Secretariat will be a body of full-time professionals anchored by a host organization for a period of 3 years. The NCS may decide to rotate the anchorage of the Secretariat over time. The secretariat is meant to look-after the daily functions of the NCS and further NCS ideas with external stakeholders in keeping with its mission.

### ***An Oversight Core Group***

A Core Group consisting of not more than five individuals shall provide an intensive oversight and support to the Secretariat. The members of the Core Group will give time for the purpose of the NCS on a voluntary basis. Intensity of engagement with SRI, commitment to NCS initiatives, mutual trust and accountability to each other is the core values of the Core Group.

The Core Group will be responsible to nurture the engagement of larger network and evolve operational agenda for the NCS from time to time. The discourse with the larger network that exist in various media, periodical interactions, symposia, policy discussions etc., shall form the basis for Core Group to evolve action agenda for the NCS. This represents the three pillars of NCS – Science, Practice and Policy.

## **Larger Engagement of the Network**

Networking is the backbone of the NCS, which will use web based interactions/interfaces. The NCS will set up an e-group and a web site as tools to enhance larger engagement on SRI, exchange of views, share experiences and promote debate. The e-Group will be an open platform and will be accountable to members through regular communication. The governance mechanism will ensure distributed and collective ownership. The NCS will update the e-Group on all its activities and outputs on a regular basis.

## **Task Groups**

Specific Task Groups shall be constituted in identified areas of research and policy interest and with clear time frame for specific deliverables as emerging from the discussions in NCS. Task Groups shall be constituted based on competences and experience. As the resources permit and/or based on necessity, the activities of the Task Groups shall be funded by the Secretariat, and clear outputs will be demanded for any consultancies outsourced.

## **Multiple Anchors**

The Secretariat will provide overall anchorage to NCS engagement. NCS also, encourages evolving multitasking nodes of engagement that promote networking and further the agenda of NCS on specific issues. These anchors will reflect the same principles and conduct of the Secretariat and be accountable to the Core Group and larger network.

## **Funding**

The NCS is primarily built upon the strength of various people engaged on the agenda and giving their time voluntarily to further the cause. NCS and all its associates will endeavor to mobilize financial and other resources from Government and other sources. For the generic purposes of strengthening the engagement on SRI and functions of NCS, the host organization of NCS can receive and administer funds. The financial guidelines of the host organization (shared and discussed *a priori* in the Core Group) shall be binding on the NCS. The host organization shares the responsibility of managing the resources through the NCS-Secretariat, while the Core Group provides oversight and direction.

NCS encourages and supports organizations actively engaged in any specific issue of SRI to mobilize financial resources and anchor specific programs to further the agenda of NCS. The Core Group ensures that the matters of NCS, decisions and financial transactions are transparent and widely shared with the larger network through the e-group.

## **Specific Deliverables envisaged for the coming three years**

1. Research:
  - a. Review of SRI Research in India
  - b. On farm research to unravel various phenomena related to farmer behavior, productivity enhancement, water and nutrient use efficiency
  - c. A concept note on Indigenous Varieties and SRI
2. Intensifying policy engagement:
  - a. Synthesizing recommendations of various Sub-Groups on SRI for the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan constituted by the Planning Commission and organizing advocacy events on the emerging strategic framework
  - b. To organize interface meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture, NABARD and other agencies at national and state levels on appropriate strategic framework for strengthening SRI.

### 3. Strengthening Practice

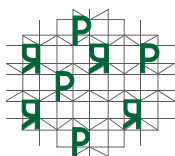
- b. Development of SRI machinery and small farmer oriented implements
- c. Collaboration members to develop relevant research and development agenda on other contemporary issues of SRI
- d. Documentation of comprehensive compendium of farmers' experiences, programs, research publications etc.
- e. SRI Resource book and training modules

#### **Long Term Strategy:**

As per the current understanding emerging from various review works and consultations, NCS will pursue the following longer term strategy for strengthening SRI in various parts of the country, as appropriate:

- Efforts to transform selected areas into sustainable SRI hubs over a period of time
- Strive for a paradigm shift from conventional demonstration approach to an area focused approach
- Adopt a cluster based strategy to address issues of labour markets, knowledge and behavioral changes in farmers and irrigation reforms.
- Ensure that changes and adaptations to be embedded into local economies.
- Promote and support state level consortia and enable active exchange of strategies, experiences and synthesis of lessons across the state.

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