

[Back](#)

## Watershed Management: AFPRO sets an example

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### By Our Staff Reporter

Bangalore, April 25. Just how technology and access to resources, not to mention know-how, can empower and enable a community achieve self-sufficiency, is what the action for Food Production demonstrating through its projects in Karnataka for some time now.

Watershed management is the centerpiece of the leitmotif of sustainable development that AFPRO has chosen to take to the rural parts, where its model farms and fields projects aim at persuading through example. At the recent 18th network meeting of the community based Human and Natural Resource Development, attended by all the nine NGOs under the AFPRO umbrella, the KARNET, a stocktaking exercise, fetched very cheering news: AFPRO used most of the Rs. 2.6 crore granted by German-based funding organization, Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst e.v. (EED) over five years. A population of 15,953 in 19 villages, and 13 Tibetan settlement were touched by the project.

AFPRO's Bangalore unit manager, Vijaykumar James. Said 5,107 hectares of agricultural land was brought under production. Over 2.7 lakh fruit-yielding and other economically viable tree species, which are a source for fuel, fodder, timber, were planted under AFPRO's afforestation and horticulture programme.

Dr. James said it was particularly satisfying to see AFPRO's dryland farming experiment in Madhugiri in Tumkur District emulated and duplicated in dozens of small and micro land holdings in the neighbourhood. AFPRO's USP. Dr. James said, were its watershed management practices that emphasized optimization of water use, for which it had technology and a few dependable set of practices that were inspired by traditional water harvesting and conservation practices.

While AFPRO favours the traditional open well over borewells, there have been several instances in the course of its Karnataka project where it has not turned away people who are already using handpumps and borewells. AFPRO has rehabilitated 106 handpumps in 22 villages of Bagalkot and Jhamkhandi taluks, apart from conducting groundwater investigations on 23 sites in Bangalore, Mysore, and other districts.

AFPRO conducts what it calls yield tests to help determine the safe yield from a borewell or open well, which in turn helps in opting for the most suitable pump, the depth at which it can be installed, and how much water can be drawn.

It also has considerable experience in desilting tanks, and has even demonstrated how silt can be turned into nutrient-rich manure for the orchards and fields, and the innovative sloping agricultural land technology (SALT) that optimizes land use to grow food crops, horticultural produces and afforestation.

AFPRO, which has field units and representatives in nine places across the country, is working in nearly every state. Its funding partners include B.H. Misereor e.v. Aachen and protestant association for cooperation in Development (EZE), in German, the Interchurch Organization, the Netherlands, the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland, and Christian Aid, United Kingdom.