

Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices

7.3.1 Portray the performance of the Institution in one area distinctive to its priority and thrust

Sacred Heart College Organic Farming at a glance

“To provide an environment that instils in the students, a feel for frontier disciplines and cultivates a concern for the environment “(mission). A concern for the environment and conservation of biodiversity can be realised by promoting organic farming, which, helps the students to realise the college mission.

The beginning of organic farming started in the year 2010 with the introduction of upland farming (*kara nel krishi*) in two spots of the college campus – a plot of land (around 20 cents between the hostel buildings) and on the stretch along the lakes-side road under the leadership of Dr. V.J. Dominic (faculty in-charge of nature club).

Students engaged in land preparation for Upland farming



Upland paddy Harvest





Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices

In 2011, an extension centre was opened by procuring 4 acres of paddy field in Thottara Puncha at Arayankavu, in Amballoor Panchayat, Ernakulam district, 25 kms away from the college with the active support and collaboration of Rajagiri College of Social Sciences (sister concern of college). The field is part of the unique stretch of land called *Thottara Puncha*. The effort was inspired by Joy (Varghese T) attendant, SH college and was brokered by Thankachan, who was also interested in organic farming. Organic farming was introduced with active involvement of students. These activities enabled the students to understand the importance of organic farming and helped to engage them in outdoor activities where they can produce food and get exercise all while having some fun. The initial four years saw cultivation of paddy, IR 5 variety, with experimentation of direct sowing and that of preparing a seedbed and transplanting them after a fixed period of growth. In the beginning it was a very tough task as there was no road connectivity to the land, and the easiest point of access was through a very steep slope of rubber plantation. The water Management, rains, availability of machinery (harvesting or threshing) etc were the main points of concern during the beginning times. But later with the seamless efforts of students and staff especially Mr.Thomas(PRO), Fr. Joseph and Mr.Abin Abily (SDO), these problems were sought out and have been making value added products from organic paddy like rice with bran, rice flour for various needs, beaten rice etc.

The organic farming at Arayankavu includes the following activities)

1. **Seed selection and Land preparation:** -Proper seed selection based on the cultivation environment which ensures the highest possible yield. The main purpose of land preparation is to have the soil in optimum physical condition for growing rice. The proper preparation of land for sowing is achieved via tractors (mechanical means) or with the help of water buffaloes. These activities are really an experiential learning for students.

Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices

Preparation of Land through traditional method



Preparation of Land by Students



Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices

Preparation of Land by Students



2. **Crop Establishment(Njaru Nadal):** Two main methods are used for introducing rice plants to the soil like transplanting or direct seeding.



Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices



3. **Controlling of weeds and water management:** - The weeds are handpicked by the students. Good water management practices are used as the rice is extremely sensitive to water shortages.



Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices



Water Management using Jalachakram



Water Conservation Pond at Paddy field



4. **Harvesting:** - Harvesting is the process of collecting the mature rice crop (rice paddy or rough rice) from the field. Depending on the variety, a rice crop usually reaches maturity at around 115-120 days after crop establishment. Harvesting activity includes

Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices

cutting, stacking, handling, threshing, cleaning, and hauling. Either manual or mechanical methods are used for harvesting.





5. **Post-Harvest:** - After harvest, the rice grain undergoes a number of processes depending on how it will be used. These steps include drying, storing, milling, and final processing. Drying is the process that reduces grain moisture content to a safe level for storage. The crops are brought to the college campus and drying is done at the basketball court or ground of the college. Then rice is used to make value added products like rice with bran, rice flour for various needs, beaten rice etc.

Students engaged in drying the grains in the campus

Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices

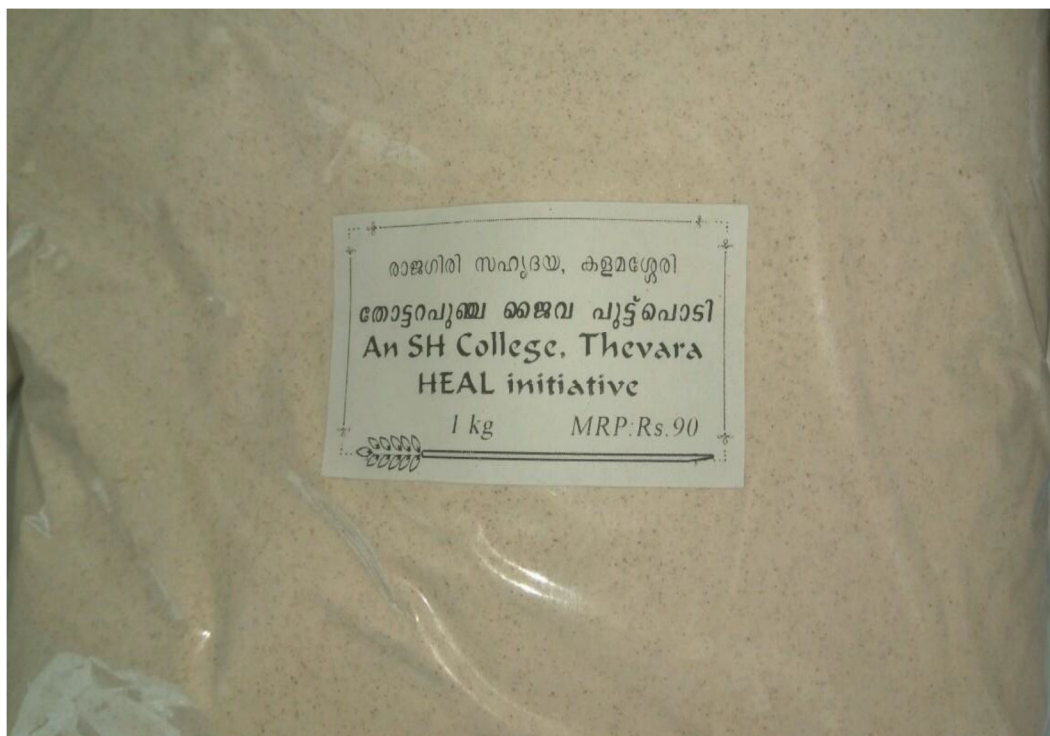




Students engaged in drying the grains in the campus



Rice Powder made by Organic farming



Rice and Rice powder



Traditional Kerala Dish “Puttu” using the Rice powder and Banana (cultivated in the college premises)



Then these products were being marketed in the name of **Heartian Harvest** and Thottara Puncha Rice. The presence and initiative and perseverance of the college in the area (Thottara Puncha) had rekindled interest in paddy cultivation in the stretch. This was further boosted by the efforts of the government as well. On an average 250 students took part in the cultivation programme every year giving them a taste of food production and the hardness of rural and agricultural life. The opening of the extension centre at Arayankavu not only promotes green culture through organic farming but also serves as a centre for observations on birding, butterflies and dragonfly population. The visit to the existential centre provides an experiential learning opportunity to students and faculty members.

Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices



The college campus also has one organic vegetable (One cent Farming)gardening (cultivation) – Banana – musa (different varieties), with the involvement of various student groups like Nature Club and Bhoomitrasena. There are 3 plots of vegetable garden on the campus (i) with perennial leafy vegetables, plus seasonal crops. (ii) banana plantation (iii) roofed garden experiment by Bhoomitrasena/Nature club. College also has collaborated with Organic Kerala charitable trust in an experiment for soil enrichment in organic fashion at Kanthalloor.

Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices



Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices**ONE CENT FAMILY FARM**

An experiment was initiated with the partnership of the college by Organic Kerala Charitable Trust. A family of five could have sufficient vegetables of all sorts – tuber, leafy vegetables (like Amaranthus), pulses of various sorts, seedy varieties like tomato, brinjal, ladies finger, chilly etc. and cucumber varieties for salad, provided they have about 600 sq ft of land/terrace exposed to sun, in one piece or in smaller portions. All these crops could be managed with the family getting involved in farming and each of them spending about 15 to 30 mts per day in the garden. This was begun in connection with the international year of family farming in the year 2014. A model plot in this regard has been set up at the college directly under the supervision of the Principal.

Tomato Plant in the one cent farming Area



Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices



Banana Cultivation in the college



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Office administrative staff engaged in Banana Harvest





Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices

Tapioca Cultivation at College Premises



Sugar cane at College Premises



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**Principal, teaching, non-teaching staff and students engaged in Achinga (cluster beans)
harvesting**



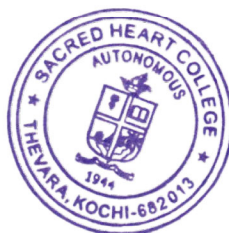
Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices

Heartian Harvest

Vegetables at Heartian Harvest



Criterion VII: Institutional Values and Best Practices



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