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First Agro: Promoting pesticide-free living



By *Gideon Kharmalki*

Nameet Modekurti of First Agro remarks, "The connection between the food we eat and our health is undeniable. We are what we eat and food is only as safe as it is grown."

India is still reeling from the deaths of 23 schoolchildren in the village of Dharmasati Gandawa in Bihar on July 17. It was a result after having eaten a free school lunch that was made with cooking oil tainted with the pesticide monocrotophos. Known as organophosphates, these pesticides are extremely toxic and are considered as nerve agents because they have the same mechanism of action as nerve gases like sarin.

In all parts of India, organophosphorus pesticides are readily available and commonly used by Indian farmers for vegetables. Unfortunately, many farmers are not aware of the impact the toxins in pesticides have on humans. These vegetables are now sold openly across India.

Nameet Modekurti is the co-founder and director of First Agro, India's first commercial grower organization with zero pesticide fresh produce, complying to WHO's Codex Alimentarius, the highest food safety standard worldwide.

First Agro with its global headquarter in Bangalore was founded by three Bangaloreans in 2011 – Nameet Modekurti, KN Prasad and Naveen Venkat Modekurti, who have extensive international experience in horticulture, hydroponics and information technology.

It is interesting to share that all fresh produce of First Agro contains zero pesticide, which is their USP. The Integrated Pest Management, pioneered by Nameet Modekurti, focuses on using natural solutions to manage and deter pests.

Nameet Modekurti explained, "By using combination of neem oil, beneficial insects, garlic-chili spray, pheromone insect traps and companion plants, we are able to manage about 90% of the common pest issues in agriculture. For every bad insect, there is a good (beneficial) insect, many pests hate the presence of garlic and coriander as an example - let's leverage nature to balance the ecosystem."

First Agro is implementing 1,500 acres of pesticide free production across sixteen identified locations in North, West and Southern India over the next seven to eight years. This is one of the biggest horticulture initiatives in India for the domestic market with pesticide free produce. Its first farm cluster 'Cauvery' is operational in

Talkad near Bangalore from last two years. With more than 40 varieties of Indian and exotic vegetables and lettuce, First Agro's Zero Pesticide has become very popular as a safe and healthy food which comply 's to the Codex food safety standards.

As we ended our discussions, KN Prasad commented, "In the last one year, customers are very keen on knowing about the produce, where and how it is grown, besides nutritional details. The ability to grow local in a sustainable manner with focus on food safety in large volumes to make a difference to the society and for a healthy living of our fellow citizens will be our key to success."



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Reviews and Comments

bhuvana says:

"It is very good to know about zero pesticide produce. Awareness on this increasing nowadays. Are they available in Chennai?"

Rakesh Koul says:

"I was very happy to meet these young and educated entrepreneur at our stall in 2011 - Agri Tech Exhibition. When they discussed about their project I was certain and confident that they will achieve what they are aiming at. Since we also contribute to a very small extent in providing eco friendly product to Horticulture/Floriculture area, they used our Polymer wire for proving support to the plants instead of GI wire. I am sure they will go much ahead and will provide safer food to all of all. God Bless."

sainath says:

"Great news.....The million hearts in the waiting.... India needs a quality food and you guys have been a front runners and wish you a great success... Cheers, Sai"

