China Vetiver Network

New Project Launched

Supported by EED/Germany， the project titled Vetiver and Agroforestry Technology for Rural Poverty Alleviation and Natural Resource Protection in Minority Mountains of Guangxi Province of China has launched. The project aims at helping local farmers develop economic trees for 48700 seedlings and 40 mini-irrigation systems. Meanwhile, vetiver system and agroforestry technology will be introduced and over 3 million vetiver tillers will be planted in order to conserve nature resources and provide farmers with multiple products and materials. Besides, various training courses will be organized and different publications will be produced and widely distributed to extend the project.

On 4 January 2007, a group from China Vetiver Network went to the project site to start the project. They were welcomed by local authorities, communities, and the governments. At first, they visited the Agriculture Environmental Monitoring Station of Guillin City. During the meeting, China Vetiver Network introduced the process of the project application and the approved project components, met the directors of the Agricultural Bureau of Guilin City.

On 6 January 2007 a team consisting of China Vetiver Network and the Agriculture Environmental Monitoring Station went to Longshen County, where they met the directors of Agricultural Bureau of Longshen County. Besides, directors from related technical stations also participated in the meeting. The Director of the Agriculture Bureau Mr. Wei introduced general information on the county and the development plan of the county. He said that the county is situated at the border area covered by mountains. The traffic problem often restricts economy development. In the afternoon all of the participants went to Sishui Township where they visited present field land use pattern, talked to farmers and governmental officials.

Later on 7 January 2007, the team visited a Zaomi pear garden that was established by the local government in 2002 in a nearby Piaoli Township. It covered 1122 Mu (about 74 hectors). It produced high profit for 4000-5000Yuan/Mu (about US$7692-9615/hactor). Through few years practice, farmers grasped basic technology and the garden is enlarged from a valley plain to slope land. Now farmers established their own nursery to cultivate tree seedlings.

During the visit scientists, government officials, villager leaders, and farmers discussed the project components. They all expressed high enthusiasm in the implementation of the project.

Originally, farmers there plant rice on the small pieces of valley plain, and soybean or sweet potato, or corn on the upland. Following economic reform, farmers became interested in economic tree production when they got information from nearby villages. Recently, they planted some trees in small scale, but caused by lack of technology some of them could not grow up or could not produce high profit. For example, some orange trees suffered from disease and have to be cleaned. Some pear trees could not bear fruit. All of these influenced farmer's activity in further development.

On the other hand, farmers realized the importance of technical trainings that forms one of our most essential components of our project. Some officials complained that farmers in some area are difficult to learn and accept new technology. They just wish to get bumper harvest without input big labor or technology. It is not easy to teach farmers to grasp technology or to accept new technology. The situation derived from several factors: the

farmers have less education, while the technical training has been very weak particularly in the resent years since national economy reform.

Through discussion and field visitations most farmers and village leaders do not hesitate with planting Loquat because Loquat is easy to cultivate and fruit ripens just at the tourism season. On the contrary, some farmers are not interested in planting pear trees because the Fenshui pear trees (one variety of pear trees) planted in their village often has second bloom that influenced production. They wish to plant waxberry because it is easy to cultivate. This matter needs to be decided through further discussion.

The organization

At the end of the visit agreement was signed between cooperators. The project got multiple supports from local cooperators, from Guilin City to Longshen County, the Township, and the villages. During one week visit, over 10 leaders from different authorities involved in the field visit and discussions. Many farmers were visited at their families or in the field. The Director of the Longshen County Agricultural Bureau Mr. Wei Zhikai and the Director of Sishui Township Government Mr. Lu Anyang acted as the team leader for the whole visitation. Mr. Lu said that the Township Government would prepare an official Red Head Document to announce the project and to request all related leaders to actively participate in the project. Besides, the Township Government will establish a Project Leading Group, while the villages will establish their Implementation Group through full discussion. All of the Groups should contain women members.

The Director Mr. Mo Sihua from Guilin Agriculture Environment Monitoring Station will be specially responsible to the project implementation. Mr. Mo participated in the World Bank project in 1989 titled Red Soil Development Project that involved in 5 provinces in southern China and lasted over 10 years and firstly introduced vetiver to China.

The vetive grass

During the visit, scientists from China Vetiver Network briefly introduced the characteristics and application of vetiver grass and its technology. The government officials, village leaders and master farmers felt quite fresh because they never heard of vetiver. It generates great interests among them. For example, they said that some farmers raise fish and the grass can be used as fish food. Besides, there are certain numbers of cattle and goat in the project villages, while vetiver can be used as green fodder.

When we introduced the application of vetiver for infrastructure protection, local officials have high interests. They told us that the road construction has been carried out almost every year and several village roads are in construction that usually caused serious erosion problem, because there are no any conservation measures caused by lacking of funds. About 80% of roads were constructed by stone and sands suffering from erosion. They hope to use vetiver to protect theses roads. In addition, vetiver technology can be used in many nearby area and has great potential.

In this area, the lowest temperature was –4.8℃, the accumulated temperature of ≥10℃ is 5650.5, the average altitude is 700 m above sea level, and the mean annual rainfall is 1546mm ranging from 1500 to 2400 caused by altitude and landform. Most of the rainfall accumulated in from April to July. In September there is usually Autumn Drought that

influences crop production. All of these background factors are suitable for vetiver grass growth, while vetiver grass can play important role in water erosion control and helping ground water recharge to protect drought.

About 90% of the land covered by mountains, while ＞15° slope accounts for 87.2%. Many of them ＞30° .As a result once the soil was disturbed soil erosion should be very serious. Vetiver can play an important role in erosion control.

Talking about the vetiver handcraft, women have much interests because it can help them grasp a new technology and to generate profit using free time. The officials mentioned that in the nearby county Lipu there are handcraft production workshop. We may try to invite their technicians to teach project women.

However, since the comprehensive training has not organized people still know very little about vetiver technology. They even did not see the grass so far. It needs time for them to understand and accept the technology. In the past, most farmers are be accustomed to cleaning weeds while never heard of planting grass.

Women participation

During the whole visitation we emphasized the importance of women participation, not only involving in the implementation but also the design. The Vice Director of the Township Government and directors from the villages all participated in the process and expressed their high enthusiasm in implementing the project. Besides, they raised questions concerning project components. The most worry for them is the pear tree planting. Because the Fenshui Pear planted few year ago did not produce high profit, the farmers simply think all kinds of pear trees may not suitable in their villages. Some proposed waxberry to replace pear tree.

The preparation for the training

Through visits local information on economic trees were collected from Guilin city, to Longshen County and the township. The multiple training and extension materials are in preparation. Now the booklets *Vetiver Grass: The Hedge against Erosion* and *Loquat Cultivation* are in edition process by Prof. Xiong Guoyan in Guangdong province and Prof. Lu Shengluan in Jiangxi Province respectively. The first issue of Vetiver Newsletter was produced and distributed in both project area and outside the area. The newsletter introduced the function of vetiver grass, the 4th International conference on vetiver, and an announcement of the project.

During the visit the classrooms were selected. Besides, Agriculture Environmental Monitoring Station of Guillin City has nominated local trainers for specific training titles.

The timetable

As an initiation of the project there are many things to be done. However the most urgent issue is to select economic tree seedlings, prepare and plant trees in high qualities. All of the trees should be planted around Spring Festival. The planting regulation is in preparation and will released on the next Newsletter. (*Attachment: selected photos*)

Group discussion at Environmental Station

Observe pear tree at Batai Village

Meeting at the County Agri. Bureau

Visiting farmers family

Investigate straw berry tree

The woman Director discussing with farmers

Investigate pear seedlings

Discussion in the Zhoujia village

Discussion with Village Group

Discussion with farmers

Talking to farmers

Children welcome the project team