

NEWS LETTER

July-December 2025

Editorial

My Dear Friends,

It gives me immense pleasure to share with you the latest progress and initiatives of the ASPEE Foundation through this edition of our newsletter. This issue captures the wide range of activities undertaken over the past six months. Beginning January, we will transition to a quarterly newsletter, enabling us to keep you more regularly informed about our work and impact.

Agriculture, as always, remained at the heart of our efforts. Ahead of the Rabi season, extensive soil testing was carried out to assess soil fertility and promote balanced nutrient management. Based on these scientific recommendations, Rabi crop sowing activities were initiated. However, the season posed significant challenges. Prolonged monsoon conditions resulted in heavy rainfall, causing severe lodging and waterlogging in paddy fields. This led to considerable seed production losses and delayed field preparations, pushing the Rabi season schedule back. Despite these adversities, our teams and farmers showed remarkable resilience and determination.

This year, the Selection Committee for the prestigious ASPEE L. M. Patel Farmer of the Year Award 2023, chaired by the dynamic Dr. Tapas Bhattacharya, Former Vice Chancellor, played a pivotal role in shortlisting outstanding farmer videos. We sincerely acknowledge the invaluable guidance and expert support provided by Dr. Haldankar, Dr. D. J. Patel, Dr. B. N. Patel, and the respective Subject Matter Specialists of each category.

We are also proud to share an important milestone—the inauguration of the Sharad Patel Skill Development Center at ASPEE Vidyalaya, Uchat, District Palghar. Established in the loving memory of Late Dr. Sharad Patel, this center aims to empower girls from remote areas by offering nursing and IT courses for 10th-pass students, opening doors to meaningful employment and sustainable livelihoods.

During this season, ASPEE ARDF, in collaboration with Dr. BSKKV, Dapoli, focused on producing high-quality rice seeds suited to local agro-climatic conditions. Demonstrations of organic practices such as Gokrupa Amrutam and mango grafting initiatives further strengthened opportunities for diversified farm income. In parallel, expert scrutiny for the ASPEE L. M. Patel Farmer of the Year Award 2025 helped shortlist deserving farmers for the next stage.

A Farmers' Day programme was successfully organized at our farm, highlighting zero-tillage rice cultivation through the Saguna Rice Technique (SRT). Shri Chandrashekhhar Bhadsavale delivered an enlightening lecture, inspiring farmers to adopt sustainable and resource-efficient farming practices. Adding to our outreach efforts, students from K.M.E.S. Urdu High School visited the Tansa Farm, gaining hands-on exposure to modern and sustainable agricultural practices—an experience that kindled curiosity and respect for agriculture among young minds.

We remain deeply committed to empowering farmers, students, and rural communities through practical technologies, skill development, and sustainable agricultural practices—working together toward a more resilient and prosperous future.

Thank you for your continued support and encouragement. We look forward to sharing many more milestones with you in the coming issues.

With warm regards,

Dr. Swapnil Dekhane

July-December 2025

Rice Seed Production Program

"Seed production is not just a process – it is the beginning of hope, growth and food security"

During kharif 2025 season, for the first time a rice seed production program was initiated on 25 acres by ASPEE Foundation in collaboration with Dr. BSKKV, Dapoli to ensure the availability of high-quality, genetically pure rice seed suitable to the local agro-climatic conditions. As part of the program, scientists from the Palghar research station visited the designated seed production plots at Tansa Farm to assess field conditions and guide implementation. During the visit, they conducted a detailed inspection of land preparation, nursery management, plant spacing, and isolation measures to ensure compliance with seed production standards. The scientists provided technical guidance on best practices for varietal purity, roguing (which means removing undesirable plants from a seed production field to maintain the genetic purity and quality of the variety), pest and disease management, water and nutrient scheduling, and harvest timing.

Emphasis was placed on maintaining proper field records, following certification protocols, and post-harvest handling to maintain seed quality.



Dr. Amol Dahifale (3rd from right), In-charge, Agricultural Research Station (ARS), Palghar and **Dr. S. S. Pinjari, (2nd from right) Agronomist**, ARS, Palghar visited to Aspee foundation Tansa Farm.

Paddy Transplanting by machine

Paddy transplanting is one of the most labor-demanding operations in rice cultivation, traditionally done by hand. It requires a large number of skilled workers within a short period, as any delay in transplanting can affect yield. However, in recent years, Aspee foundation have been facing acute labor shortages due to migration of rural youth, rising labor costs and reduced interest in agricultural work. This shortage becomes more critical during peak transplanting season, forcing to either delay planting or reduce cultivated area.

July-December 2025

To overcome this challenge, during kharif season Aspee Foundation used mechanical rice transplanter which become a practical and efficient solution. Machine transplanting reduces the dependency on manual labor and allows timely planting even with limited manpower. It also ensures uniform spacing and depth of seedlings, leading to better crop establishment and higher yields. Moreover, mechanical transplanting significantly saves time, reduces drudgery, and lowers the overall cost of cultivation in the long run.



Gokrupa amrutam preparation & application – Mr. Siddhesh Visit

Mr. Siddhesh Patil visited the Aspee Foundation's Gaushala and provided valuable guidance on organic farming practices and cow-based natural farming inputs. During his visit, he explained the preparation and benefits of **Gokrupa Amrutam** and **Jeevamrut**, which are organic formulations made from cow dung, cow urine, jaggery, gram flour, and other natural ingredients. These inputs help improve soil fertility, enhance microbial activity, and promote healthy plant growth while reducing the dependency on chemical fertilizers and pesticides.



July-December 2025

He emphasized the importance of minimizing the use of chemical inputs and gradually increasing the adoption of organic methods to maintain long-term soil health and sustainability. Mr. Patil also guided the Gaushala staff on proper cow care practices, including balanced feeding, maintaining cleanliness, and ensuring good health and comfort of the animals. His visit inspired the team to make better use of cow-based resources for promoting organic farming and to strengthen the link between livestock management and sustainable agriculture.

SRT rice planting

During this Kharif season, Aspee Foundation adopted the **Saguna Rice Technique (SRT)** for rice planting at the Tansa Farm. The SRT method is a sustainable and innovative approach to rice cultivation that eliminates the need for puddling and continuous flooding of fields, raising of seedling. Instead, it promotes **no-tillage, permanent raised beds** and **mulching**. This technique helps conserve soil structure, reduce water usage and minimize weed growth. This technique not only saves time, cost of cultivation and labor but also improves soil health and organic matter over time.

With the experiences of other farmers, it is seen that adoption of SRT at reflects commitment to promoting eco-friendly and resource-efficient farming practices. While comparing to traditional methods, SRT offers several advantages, including reduced greenhouse gas emissions, lower production costs and easier crop management. Aspee Foundation in its initial observations at the farm indicate good crop establishment and reduced weed infestation, showing that SRT is a promising method for sustainable rice production under the local climatic and soil conditions.



The SRT team both farm workers & associated staff were very hardworking, dedicated towards their collaborative commitment with the ASPEE Foundation. They were an inspiration to the staff and farm labors were encouraged to work with similar enthusiasm and efficiency.

We recently learned that Shri Chandrashekhar Bhadsavale, Mentor and inspirator of SRT who underwent angiography. We sincerely pray for a speedy and complete recovery and wish him good health.

Mango grafting

This year, Aspee Foundation successfully produced a total of **1,600 mango grafts** at its nursery unit. Out of these, **1,000 grafts were of the popular 'Kesar' variety**, which is known for its rich flavor, bright saffron color, and excellent market demand. The remaining **600 grafts were prepared from other premium varieties** such as **Israel, Langda, Totapuri, Dasheri, Hapus (Alphonso), and Rajapuri**, each valued for its unique taste, fruit quality and regional preference.

July-December 2025



The grafting work was carried out carefully under the supervision of skilled staff Shri. Sudam Patil along with Ms. Monali Patil to ensure high success rates and healthy plant growth. This reflects Aspee Foundation's continued efforts to promote quality planting material and support fruit crop diversification among farmers. By producing multiple high-value mango varieties, the Aspee Foundation aims to provide farmers with better options for orchard development, higher income potential and improved adaptation to different climatic and soil conditions.

Scrutiny of Preliminary Proforma

The scrutiny of preliminary proforma submitted for ASPEE L. M. Patel farmer of the year 2025 under three categories — Paddy Crop, Banana Crop, and Women Farmers Engaged in Vegetable Cultivation from west & central zone was successfully conducted by the expert committee. The committee comprised Dr. Parag Haldankar, Ex. Director of Research, Dapoli University, Dr. D. J. Patel, Ex. Principal, B. A. College of Agriculture, AAU, Anand and Dr. B. N. Patel, Ex. Principal, ASPEE College of Horticulture, NAU, Navsari.

After carefully reviewing all received applications, the committee shortlisted eligible candidates for submitting the final nomination forms.



Kharif Farmers' Day in Tansa Farm

A Farmers' Day was organized at Tansa Farm on 2nd November 2025 with the objective of disseminating scientific knowledge and promoting improved cultivation practices for the ongoing Kharif season. The program focused on **"SRT – Zero Tillage Farming"**, emphasizing the ASPEE Foundation's continued efforts to introduce innovative and sustainable agricultural technologies to small and marginal farmers in the surrounding villages.

The event was graced by Krishiratna Shri. Chandrashekhar Bhadsavale, Pioneer of the Saguna Rice

July-December 2025



Technique (SRT), Saguna Baug, Neral, Tal- Karjat, Dist- Raigad, who served as the keynote speaker. Dr. Swapnil Dekhane, welcomed all farmers, dignitaries and introduced the key participants. Shri. Kiranbhai Patel, Director of Aspee Foundation, expressed his gratitude towards the participants for coming from far off villages to attend the programme inspite of continuous rain.

Before the formal program commenced, the farmers had field visit and were briefed about the experiments carried. Farmers were introduced to different rice varieties under evaluation and the ongoing research projects at the farm. During the visit, Shri. Parshuram Agivale, SRT Team Member, elaborated on the Saguna Rice Technique and its benefits in practical farming systems.

The Chief Guest delivered a concise yet informative presentation on various operations of Paddy cultivation by Saguna Rice Technique in kharif and Chickpea, Moong, Cowpea, Lentil etc. in Rabi. By his SRT technique he showed how to minimize cost of cultivation. During the presentation, he not only introduced these crops but also investigated into production techniques that maximize returns while minimizing resource inputs. He emphasized the use of power weeder, highlighting their effectiveness in controlling weeds and reducing manual labor. By minimizing soil disturbance, the SRT system helps increase rice yields while improving soil fertility, microbial activity and long-term soil health. His talk was a valuable source of knowledge for the audience, shedding light on the details of cultivating vegetable crops and the strategies to achieve higher yields in a resource-efficient manner. This presentation served as an essential educational resource for farmers seeking to enhance their expertise in farming. SRT Team member Shri. Parshuram Agivale who has lot of knowledge and practicing SRT at his own farm, not only answered the queries raised by the farmers but also give in detailed the cultivation and management practices of rice & different crops.

The ASPEE Foundation gifted dragon fruit plants to farmers, aiming to create awareness about the importance and potential benefits of dragon fruit cultivation. Near about 40 farmers from the adjoining villages participated in the event. After clearing all doubts of farmers, the Farmers' Day ended after lunch.



Farmers registration before function.



Shri. Bhadsavale welcomed by ASPEE Foundation Director, Shri. Kiranbhai Patel.

July-December 2025



Shri. Kiranbhai Patel giving introductory remark regarding foundation activities.



Paddy plot visit of the farmers.



Dr. Swapnil Dekhane, Agriculture Officer, ARDF, welcomed the guests and gave introductory remarks about the invitees.



Shri. Bhadsavale Sir addressing to the farmers.



A token of love gave to chief guest by the hands of Shri. Kiran Patel.



Vote of thanks given by Mr. Kalpesh Jadhav.

July-December 2025



**Dragon fruit plant gifted to Chief guest
and same way distributed to farmers who
attended the farmers Meet**

Selection Committee Meeting for Shortlisting Farmers

A meeting of the Selection Committee for the ASPEE L. M. Patel Farmer of the Year Award 2023 was held on 5th November 2025 under the chairmanship of Dr. Tapas Bhattacharya, Former Vice Chancellor, BSKKV, Dapoli. The committee comprised of Dr. Parag Haldankar, Ex. Director of Research, Dapoli University, Dr. D. J. Patel, Ex. Principal, B. A. College of Agriculture, AAU, Anand, Dr. B. N. Patel, Ex. Principal, ASPEE College of Horticulture, NAU, Navsari, Dr. Ishwar Singh, Former DEE, Agriculture University, Jodhpur, Dr. Pankaj Bhalerao, Fruit Science Head, NAU, Navsari and Progressive farmer Shri. Chandrashekhar Bhadsavale. During the meeting, the committee reviewed and screened the videos in three different categories, i.e. Horticulture –Pineapple, Winter Cumin. After detailed evaluation, they shortlisted 2 farmers each from these two categories for further recommendation to the Governing Council, they will finalize the awardees.

In the Women Farmer category (Vegetable Cultivation) – North Zone after unanimously discussion over the 4 entries, selected one deserving farmer from Himachal Pradesh for a special Inspiration Prize to recognize and motivate women growers in the region.



July-December 2025

Prolonged Rains Hit Paddy Fields & Delay Rabi Season Activities

Due to excessive and prolonged rainfall this season, the paddy crop suffered severe damage. Strong winds caused extensive lodging in the fields, while continuous rain led to waterlogging for several days. As a result, the paddy seed production plots experienced significant yield loss and quality deterioration. The heavy rains have also delayed field preparation for the upcoming Rabi season, creating further challenges for timely sowing and crop management.



Soil Testing before Rabi crop sowing

Every year, soil testing is systematically carried out at our research farm both before sowing of paddy and after harvesting the paddy crop to assess changes in soil fertility status. This regular practice helps in understanding the impact of cropping and nutrient management on soil health. During the present season also, soil samples were collected after the harvest of paddy and prior to sowing of the Rabi crop. The soil testing work was initiated and conducted by Ms. Tanvi Patil under the guidance of Dr. Swapnil Dekhane. The collected soil samples were analyzed for major soil fertility parameters such as soil pH, electrical conductivity (EC), organic carbon (OC) and available nutrients including nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.

These parameters provide a clear picture of soil reaction, salinity status, organic matter content and nutrient availability. Based on the soil test results, fertilizer recommendations were scientifically formulated and applied to the succeeding Rabi crop. This soil test-based fertilizer application ensured balanced nutrient supply to the crop. It also helped in minimizing the wastage of excess fertilizers and reducing unnecessary input costs. Moreover, the practice contributes to maintaining soil health, improving nutrient use efficiency, and ultimately enhancing crop growth and yield in a sustainable manner.



Soil Sample collection work

July-December 2025

We are happy to inform that we are also providing free soil testing services to farmers from surrounding villages so that they can benefit from scientific soil analysis. The farmer can apply the required quantity of fertilizers to their crops, which helps in efficient nutrient management, prevents wastage of fertilizers and supports sustainable farming practices based on soil test results.



Collected Soil Samples drying in shed



Grinding & Sieving of soil samples



Estimation of available Potassium from soil.

Rabi Season Crop Sowing

After harvesting of the Kharif crops, the fields were thoroughly prepared for sowing of various Rabi crops. During the present season, special emphasis was given to improving and maintaining soil health. With this objective, it was planned to grow Sunhemp as a green manure crop on a large scale covering nearly 14 acres. Sunhemp helps in improving soil organic matter, enhancing microbial activity and enriching the soil with biologically fixed nitrogen. Incorporation of Sunhemp biomass into the soil also improves soil structure and water-holding capacity. Along with green manuring, sunflower was also planned, as it is suitable for Tansa region and which not only fits well in the Rabi season but also provides economic benefits through oil production.

July-December 2025



Vermicomposting

At our gaushala, high-quality vermicompost is produced using fresh cow dung and leftover organic waste from animal fodder. The vermicomposting process is carried out in a scientific and systematic manner to ensure optimal nutrient retention and consistent quality.

The unit operates under the regular supervision of Ms. Tanvi Patil, who ensures proper moisture levels, aeration, and overall hygiene of the beds. Well-decomposed vermicompost is harvested every fifteen days. The harvested material is carefully screened and stored under suitable conditions to preserve its nutrient value.

The vermicompost produced is extensively used at the ASPEE Foundation farm for nursery preparation and seedling raising. It is also applied during field preparation to enhance soil fertility and structure. For fruit crops such as mango, guava, and sapota, ring application is practiced to ensure efficient nutrient uptake.

Regular use of this in-house vermicompost has significantly improved soil health and nutrient availability, reduced dependence on external fertilizers, and lowered the overall cost of cultivation, thereby supporting sustainable and eco-friendly farming practices.



July-December 2025



Sharad Patel Skill Development Center

Our Director, late Dr. Sharad Patel, use to dream of rural development and women empowerment in and around the Tansa Farm. After his demise, this noble initiative was fulfilled by the family trust, Shakilam Foundation and Uchat Shikshan Sanstha of Palghar District. In collaboration of both these Trusts and in order to cherish the dream and stands as a tribute to Dr. Patel's vision they inaugurated a Skill Development Center for girls studying in remote areas of Palghar District with the objective of empowering them through education and vocational training. The center has been established at Village- Uchat, Taluka Wada, District Palghar. The aims of this center is to provide better learning and employment opportunities to rural girls and boys. Under this center, 1 year nursing and IT-related courses have been started for students who have passed the 10th standard. These courses will help students acquire practical skills and improve their employability. The center is expected to play a vital role in building self-confidence and financial independence among young girls and boys.



July-December 2025



Girls Hostel For Students



IT Lab Ribbon Cutting by the hand of Smt. Lataben Kiranbhai Patel



Girls Students attending inauguration function of Sharad Patel Skill Development Center

Educational Visit of K.M.E.S. Urdu High School Students to Tansa Farm

On 9th December 2025, a group of 30 students of 8th standard from K.M.E.S. Urdu High School, Vadvali, accompanied by their teacher Mr. Tahir Kudai, visited Tansa Farm for an educational exposure tour. The visit was aimed at providing students with practical knowledge of agriculture and related activities.

The program began with a brief introduction to the ASPEE Agricultural Research & Development Foundation, highlighting its role in agricultural research, farmer support and sustainable farming practices. Students were then taken around the farm and were shown various ongoing activities and cropping systems. They observed different field crops and were given information about modern and traditional farming methods.

Students were also introduced to mango grafting techniques, where they learned how quality planting material is prepared. They visited the shade net house and were shown the cultivation of chilli and capsicum crops raised under protected conditions. Basic information on soil testing, its importance and how it helps in improving crop productivity was also explained.

July-December 2025

Besides, the girl students were informed about the newly started Nursing course at Uchat and given encouragement to consider nursing as a career option after completing their 10th standard.

Students carried their own lunch boxes and after lunch, they returned safely to their school. The visit was informative and enjoyable and the students actively participated and showed keen interest in learning about agriculture and career opportunities.

We encourage nearby schools to send their students to visit our Tansa Farm, where they can learn about the importance of agriculture, understand the contributions of the Green Revolution and develop awareness about environmental protection and sustainable farming practices.

