Cactus has potential to:

§ help farmers cope with climate change and variability
§ grow on marginal land with little input
§ increase water use efficiency of production systems
§ solve the problem of increased demand for green fodder
§ reduce livestock watering

Cactus is catching up in India

Cactus pear (Opuntia ficus-indica) demonstrates great adaptive traits under harsh agro-climatic conditions, and often thrives where no other crops can grow.

Cactus as a fodder crop can address the widespread shortage of green fodder

Our innovative approach

• We explored the potential of using cactus pear as a new source of fodder.
• We attempted to change perceptions, attitudes and practices toward cactus among farmers.

Outcomes

• More than 120,000 cladodes were distributed and planted in 1200 farmers’ fields.
• A cactus suitability map in India was generated. The best planting time in India is July before the monsoon.
• Well-adapted cactus pear accessions were identified.
• Demand for cactus cladodes is expanding as more States request this crop.

Future steps

• Support local institutions, NGO, and farmers’ associations to play an active extension role.
• Set up nurseries across several States to speed up cactus pad multiplication.
• Develop the capacities of farmers, extension services, local authorities, and development agencies on cactus production
• Explore additional uses of cactus such as fruit production.

Partners

• Indian Council of Agricultural Research
• Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute
• ICARDA-FAO Cactus Net

Context

• Smallholder farmers in semi-arid environments have limited resources to improve the supply of animal feeds.
• Cactus pear (Opuntia ficus-indica) demonstrates great adaptive traits under harsh agro-climatic conditions, and often thrives where no other crops can grow.
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