

Foreword

It is now becoming clear that an ecosystem approach is the most appropriate methodology to ensure sustainable food security and conservation of urban landscapes. Hence this book by Steve Wratten and colleagues is a timely one. At the time of the origin of agriculture or settled cultivation over 10 000 years ago, the early cultivators, mostly women, adopted an ecosystem approach for standardizing cultivation practices, as well as in the choice of crops. For example, in the state of Tamil Nadu in India, ancient scholars divided the state into five major agroecological zones. These were: coastal, hill, arid, semiarid and wet zones. Agricultural practices were followed according to the specific ecosystem, keeping in view the extent of rainfall, the incidence of sunlight and the moisture-holding capacity of the soil. From the naturally occurring biodiversity, plants with specialized adaptations, such as halophytes for coastal areas and xerophytes for the arid zone, were identified and cultivated.

An ecosystem approach to soil and water management helps to ensure successful agriculture. Water security is important not only for agriculture and industry, but also for domestic needs and for ecosystem maintenance. The book covers all aspects of soil health conservation and enhancement, and water and biodiversity management. Ecosystem-based agriculture ensures stability of production and at the same time enhances the coping capacity of farming families to meet the challenges of climate change. I therefore hope that this book will be widely read and used both by farming practitioners and policy makers. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the editorial team for their dedication to the cause of sustainable agriculture and food security.

M. S. Swaminathan

PROF MS SWAMINATHAN

Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha)

Emeritus Chairman, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation

Third Cross Street, Taramani Institutional Area

Chennai - 600 113 (India)