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Discipline Farm
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2nd Quarterly Report

6 Months Of Farmwork

I have been working on the Discipline-Farm for the last six months now and I will continue doing so for another six months. I am doing a voluntary service supported by the German Ministry of Development Cooperation called „weltwärts“. This is how felt working here.

When I came to Auroville I could not use my left arm, let alone my left hand, because I severely injured it back in Germany. Therefor I was quite curious to see how I could work on a farm five days a week. Coming here I did not know whether it was possible for me to contribute to the farm as an active volunteer in such a way that it was both beneficial for the farm and sufficient to my expectations and aspirations. Not having worked manually for seriously long periods of time beforehand, I had no realistic idea of, firstly, how physically exhausting and demanding, and secondly, how manageable with basically one hand it would be.

Retrospectively analysing the introductory Period of my voluntary service year, I am very happy to say that it went a whole lot easier than I had expected. Every single member of the farm has bid me warmly welcome. I was offered a wide variety of opportunities to contribute to the farmwork, especially taking into consideration the fact that I had not worked on a farm before.

As I have been working on the farm on five days per week and will all the time being a volunteer here in Auroville, I soon felt the urge to find one particular or more projects in which I could engage for longer periods of time and subsequently would be given greater responsibilities, not to mention the knowledge I would surely gain in the process. I did find such projects and I am satisfied with the results as well as with the way those efforts were met and valued. Colleagues, mentors and management all

give me the feeling that my contribution and my efforts are taken for serious and valued.

An example for such a project of mine is the „Discipline“-farm stand on the weekly farmer’s market in the youth center on Saturdays. Starting this project basically from square one, I spent relatively much thought, labour and effort establishing a serious concept. This concept, which I kept presenting to the ones in responsibility, has always been seen and treated in a serious way. I experienced realistic feedback and in most cases even further ideas and contributions, which turned out to be of rather significant importance for me.

A current field of work that I spend quite some time on lately is the collection of seeds, namely the ones of herbal plants like mustard, rucola or basil. I like this kind of work because it does not get boring too easily and has a considerable influence on the farm. Moreover, this field proves to be offering a tremendous potential, when it comes to improvements that could be made on the farm. And own seedcollection is highly valuable for a farm, because due to natural occurring adaptation and evolution, the plants that give seed are the ones that did best in this particular ecological environment of the farm. Consequently, sowing seeds won from farm owned plants is an very efficient way of growing plants, let alone growing young plants in the green house, the nursery that is being managed by the farm itself.

Furthermore I highly enjoy constantly being able to gain knowledge in the field of agriculture, organic agriculture in particular. I am frequently offered opportunities learn, the daily work on the farm being the most significant one. In addition, I can not help but say that Auroville as place of constant learning fosters this atmosphere of knowledge exchange.

Obviously, the kind of work that is needed to be done on the farm heavily depends on the season at hand. I appreciate this periodical shift for it adds to the variety of experience both on the farm and in Auroville, thus making the stay quite a lot more interesting. During the wintermonths of Auroville, for instance, by far the most time was spent weeding, as all the plants seem to grow way faster than in other times. Approaching the hotter months, on the other hand, mulching takes up most of the time.

A rather annoying issue regarding the work on the farm is the high fluctuation of volunteers. Being a volunteer myself, though one staying for a greater amount of time, I am, from time to time, asked to take care of someone, who wants to work on the farm voluntarily. It, apparently, has become common practice to not behave as a reliable source of labour. In other words, I have had several experiences where I introduced volunteers on the farm, which, of course, takes time and work, without seeing those particular visitors only once again on the farm.

After all, I still am happily satisfied with the time I spend on the farm, the experiences I have and the work I do.