Amid changing climatic conditions and growing environmental challenges, students of Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan College of Agriculture, Perambalur, have achieved a remarkable milestone by cultivating traditional Samba paddy across 50 acres using 100% natural farming methods. As part of this initiative, they have successfully cultivated a unique variety of rice known as 'Magic Rice' on 2 acres of land, which requires no cooking.

Going beyond conventional classroom-based agricultural education, the students have embraced the concept of 'Learning by Doing' through hands-on field experience. From ploughing the land, preparing nurseries, transplanting seedlings and removing weeds to applying organic fertilizers and harvesting, the students themselves undertake every stage of cultivation as an integral part of their academic curriculum.

The special rice variety cultivated here is 'Komal Saul', a traditional rice variety grown by indigenous communities in the Sivasagar region of the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam. The seedlings are transplanted at a spacing of one foot by one foot, and the crop has a cultivation period of approximately 150 days. Historically, this rice was an important food source for warriors.

Unlike conventional rice varieties, Komal Saul does not require cooking over a fire. Simply soaking it in warm water for 30 to 40 minutes is sufficient to make it soft and ready to eat. Since it does not undergo high-temperature cooking, its vitamins, antioxidants and essential nutrients are preserved to a greater extent. It also contains significantly more dietary fibre than ordinary white rice, making it a promising food choice for digestive health and sustained energy.

Chemical fertilizers are completely avoided across the 50-acre farm. Instead, only natural fertilizers prepared within the college premises are used to protect crops and improve soil fertility.

Microbial fertilizers produced on the farm are applied to the crops once every 10 days, beginning from transplantation and continuing up to 90 days. This helps improve root development and enhance soil fertility. In addition, a natural nitrogen-based fertilizer, also

prepared within the college premises, is regularly sprayed on the crops until the flowering stage.

In terms of cultivation expenses, while other rice varieties such as Karnataka Ponni, Andhra Ponni and BPT require approximately ₹100 towards fertilizers and crop protection inputs, the corresponding expenditure for Magic Rice is just ₹20. Another notable feature of this variety is its ability to withstand common paddy diseases and pests, including bacterial leaf blight and stem borers, making it well suited to natural farming conditions.

By combining large-scale chemical-free natural farming with innovative and traditional rice varieties such as Komal Saul, the students of Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan College of Agriculture have demonstrated how traditional ecological knowledge can be integrated with the food requirements of the future.

This remarkable initiative in Perambalur stands as an inspiring example of sustainable agriculture, paving the way for a cleaner, healthier and more prosperous agricultural future.