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Success Story

A successful mushroom grower: Inspiration for retaining youth in agriculture

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The escalating unemployment among rural youth has led to a concerning migration trend. To address this, the ICAR-ARYA Project was launched in 2018-19 in Odisha's Puri district. By promoting Agri-enterprises, the project aims to provide employment opportunities, deter migration, and empower rural entrepreneurs, thus fostering sustainable progress. A total of 183 beneficiaries have been acknowledged and included across 4 enterprises including mushroom cultivation, fishery, poultry, and apiary under this project. Puri, the mushroom hub of Odisha, presents an advantageous setting for sustainable livelihoods through mushroom cultivation. The region's climate and coconut orchard spaces offer a conducive niche for this venture. With the substantial daily supply of mushrooms to nearby markets, mushroom cultivation has emerged as an appealing livelihood choice for many small and marginal farmers. Under the ARYA Project, KVK Puri has taken proactive steps to comprehensively uplift the mushroom enterprise, encompassing aspects like value addition, spawn production, cultivation, and marketing, all geared towards empowering the local community.

Tending to 3 acres of land, Mr. Manoj Behera cultivates paddy, pulses, coconut trees, vegetables, and mushrooms. Having grown up in a farming family, he aims to establish an integrated farming system that can counterbalance potential crop losses with other ventures. However, lacking technical know-how, he heeded the advice of a fellow farmer and approached KVK Puri in 2020. His purpose was to access technological guidance to enhance his farming methods, thereby improving his financial and livelihood prospects. This decision led to his collaboration with KVK scientists and his involvement in the ICAR ARYA project.

Name: Mr. Manoj Behera
Educational Qualification: Under matric
Age: 37yr
Size of land holding (in acre): 3.0
Address:
 Village-Sanabhimadapur, Block-Satyabadi,
 District-Puri, State-Odisha
Mobile Number: 9937130988



Initially, Mr. Behera focused on traditional Paddy and Pulses cultivation. After joining the ARYA Project through KVK and collaborating with other agricultural agencies, he embraced Integrated Farming Systems, diversifying his agriculture for increased income. In optimizing mushroom production, he incorporated a Paddy Straw bundle cutter to reduce cost of cultivation and established a commercial venture of mushroom farming all through the year. He included the paddy straw mushroom and oyster mushroom cultivation practice for a consistent year-round income.

Presently, his average yield increases to 0.7 to 0.9 kg per paddy straw mushroom bed (21 days per cycle) and 2.5 kg per oyster mushroom bag (60 days per cycle). Introducing mechanized straw cutting for mushroom cultivation has led to reduced labour, time, and drudgery, with an annual cost saving of Rs. 24,000/-. Additionally, he now produces vermicompost from spent mushroom substrate. His practice of paddy straw mushroom cultivation in crumpled straw is showcased under KVK's demonstration programme. Benefiting from a horticulture department subsidy, he possesses a semi-structured shed-net house, organized in a rack system, valued at Rs. 40,000/-. Formerly selling mushrooms at Rs. 140/kg, his income now receives a Rs. 10/kg boost due to the innovative ARYA project-introduced paper bags for sales. Previously, Mr. Manoj Behera's annual income from crops like Paddy, coconut and only paddy straw mushroom cultivation amounted to Rs. 2,68,142/-. However, he encountered issues such as reduced yields from paddy and mushrooms. Through KVK's interventions, which included practices like varietal substitution in Paddy, cost reduction in scientific paddy straw mushroom cultivation i.e., beds in rack system under shed net house, and the introduction of Oyster Mushroom in winter, vermicomposting from spent mushroom substrate and Dairy farming his annual income has now increased to Rs. 3,82,603/-With the help of a subsidy from the agriculture department, he has acquired a tractor. He has also secured various initial inputs required for year-round scientific mushroom cultivation through the ARYA Project of KVK. Additionally, his product marketing efforts are being supported by both KVK and the Mushroom Federation. An exemplary source of inspiration for fellow young farmers, he has effectively stirred the enthusiasm of women from Self-Help Groups in the Satyabadi block, igniting their interest in entrepreneurship. With unwavering readiness to offer his guidance, he extends his support and motivation to women farmers and rural youths in adjacent villages, urging them to embrace innovative farming techniques made possible through the assistance of KVK Scientists and experts.



Training on Mushroom Production



Skill Training on Vermicomposting from spent mushroom Substrate



Exposure Visit to AICRP Mushroom, QUAT



Start-up Input Distribution under ARYA Project



Mushroom Unit



Master trainer for SHGs

Conclusion

Mr. Manoj Behera has achieved success as an Agri-entrepreneur and is recognized for his diligent and innovative farming practices. His self-driven approach to profitable agriculture provides support to his six-member family. His economic and lively hood standard increased by the extra income from mushroom cultivation i.e., Rs 9,000-10,000 per month. His vermicomposting from the spent mushroom substrate helps him lowering his fertilizer need. His progress is now providing inspiration to the youths of that area to take mushroom as a profitable agricultural venture and imparted an impact to retain and undertake agriculture as a profession for earning their livelihood. Recognizing his year-round Mushroom farming, he earned the Best Progressive Farmer award from KVK Sakhigopal, Puri district. His aspirations extend to establishing a well-equipped mushroom spawn lab to meet the needs of neighbouring villages. With his vision set, he is determined to establish a mushroom hub in Sakhigopal, supported by KVK and the Mushroom Federation.