Strawberry Fields Forever

Farmers of Village Wazihana in Bijnor may not be very familiar with the popular Beatles number, but certainly the song rings true in their success story.

Learned in Tribul Science, the Wazihana farmers, almost without exception, suffered from the diseases associated with small holdings. A plethora of problems relating to inputs and irrigation plagued them. At least, they got to experience that drip irrigation that makes it possible to have water only where it is most needed and eliminate losses for many high value aerobic crops. The soil, water and air of the area all contributed tremendously to produce fertility.

It was Abdul Ahad Muz, a farmer from this village, who came up with a unique idea. Abdul, realizing the plight of the farmers, began actively looking for new alternatives to augment their incomes. He was involved in horticulture farming under the Horticulture Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in North Eastern States and Bihar. Abdul was advised to take up cultivation of strawberry which was established in the area and which satisfied the prevailing climate. The fruit had great market potential both within and outside the state.

Under the guidance of experts working on the Horticulture Mission, Abdul started by beginning by planting the Chilean variety of strawberries on 1 Kanal of land in March, 2015. After a few months with all the requisite inputs and planting materials, these included a polyhouse for protected cultivation of the crops. In the first year itself, the small area oversold its unimproved income of Rs. 60,000.

Motivated by success, Abdul expanded the area under strawberry to 8 Kanals during the next year, which again yielded a tremendous generation of income of Rs. 2.4 lakhs.

Not content with his own success, Abdul took this big leap of educating his fellow farmers who soon became convinced about the commercial viability of rearing this new crop. Abdul moved out of his own farm to help guide others at Corner, the received an overwhelming response. Today all the farmers in Corner have decided to emulate his example and plant this boon crop on their farms. Group action has also shown the way for profitable marketing of their produce.

Little wonder then that Abdul has now set out on a new mission for himself and that is to transform Corner into what he aptly calls the ‘Strawberry Village’.
The Power of Dreams

Abdul Halim
Village Abanathika
Asan

Third fuel to dreams. His passion to grow his field with a mission and never give up. The poet Langston Hughes' line might have been written for Abdul Halim, a young farmer from Village Abanathika, Asan. One thing he wanted to overcome ever since he learned to travel was poverty. He spent long hours of his childhood playing almost obsessively with a toy car but as he grew older, realism struck that his father, who owned and farmed a massive 2 acres of land, would not be able to accumulate the money needed to fulfill his dream. However, his father provided him a solution to accomplish his goal. He told Abdul that if he started to help him in improving the quality and the productivity of his crops, he could save enough money in time to buy his dream car.

The next day, Abdul woke up with single-minded determination, life was a mission. He worked tirelessly in the fields from dawn to dusk and began searching for possible methods to improve his earnings. It was during this exploration on his farm that he developed a close relationship with the Soil Agricultural Development Officer and Village Level Extension Worker. They in turn provided him with all possible technical help on how to achieve higher productivity of crops. Slowly, all his efforts began to pay dividends. The yield of all his crops including jack-fruit, eka, potato, cauliflower, cabbage, brinjal, tomato, onion, chilli, sweet potato, hybrid paddy etc. was spectacular. His profit (-inch) as compared to that of the previous year. He even understood cultivation of pulses in both Kharif and Rabi seasons and adopted unique intercropping practices which raised his cropping intensity by 200 percent to further augment his earnings.

Now at the age of 28, Abdul has saved enough money to buy a car. He makes a point to drive it every day; occasionally stopping at a friend's house to proudly show off his gleaming new car.
Persistence Pays

Village Sangayath of Lohit District in Arunachal Pradesh had some of the poorest families of the district. In an effort to add to each household’s income, the women of the village formed the Ayogutol Self Help Group (SHG). The group initially faced many hurdles and was unsure as to whether it would be a success. However, Sairima Inowar and Madam Munda, the President and Secretary of the SHG respectively, were not going to give up easily. They approached the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) in Lohit for skill development in animal husbandry.

Once the group had acquired skill development training in pig rearing the Lamps (Large Hairs Agricultural Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society) then funded them with Rs. 1,37,000 for buying pigs, construction of the pig pen, water pumps and feed. Twelve of these women each were raised to take care of the upkeep of the pigpen and feeding of the stock. With these efforts, the pig rearing unit started realizing profits within a year. The value of pig stock went up with a pig valued at Rs. 12,000. The women also started selling fryers amongst themselves limiting the amount to Rs. 20,000. The total amount generated was valued at more than Rs. 500 a month. Since, the group could also afford to employ more women to work in the pig rearing unit.

Today, the Group is planning to add two new pens that will generate extra assets of Rs. 1,5 lakh. As Sairima Inowar and Madam Munda tell their families with a satisfied smile, “It’s achieved our goal of self-determination and self-esteem (right track). We persist! We pays.”
Sharing Success

Ajay Singh, a resident of Village Sahajpur Mustakhaz in Hoshuli district of Uttar Pradesh was a progressive farmer, having set up a Farm School on his plot of land. Here he interested busy experimenting with new varieties of rice, trying out organic fertilizers and innovative pest management techniques.

Ajay did just that on his farm School, Growing of Basmati rice (Pusa 1131 variety) in his one hectare farm was the focus of his efforts. He built a massive ISMA (Integrated Sustainable Management Agro) unit on his farm. In the base ment of his house, he has a large collection of different types of rice and other crops. The unit is well equipped with all the necessary tools and equipment needed for effective pest management.

Ajay Singh
Village Sahajpur Mustakhaz
Uttar Pradesh

However, during August of the same year, when a group of unknown pests came to visit his farm School, it was discovered that his plants had been infested with Brown Rice. But the rice was not diseased. Ajay sought advice from specialists who told him to plant 70% of his rice with Basmati and 30% of the crops with other varieties. He also used organic fertilizers to maintain the soil quality. The result was that the pest attack was reduced significantly.

Ajay, by way of his Farm School and pest management techniques, has resulted in higher yields and better quality of rice. He has also been able to attract more farmers to his Farm School, which has resulted in a significant increase in the area under rice cultivation in the Hoshuli district.
Bridging Divide to Reclaim

The Village of Madhupur in the Cooch Behar District of West Bengal was beset with a multitude of problems. It is a remote and communally sensitive deltaic. Cultivation was severely affected by shifting seasons of monsoon cropping. Two men from two different communities in this village, Pradip Chandras Sarkar and Bimla Ali Mohar realized that the only way out of their predicament was to keep under their own-control population and this led them to cooperative action. Pradip said, “You know Mithi, we have to get together in the village and conserve the sandy wasteland, due to the shifting of our River Tirtha, into a cultivable one. Then only will our village be able to enhance its productivity and we can live a decent life.” said Pradip. Ali Mohar replied, “The reclaimed land would be ideal for cultivating Jute and other Khadi crops like Hemp and Paddy. But, of course, it will need a lot of support and hard work.”

The duo, now fully committed, organized a group of thirty farmers belonging to different communities and formed the idea of community action to reclaim the sandy nallay land. Soon, they along with Gram Panchayat members, approached the Agriculture Department for support under the Rashnya Krishi Vikas Yojna (REKV). A phased plan of action was drawn up and implemented. The first phase focused on Rainwater Harvesting, Water Building and Protection of Rain Harvest, while the second phase aimed at soil conservation and other improvement initiatives in those lands. Finally, the third phase was implemented for increasing the cropping intensity maintaining soil moisture regime and conserving rainwater by different techniques.

The result of this community action was spectacular. Productivity of Jute increased from 0.8 to 1.3 tonnes per hectare, still paddy from 3 to 1.68 tonnes per hectare and all revenue reductions from 5 to 12 tonnes per hectare – that is, almost 20% increase in Khadi crops and 80% increase in Jute crops. This resulted in a dramatic improvement in their socio-economic condition. The two men who started the whole exercise became models of those who every time anyone asks in the miracle of Madhupur, Pr, they know that miracles need to be made to happen.
Triumphant Against All Odds

In the remote Village of Roshandh in West Midnapur District of West Bengal, the local tribals were a completely marginalized group. Cut off from the mainstream and plagued by extremities, they lived a hand-to-mouth existence. However, there was one man among them called Amaol Ali who realised that only a concerted cooperative action could improve their lot.

Amaol Ali took the initiative to organise 14 other farmers to form a Group to decide what to do. After intense discussion, the Group came up with the idea that cashew cultivation could be the way to their economic salvation.

Amaol had met the Block Development Office (BDO) when the gentleman made a visit to the village earlier. Now he had a couple of questions from the Group that he wanted him to answer. “You know,” Amaol said, “we need to take the next step in our own hands to improve our lives. After a bit of thinking, we have decided that our land has a just right for cashew cultivation, but we need some guidance and support to proceed.”

The BDO was happy with the interest shown by the villagers, realizing that such a plan would generate economic opportunities. He was determined to do everything in his capacity to channelize the idea and bring it to fruition. Guided by the BDO, the villagers then met officials of the Agriculture Department, which gave them necessary instructions.

20 hectares of land was designated for the cooperative farming of cashew, and the right quantities of seeds, manure and pesticides were acquired. Scientific cultivation methods were demonstrated and then implemented. The results were beyond everyone’s expectation. A productivity of 325 kg/hectare was achieved and net income of Rs. 12,000 per hectare was realized, and the gross income, was Rs. 56,000 per hectare. The farmers of Roshandh were well on their way to turning around their fortunes.

As Amaol says, “When you get together, plan democratically and then organise scientifically, you can achieve whatever you realistically set out to do. Cooperative action can overcome all odds, however insurmountable they may seem.”
Amrita Dutt Paney, a marginal farmer in Alurua District, had been hit hard by water scarcity. At his five-acre farm not being able to adequately irrigate his cropper, holding 0.2 hectares of field, he had almost resigned for a bleak future of back-breaking labor with declining crops, when fate in the guise of the Vivekananda Parayak, Kisan Anusandhan Samiti (VPKAS) intervened. Amrita Dutt found that one-third of the organisation was visiting his Village Palaqbour.

The official discussed his problem along with other similar affected farmers. He examined the terrain, saw the natural perennial springs near Amrita Dutt’s farm and even found a long term solution to his water crisis. “When harvesting from these springs in cakes lined with Low Density Polyethylene (LDPE) is your way out of your farming problems,” he said, going on to explain in detail.

Amrita Dutt, who had asked for help with a faint hope, was encouraged now to realize he would be provided with funds to install the tanks. As part of the scheme, he was also advised on the most suitable type, in his case, he quickly learnt that vegetable farming in poly houses to overcome the frequent weather conditions, would best suit him. He was also provided with necessary training on vegetable crop rotation and the initial stocking of these initiatives.

That was the beginning of a whole new chapter in Amrita Dut’s life. Soon, through water harvesting in LDPE tanks, he could draw upon reserves of 60,000 litres of water. He set up year-round potashes to grow vegetables, learnt how to raise different vegetable crops to maintain and fertilize the system, and solve diseases and pests. The formation of the Vivekananda Water Help Group, of which he was one of the first members, further facilitated access to credit from banks through Krishi Credit Card scheme. With the advent of newer cash-crop schemes, he could find out the prices of vegetables at an adjoining town in advance to get the best possible price for his produce.

In just 3 years, Amrita Dut has been able to increase his earnings by about 80 percent. Emboldened by the success, he is planning to expand the 140-acre rainwater area under protected cultivation. He is a happy man today who contributes otherwise in work help in order to intelligently help themselves.
Love for Lilium

Amelia wakes up every morning to the fragrance of flowers blooming in her backyard. The 20 x 60 ft poly house installed three years ago for her flowers, has been a source of joy and pride. Her love for lilium flowers and her passion for gardening has not only brought her happiness but also financial stability.

For the past six years, Amelia has been a successful entrepreneur in the horticulture sector. She started her business by selling flowers to local florists and has now expanded her business to supply flowers to major hotels and restaurants in the city. Her products are in high demand, and she has a steady stream of customers.

Amelia’s success story is not just about her passion for gardening but also about her hard work and determination. She always believes that hard work pays off and that she should never give up on her dreams.

Amelia’s love for lilium flowers and her dedication to her business have made her a role model for many aspiring entrepreneurs. She has inspired many to pursue their dreams and work hard to achieve success.

Love for lilium, Amelia’s passion for gardening, and her dedication to her business have made her a successful entrepreneur in the horticulture sector. Her success story is a testament to the power of hard work, determination, and passion.
Sowing Seeds of Success

Anil Kumar Ragh of Village Sachet in the Patia District of Bilaspur had the gift of thinking out-of-box. Hence, he did not go for traditional farming in his 20 cents farm, but reasoned instead that all the farmers around him would need seeds for planting various crops. He decided to concentrate on producing seeds for them and capturing a market that would always have a demand.

Displaying the same intelligence that led him to choose seed production, he also figured out that high yielding disease-resistant hybrid seeds were being continuously developed and should be encouraged. After examining and doing a lot of research, he joined the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) Patna, the Indian Institute of Pulse Research (IIPR), Krupur and other agencies which could help him in achieving his objective.

The response he got at ATMA was so encouraging that he decided to expand his research to yet other agencies and was not disappointed. The new economic method he learned combined with the new hybrid seeds production technology that he had become knowledgeable in, held him in good stead as he began his seed cultivation. By using a methodical approach, he had got most of the things right by the next season. Soon, he was supplying his improved hybrid seeds to prlients of the area. However, not content with being confined to his own area, he was soon taking the help of Bihar Rajya Bhiwani (BBH) Patna to reach a wider market for his seeds. With his income now multiplied manifold from his earlier few rupees, he is a retired man today. He often tells his friends unassumingly – “You need to think differently as nothing can beat a unique idea, hard work and economic approach.”
The Soft Touch for a Blooming Success

The West Qans Hill of Meghalaya offer an ideal climate for the cultivation of Anthurium flowers, which are in great demand as cut flowers. Hence, the Directorate of Horticulture has initiated a programme under the Technology Mission for promoting commercial cultivation of Anthurium through women’s groups. As expected, the response for this programme was highly encouraging as women in that region have an abode love for flowers.

As one of the 10 women who came forward to enroll under the scheme, Merry Garolla A. Sangma said, “With the women of Meghalaya have always come forward to take up the cause of the family. When the Anthurium cultivation scheme came along, we saw a great prospect in growing flowers. After all, we women love flowers which redouble our pleasure when these help us or increase our income for our families.”

Initially, 40 potential growers were identified under the Technology Mission and provided with quality planting materials, seedling and related inputs like coco waste, sprouters, irrigation pumps, etc. Basic training on cultivation and maintenance of the garden was imparted to these women. Soon, different varieties of Anthurium began blooming in the gardens and the women started earning a range of Rs. 4000 to Rs. 10,000 per annum.

Though the gardens of the individual growers were fairly small and ranged from 100 sq. meters to 250 sq. meters, they brought their cut flowers to a collection center and thus benefited from economies of scale and collective marketing. The women began to participate regularly in various exhibitions, flower shows and horticultural events where their flowers were highly appreciated for their quality and varieties. As a result, they are also in the process of forming a registered society so as to achieve marketing and input source.

The success of these growers has inspired other women’s groups to take up such enterprises with financial support from the Directorate of Horticulture and also by accessing their loans. Today, the Anthurium growers of West Qans Hill of Meghalaya are a happy lot and a role model to others. As L. D. Minniew, another grower, says, “At last, we have found something we love to do which helps us live with happiness and dignity.”