

A story of a banker turned farmer in Bihar

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Direct sales: Barun Singh (foreground) markets the produce grown in his farm directly to consumers.—
Photo: Special Arrangement

“Farming is fascinating. The only thing is that it requires continuous hard-work and devotion without any distraction” says Mr. Barun Singh, a government bank manager-turned-farmer. Mr. Barun Singh maintains a vermi-composting unit in a portion of his 10 acre land. A dairy unit is attached to the composting unit so that the cattle dung can be easily utilized for the process without much labour involvement. Waste materials like dried leaves, rotten vegetables, fruits etc is spread on a polythene sheet placed on the ground and then covered with cattle dung. Tanks are made of bricks and cement with small holes to facilitate easy movement of earthworms from one tank to another and effective collection of vermi-wash.

Net profit

“The farmer made a net profit of Rs. 12 lakh from his composting unit alone which included sales of above Rs. 25 lakh in the States of Bihar and Jharkhand together with supplies to the government in 2012 and in the current year, he expects a net profit of Rs. 15 lakh since the demand for organic inputs in Bihar is quite high,” says Mr. Aditya, Assistant Professor-cum-Junior Scientist, Department of Extension Education, Bihar Agricultural University, Sabour, Bihar, who is working on an action research to catalyze rural leadership for better dissemination of information.

In addition to this Mr. Barun has maintained a two-acre farm exclusively for the cultivation of tissue culture banana through high density planting (HDP) technique. “Two months old plants are growing even better than the normal banana cultivars planted at the same time in other plots,” says Mr. Barun. High Density Planting (HDP), an advance technique, is an effective method used to improve the fruit productivity. Through HDP 4,000 to 5,000 plants can be planted in a hectare and the yield improves radically.

HDP technique

According to Mr. Aditya, this technique is more useful for perennial crops because it allows efficient use of land and resources, realizing higher yield and net profit, easy canopy management suited for farm mechanization, and cultural practices, efficient spray and weed control, improvement in fruit quality easy and good harvest. In India, HDP technology has been successfully used in banana, pineapple, papaya and mango, guava and citrus where the yield has increased two to three times. The combination of dairying with over 30 high yielding cows of Sahiwal, Jarsi and Holstein- Friesian breed along with 28 calves, goaterly with Jamapari breed of goats brought from Rajasthan, fishery in 0.75 acres of land with mix-carp variety of fish and short-duration tissue culture banana plant, maize and vegetable crops like bottle gourd, potato, lady's finger are grown in his farm.

Sale of milk

From dairying alone, he is able to sale over 180 litres of milk each day fetching over Rs. 1.70 lakhs per month. The carp fish has great demand in the local market and the state capital. The demand often exceeds the supply. It is a good source to meet current expenses incurred day to day on his farm. The best part is that the crops are grown completely by organic means with no use of chemical fertilizers.

Marketing

The vegetables produced from the farm are packed and sent to different parts of the state as well as the local market. Along with it, he owns a mustard processing plant to extract oil and use mustard bran as a nutritious concentrate feed for cattle,” says Mr. Aditya. “More than 80 per cent of Indian farmers have small farm holdings. The success of an agricultural research programme or project must be on increasing productivity and income to the small farmer,” he adds. Mr. Barun was conferred the best Innovative Farmer

Award by the university last year for his sustained efforts and leadership qualities in guiding other farmers in the region.

Rural leaders

“My dream is to intensify my current activities in the coming years to give it a shape of an agro-industry and also form a club of rural-leaders who would be trained by the University for working in the area of farming they desire,” says Mr. Barun.

For visits and more information, readers can contact:
Mr. Barun P. Singh, Gram: Patwaha, Block: Kehra, Dist,
Saharsa, Bihar, Mobile :08809419388 and
Mr. Aditya, Assistant Professor-cum-Junior Scientist,
Department of Extension Education,
Bihar Agricultural University, Sabour,
Bihar. email:inc.aditya@gmail.com, mobile: 9798649444