

Educated Youth in Agriculture-Story of Pitambar Bag

Pitambar Bag, aged 25 of village Bahabal in Komna block is an enterprising youth. He helps his father in agriculture. The crops grown from their two acres of land are sufficient to sustain a family of five. But Pitambar always wanted more. He completed his graduation in arts and did a PGDCA course in 2012. He is amongst a few in his village who have managed to complete their graduation. During his graduation days, as his peers labored endlessly in the fields, Pitambar worked as a community volunteer for his village. He helped SVA to promote Seed Collection campaigns of Pigeon Pea and to promote SRI cultivation initiated by the Agriculture Department and SVA. But the money earned was very small. While working with SVA he was influenced by many innovative techniques of agriculture and livelihood options promoted by the organization. One of these was mushroom cultivation. Motivated by the employees of SVA and with his own risk taking ability he jumped into setting up his mushroom unit.



Oyster mushroom is cultivated in Nuapada district during December to March. During this time the weather and the optimum moisture in the air enhances its growth. Pitambar did not have the right know how to place the mushroom beds and had seen the workers in SVA grow it only once or twice. Yet he was determined. He found a place in the corner of his field under the shade of few trees where he decided to build the temporary enclosure to house the mushroom beds. He set out alone to collect logs, rug sacks, plastic sheets and paddy straw to make the enclosure or “Chattu Ghar” as he calls it. The seeds were bought from SVA office and paddy straw was cut and soaked in lime water, the beds were laid. But unfortunately, the straw was not properly dried for the beds. Since Pitambar did not have the right know how for mushroom bed preparation, moisture in the hay was too much for the germination of the fungi in the first few beds. When he saw the beds getting blackened with time due to high moisture, he panicked. He then consulted an employee of SVA who has been cultivating mushrooms for years. After that Pitambar set out to add five to ten beds each day to the “Chattu Ghar”. He bought 250 bottles of seed and used one bottle per bed. Each bed gave a yield of around 2 kg of mushroom over one season which were sold at 100 rupees per kg. He invested about Rs 3000 for construction of the



GOOD QUALITY SEED: KEY TO HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY...

Visit of Mr. M.S. Mishra, DDM-NABARD, Nuapada to the fields covered under seed village programme by SVA, in the village Kutribahal of Komana Block.

enclosure. He had made a total investment of 8000-9000 rupees but he could make a net income of Rs. 15000/- just in two months.

As he works alone, he had been able to utilize only 60-70% of the seed bottles bought. His daily tasks include maintenance of the enclosure, preparation of new beds and selling of the produce at the nearby markets every day. The money earned after each sales and a day of hard labor, brings a smile to Pitambar's face. When asked, how he intends to spend the money, he wisely replies that this money is irregular and this will feed to the immediate needs of the family. Though he still looks out for a government job which would give him security for life, he knows that small efforts like these can also reap him large benefits every year.

(Report: Akanksya Srivastav – ICICI Volunteer)