

Mushroom Cultivation Improving Livelihoods of Tribal Women in Jharkhand

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Mrs. Sukramani Kharkhusa, wife of late Suresh Kharkhusa, resident of Plandu village of Namkum block of Ranchi district, is a landless hardworking woman. She is the only earning member in her family of six. Before she became a beneficiary of the Farmer FIRST Program (FFP), she used to work as a maid in others' homes and earned only Rs 6,000/- a month, which was not enough for her family. She also worked as a laborer in hotels, ICAR Plandu and others' farms. She had to work overtime to meet the necessary day-to-day expenses. However, due to financial constraints in the family, her children left their studies. She had taken a loan of Rs.50,000/- from a women self-help group for arranging the basic needs of the family members.



The Farmer FIRST Program team visited her during 2019 and interacted with family members. They came to know about the interventions being implemented under the program and showed interest in mushroom cultivation. She attended one day training on “cultivation of mushroom” in 2019- and three-days training on cultivation and value addition of mushroom in 2022 at ICAR Research Complex for Eastern Region, Farming System Research Centre for Hill and Plateau Region (ICAR RCER, FSRCHPR), Plandu, Ranchi. She kept a room for mushroom and started its cultivation in the month of September, 2019. ICAR-RCER, FSRCHPR, Ranchi provided her with mushroom spawn, PPP bags, formalin and Bavistin under FFP. Regular monitoring was done by FFP team. She was able to sell 145 kg of fresh mushrooms at the rate of Rs.150/- per kg in local haats (Rampur market, Namkum market, etc.) within two months. She decided to continue mushroom cultivation throughout the year. Here mushroom business slowed down during the lock down period due to fear and low demand. To better her life, she started making mushrooms badi and pickles. During 2022 again this business picked up pace. She is doing oyster mushroom cultivation from August to April.

Table 1. Economics of mushroom cultivation by Smt Sukarmani Kharkhusa

Technology	No. of bags (1 kg dry substrate per bag)	Yield (kg)	Average selling price (Rs. per kg)	Gross income (Rs.in lakh)	Net income (Rs.in lakh)
Cultivation of Oyster Mushroom	850	765	145	1.11	0.86



Fig.1. Cultivation of Oyster mushroom and preparation of mushroom *badi* by Sukarmani Kharkhusa

She uses spent mushroom bags for vermicomposting. Her success story was telecasted in local news channel "Jharkhand Ki Buniyaad". For her success she was felicitated at ICAR-RCER, Foundation Day 2023. By adopting mushroom cultivation, her family became self-sufficient, got employment, increased income and nutritional level. She returned the loan to the women self-help group from the profit earned from the mushroom business. Then, her children rejoined private school for further studies. She is also rearing 25 poultry birds and two goats. She is a role model for other women mushroom growers.

Table 2. Performance of mushroom cultivation in Farmer FIRST Programme villages

Technology	Number of farmers adopted mushroom cultivation	No. of bags (1 kg dry substrate per bag)	Yield (kg)	Net income (Rs. in lakh)
Cultivation of Oyster and Milky Mushroom	83	6500	5800	4.46



Fig.2. Mushroom cultivation in Farmer FIRST Programme villages

Her success inspired many women farmers to take up mushroom cultivation. During 2022-23, 83 farmers took up mushroom cultivation in the project villages. Some farmers have also adopted milky mushroom cultivation during the summer season (April to July). The additional net income generated in the project villages by adopting mushroom during 2022-23 was only Rs.4.46 lakh (Rupees four lakh forty-six thousand only). Many farmers are interested in doing business related to mushroom cultivation.