

Mushrooms Brought Extra Income Generation to Farmers in North-Eastern Region

Two clusters namely Balaram & Maracherra of Dhalai districts in Tripura were identified with



less irrigation facility coupled with low cropping intensity. The local farmers bound to have paddy as the solo crop twice a year with intermittent vegetable outputs that did not do well in raising extra income generation. Therefore, mushroom cultivation was started off as an extra livelihood generation amongst the farmers by the ICAR in close collaboration with regional center of ICAR for NEH region at Tripura, under the NAIP project "livelihood improvement".

Mushroom cultivation was first initiated through an in-situ training cum live demonstration in all the six Self Help Groups (SHGs) of Dhalai Districts along with the fifty-five beneficiaries in May 2008. The six SHGs were Abachanga, Khabaksha, Sharda, Pohor, Bodol, and Loknath. Till December 2010, 216 farmers have had started mushroom cultivation. Farmers produced 2062 kg of fresh oyster mushrooms at the expenditure cost of Rs. 46492; @Rs. 12 for a poly bag filling. The farmers sold fresh oyster mushrooms at Rs 80/kg to the local markets and earned Rs. 165045. The net profit resulted in Rs. 118509. Besides, increase in employment is registered to 1185 mandays. Furthermore, farmers used 882 & 889 mushroom spawns (each 150g) and produced 560.30 & 559.00 kg of fresh oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus sajor-caju*) in Balaram and Maracherra villages during April 2009 to March 2010, respectively.

Most of the restaurants menus have button mushroom dishes, Chinese Bhel, Malai Mushroom Curry, Mushroom Biryani, and Mushroom Gravy as the famously served mushroom items. 'I am very happy to listen that my mushrooms are being served across various reputed hotels in and around the state', says Bimal Debnath from Balaram village. "By selling oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus sajor-caju*) at Rs 80/kg at local market was like a distant dream that appear coming true slowly but surely with the technical and timely help provided the ICAR," says Rebika Sangma, a woman farmer from Balaram village. "Since the demand of mushrooms are surging both nationally & internationally, production technologies should be applied accurately with sufficient technical inputs. There are many farmers who are coming forward to adopt this as business", says Principal Investigator of the Project Dr G.C. Munda, ICAR, Barapani.

Mushrooms cultivation ensured enhancement of family income at cost of less investment. Waste materials easily deposited into food materials enriching with nutrition is the extra benefits at farmers' hand. Sustainability depends upon regular construction of new sheds in order to increase mushrooms production amongst interested beneficiaries, however continuous mushroom spawns supply pose a challenge that can be sufficiently managed through improved techniques of spawn (seeds) production.

(Source: NAIP Sub-Project of Mass Media Mobilization, DKMA with inputs from ICAR complex for NEH region)