



Rejuvenating Lives

Chronicles of agricultural transformation on the fields of small and marginal farmers

Smelling Agri Gains through Scented Rice

Introduction

The cornerstone of Action for Social Advancement's (ASA's) efforts in improving farm productivity is the "Responsible Crop Initiative", which is popularly known as "Jimmedar Kheti" by farmers. The focus here is on executing environmentally and socially friendly farm practices that increase yield and productivity. Organic farming is an integral aspect of these sets of practices, which focuses on chemical-free production of the crops. ASA engages with many farmers in various locations for organic farming of various crops. An important crop promoted among farmers in the paddy growing region of eastern Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh is the scented paddy, which sells at a premium price and fetches a good income for the paddy farmers.

The Specifics

Organic Farming

Responsible Farming Initiative or the "Jimmedar Kheti" is rooted in ASA agricultural productivity enhancement program to achieve higher crop production and productivity that is in harmony with the environment and society. Organic farming is one of the key components of the responsible production system. The main basis for the promotion for the organic farming by ASA is that the current approach to farming entails intensive use of chemicals based farm inputs, which depletes the soil of its fertility and places a high financial burden on the farmers. Moreover, such an approach is mono-cultural in its focus. This burden is more so higher for small landholders, which are the main cultivator group with whom ASA works. Hence, the organic farming component of ASA encompasses the use of locally available material to produce bio-fertilizers and pesticides along with mechanical cultivation and crop rotations. The use of bio-fertilizers enables the farmer's fields to gain the natural balance with the presence of healthy soil that is rich in organic matter and pests are kept in check by their predators. The crops that are promoted by ASA under organic farming comprises cotton, paddy, millets, mustard, wheat, and pulses. Organically grown scented rice has found favors among the small paddy growers of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in a small duration.

Benefits



Helps in preserving the environmental health with the reduction of pollution



Reduces the hazards to human and animal health by decreasing the level of residues in the product



Helps in maintaining agricultural production at a sustainable level



Reduces the cost of farming and improves soil health



Beneficial use of natural resources along with their conservation

Figures at a Glance

*As on 31st March 2020



700 farmers
growing scented
rice



2800 hectares
covered



Organic Scented Rice

Scented rice is characterized by a pleasant fragrance and is a much sought after ingredient to prepare culinary specialties among many Indian communities. The Indian sub-continent is traditionally known to grow different varieties of the scented rice. ASA initiated the promotion of scented rice after recognizing its potential in eastern Madhya Pradesh and parts of Chhattisgarh with small paddy growing farmers in 2015. The focus has been on Pusa-01 and PS-04, popularly known as Pusa Basmati that have performed very well in organic conditions. Currently, 2,000 farmers are involved in growing these varieties using the organic system of cultivation. ASA has helped the farmers in selling the harvested scented varieties of paddy at a premium price and earn higher incomes. The plan is to scale up the area under scented rice by including many other small farmers in eastern Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Scented Rice Smells Good to Anuppur Farmers

Anuppur, a major paddy growing district in the eastern Madhya Pradesh, is one of the focus areas, where ASA has extensively promoted scented rice.

Ranjana Kumari from Ura village in Anuppur, who owns 3 acres of farmland has been associated with ASA scented rice program since 2017. She cultivates PS-04 variety on 1.5 acres of land and on the remaining patch normal paddy is grown. She is able to produce 12 quintals of scented basmati rice, which she sells to an ASA promoted FPC called Kapildhara at the price of INR 2,200/- per quintal, which is INR 600/- more than local paddy variety, thus earning INR 26,000/- from its sale. The scented paddy is organically grown using her homemade manure and pesticide, which she learned from ASA. Since there is no need to apply chemicals such as urea and Diammonium phosphate (DAP), Ranjana has been able to save money on that count. Moreover, since the SRI technique is used, the input seeds and time are also saved with an outcome of increased production.



Scented Rice Smells Good to Anuppur Farmers

Gayatri Kewat and her husband Premlal Kevat from Bhad village in Anuppur district have been an early adopter of the ASA's organic farming program starting 2015 over 5 acres of land. They started cultivating scented rice on 5 acres in 2015 by taking up PS04 variety. They are able to get a yield in the range of 50-60 quintals, which they sell at INR 2,300/- per quintal and are able to earn around INR 45,000/- from scented rice alone every year. They also grow other cereal crops such as wheat, normal paddy, vegetables, and fruits organically. Their overall income after coming in touch with ASA grown from INR 50,000 to INR 1,80,000/- today using improved agricultural techniques and better inputs. Gayatri says that ASA should provide more training on organic farming to other farmers so that they are able to grow crops such as scented rice and earn their incomes and wellbeing in a clean environment.

“Growing scented rice and other crops organically does not only keep the crops from getting any disease but the farmers also remain disease-free along with increasing their incomes”, Gayatri Kewat, Scented Paddy Farmer.

Uttarabai Singh from Bhedwatola village in Anuppur district with a similar landholding as Ranjana introduced the PS-04 variety of scented rice on 1.5 acres of her land with ASA's assistance while growing normal paddy on the remaining portion. She was able to get a harvest of 11 quintals of scented rice last year, which was sold for INR22,000/- to Kapildhara FPC. She says that the main advantage of growing scented rice organically and using SRI techniques is that there is less use of labor and saving in the cost of chemical fertilizers and pesticides since they are replaced by home-produced bio-fertilizers and pesticides are used. She uses the additional income to provide quality education to her two children.

Beshahan Prajapati from Chukan village in Anuppur district has been dedicating 2 acres of her 5-acre plot for cultivating scented rice since 2015 while growing other cereal crops and vegetables on the remaining field. She derives an output of 20 quintals, the sale of which provides her an annual receipt of INR 40,000/-. Beshahan is happy with the additional income and saved costs on account of the elimination of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. She has used her savings to build a pukka house.

“The scented paddy offers me a higher price along with savings in various farm inputs, I am happy to spend my savings to finance the engineering course that my elder daughter is pursuing at a local polytechnic”, Beshahan Prajapati, Scented Paddy Farmer.

Smelling Agri Gains
through Scented Rice