

August 30, 2012

A new onion variety that brings tears of joy



The farmer has distributed the seeds to about thousand farmers in Haryana

Seventeen years of painstaking effort in developing and maintaining a new onion variety by a small farmer, Balwan Singh from Haryana, bore fruit when the National Innovation Foundation – India (NIF) under the leadership of Prof Anil Gupta recognised this variety at the national level. NIF honoured the farmer in its sixth biennial award ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi recently.

This onion variety named “Balwan Pyaj” has a longer shelf life as compared to other commercial varieties due to its tightly adhered bulb skin.

The variety’s yield per hectare is over 30 tonnes, and is believed to be resistant to pests and diseases occurring in onion. Its dark red coloured globular shaped bulbs with about 50-60 gm weight, appear more attractive than common ones with firm, bright red coloured, bulbs yielding about 20 tonnes per hectare. That is the new variety developed by the farmers yields nearly 50 tonnes.

Many years back Mr. Balwan Singh brought some onions from a neighbouring village. He observed the bulbs to be large in size, red in colour, and the skin to be tight.

Being an experienced farmer, he knew that good quality plants yield good fruits bulbs hence he started grading and breeding this particular onion through selection, considering parameters such as the plant health, tightly adhered bulb skin, size and well shaped red coloured bulbs. Year after year, he repeated the same process to purify the variety and stabilise its characteristics. After many years of perseverance he could finally develop this variety.

The family also maintained the year wise performance data for the crop, which exhibited good performance. "It is just persistence that kept him going. He did not do it for honours or recognition," says Prof Gupta about the entire process.

NIF facilitated that the testing of variety at the Vegetable Research Farm, Department of Vegetable Science, Choudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, Haryana during 2010-11. According to the results, the onion variety showed significantly higher yield (of more than 30 tonnes/ha), bulb weight and bulb diameter, than existing variety named Hisar-2.

Other features, which distinguish this variety, are dark green colour of foliage, good thickness of rings, a predominant axis and symmetrical cross section.

The farmer has distributed the seed of his variety to about a thousand farmers of Haryana and around. He specially recognises the support of scientists of the Haryana Agriculture University who guided him from time to time, and helped him with technological updates.

NIF also provided him an opportunity to display his variety at the Innovations' Exhibition at the President House in 2011.

He has been participating in different agricultural exhibitions of agricultural products and winning prizes as well. His work has been covered in local as well as national media.

"There are hundreds of brilliant solutions to tackle everyday problems in many villages. What we need is an honest effort to look out for them and then the patience to try them. In fact many of these solutions are simpler and more effective than those provided by formal science. In some cases such grassroots solutions even extend the frontiers of science," says Mr. Gupta.

The foundation has been systematically documenting several hundreds of innovations from different parts of rural India and providing the innovators with a platform to present their findings. Many of these grassroots developments though appearing to be simple can be easily replicated and used by others.

To know more interested readers can contact the farmer Mr. Balwan Singh, PO: Shivana village: Alakhpura, Bhiwani, Haryana, Mobile: 09992696963 and email Prof Anil Gupta at anilgb@gmail.com

Source: web.thehindu@thehindu.co.in Copyright © 2012, The Hindu