

Growing crops is futile without providing value addition



Good returns: Women Self-Help Groups being trained in making value added products.

Cultivating is futile without processing and value addition, especially when our farmers are struggling to find ways to increase their income from farms. Local value added agricultural food production is an important strategy to sustain many small and marginal farmers. In addition to generating good returns, value addition can open new marketing channels, create recognition for the farmer, and expand the market season (that is availability of a particular product under value addition can be effected all through the year).

Local economy

Usually, for value addition, some inputs are purchased nearby, local manpower is hired and the finished product is sold in the local market. More importantly, the income generated out of this enterprise keeps circling within the local economy and does not flow outside. Processing facilities established in production and growing areas can render enhanced availability of raw materials at reduced costs and at the same time increase employment to rural people.

Processing centres

Realizing the importance of post harvest processing in rural areas and the problems faced by farmers in achieving the same, researchers at the Post Harvest Technology Centre (PHTC) at the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Gandhi Krishi Vigyan Kendra (GKVK), Bangalore,

have embarked on a project to establish rural Agro-processing Centres to promote processing of agricultural produce locally. According to Dr. B. Ranganna, Professor & Research Engineer of the Centre, the PHTC is a pioneer in the country in establishing agro-processing centres. Over 16 such centres have been established so far in southern Karnataka and a majority of them are located in the production areas. Out of these centres, six are fully managed by women self help groups. Essentially, these centres consist of need-based post harvest processing equipment that address the needs of crops grown in villages. Supported by different funding agencies, these centres are managed by the farmers co-operative societies, village panchayats, youth associations and women self-help groups,” he said.

Profit margin

The equipment for these centres are housed in a building spared by the villagers on a nominal rent. Processing tariffs are levied with a small margin of profit. In addition to providing employment, these centres have been able to generate reasonable profits annually. The groups are trained on the use and operation of processing machines by our experts. For taking up value addition activities, women groups are given hands-on training in various product preparations and marketing specific to their location and crops.

Minimal processing

“These established centres provide processing facilities to farmers at low tariff rates. Also, the women self-help groups are encouraged to use locally available raw material with minimal processing and prepare cereals and food legume blended products that can be consumed by the local people to enhance protein-calorie intake. To initiate value addition activities, select women members in different self help groups are chosen and given intensive training in preparation of value added products from different crop produces.

Raw materials

The choice of the value added products to be manufactured will depend on the availability of raw materials in the area where the processing unit is proposed to be set up and the consumer preference in the neighbouring markets. The market for these products is usually found in the neighbourhood of their own villages.

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