

Bee Keeping as a Source of Supplementary Income for Improved Livelihoods: A Success Story of ARYA Project in East Champaran

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Mostly the people of the villages in Mehsi block of East Champaran are engaged in farming and animal husbandry and farm labour. The farmers of this village are also engaged in growing vegetables and spice crops for sale in the nearest markets. Mr Vijay Kumar was not able to maintain his family with farming occupation alone earlier. He earned 2-3 lakhs rupees annually by selling

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honey and bee colonies in nearby markets and at district level market. He set good example for enabling extra income along with agriculture. He established bee keeping unit in his farm along with agricultural crops. After establishing his venture, he is able to meet the local demand by providing good quality of honey and bee colonies to villagers. Despite earlier challenges like lack of market for his honey and difficulty in managing his colonies during the summer, Mr. Kumar has dramatically changed his life and that of his family through the sale of honey and honeybee colonies

Keywords: Livelihoods; beekeeping; supplementary income; agriculture.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mostly the people of the villages in Mehshi block of East Champaran are engaged in farming and animal husbandry and farm labour. The farmers of this village are also engaged in growing vegetables and spice crops for sale in the nearest markets. It is alarming that the growth rates of productivity have declined for overall period for most of the crops except wheat, arhar, oil seeds and potato. This is somewhat a matter of great concern, when all efforts are towards increasing yields with the help of implementation of new cultivation technologies [1]. The youth of this village and surrounding area migrate to Motihari city for employment. Processing and value addition of agricultural commodities are helpful in increasing the income of the farming community [2-4]. Throughout history honey has been a popular sweetener in nearly all cultures. However it can also be considered as a true 'food' source. Especially in places where limited food variety or quantity creates nutrient imbalances, both honey and pollen are highly welcome nutritional enrichments [5-7]. Farmer's income can be doubled by socio-technical interventions with the approach of increasing production and productivity and reducing costs of cultivation and human labour through mechanization, better grading and packaging of produce, and promoting local level processing with better drying and storage [8]. There is need to promote processing and value addition of agricultural commodities in order to enhance diversification with a view to raise the income of the farming community.

2. PROFILE OF MR. VIJAY KUMAR

Mr. Vijay Kumar is a small land holding farmer of the village Rajepur. Initially he was engaged in growing field crops. According to him being eldest son in the family, he did not have the childhood life he desired. He lost his father at a very young age and thus could not continue proper schooling education. The sudden loss of

his father and his poor economic status put him under stress. Due to lack of alternative sources of employment and income, he involved himself with agriculture.

Mr. Kumar continued to face economic problems due to limited land resource and lack of capital. His desire was to start an enterprise which required minimal capital outlay but offered high returns, which was not the case with traditional farming. Consequently, he started beekeeping with Italian honey bee (*Apis mellifera ligustica*) on advice from Krishi Vigyan Kendra, a scientist from Piprakothi. He started bee keeping with 15 bee colonies besides farming.

He came in contact with KVK, Piprakothi through Krishi mela. He participated in field demonstration and training of scientific bee keeping. Based on his skill and knowledge, he was being advised and encouraged to establish bee keeping unit at his farm by KVK, Piprakothi.

3. HIS BEEKEEPING SUCCESS

He established bee keeping unit in his farm along with agricultural crops. After establishing his venture, he is able to meet the local demand by providing good quality of honey and bee colonies to villagers. He has built trust with his clients over time by providing good quality honey. Presently, he has approximately 200 bee colonies which are in very good condition, producing about 130 quintal of honey and earning about 2-3 lakhs annually by selling honey and colonies besides he earns from agriculture annually. Beside involvement in production of honey, he has played a very important role in disseminating this technology to the other unemployed rural youth and motivating them to get involved in remunerative bee keeping through KVK, Piprakothi. He is intelligent in marketing and advertises about his enterprise as quick as possible and win the faith of farmers.



Fig. 1. Training programme on bee keeping organized by KVK Piprakothi under ARYA project



Fig. 2. Critical inputs distribution to the beneficiaries trained bee keeping under ARYA project

4. CONCLUSION

Despite earlier challenges like lack of market for his honey and difficulty in managing his colonies during the summer, Mr. Kumar has dramatically changed his life and that of his family through the sale of honey and honeybee colonies.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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