

Mushroom cultivation an ideal Entrepreneurial venture for the groups

Background

Commercial production of edible Mushrooms converts the agricultural, industrial, forestry and household wastes into nutritious food (Mushroom). Indoor cultivation of oyster mushrooms utilizes the vertical space and is regarded as the highest protein producer per unit area and time – almost 100 times more than the conventional agriculture and animal husbandry. This high tech horticulture venture has a promising scope to meet the food shortages without undue pressure on land. Considering this vital point KVK has taken up the mushroom cultivation-training program to farmers and rural youth in a larger way.

Intervention Process

Mr. A. Arul Doss of 48 years old from Keela surandai regularly attending our On Campus Training Program on Oyster Mushroom Cultivation and Value addition from 2014 onwards and he has inspired upon this aspect. He approached us frequently and we have imparted intensive practical training on Oyster mushroom Cultivation and its value addition. Under our guidance, he has established a Mushroom unit of 20'x10'x8' size in a small scale during the same year. He invested Rs. 50000/- as fixed capital for starting this Mushroom unit and he spent nearly Rs. 10000/- as working capital for purchasing hay, spawn, packing cover etc. We also ensured him to get quality spawn. Initially he struggled to market oyster mushroom, as most of the people are not aware about the importance of (medicinal and nutritional value) oyster mushroom. We have given constant encouragements to him by guiding and helping in marketing aspects.

Intervention Technology

- Conducting On and Off campus training on Oyster Mushroom Cultivation and its value addition
- Marketing strategies and tie up
- Motivation and encouragement to establish Mushroom unit

Challenges and Scope in Oyster Mushroom

Mr. Arul doss shared his experience that during Diwali and other festival time the people forced to consume non-vegetarian. During that period, they found difficult to market the fresh oyster mushrooms. Therefore, they forced to think about value adding their produce. They thought of dehydrating the oyster mushrooms again they find difficult to market locally as it becomes still costlier after drying. Finally, with small margin they started producing mushroom pickles as a value added product in a small scale of 5Kg/week.

Through KVK support, they standardized this mushroom pickle product and started selling along with fresh mushrooms. Initially the people were reluctance to buy the mushroom pickles. However, after tasting the product they came forward to purchase the mushroom pickles. Even though they fetch low margin of

Rs.30/Kg they were able to value-add otherwise these mushrooms would have wasted. The left over mushroom beds are value added as live stock feed and compost.

Impact Horizontal Spread

Meanwhile on seeing the success, he also motivated five rural youths of his village namely Mr.Pratheep Kumar, Mr.Moorthi, Mr.Sankaralingam, Mr.Subramanian and Mr.Vellapan for oyster mushroom cultivation. Mr. Aruldoss brought these five people for mushroom cultivation training to KVK and helped them in establishing their own mushroom unit. Now they are jointly selling their produce locally through door-by-door sales for regular consumer, retail vegetable shop, WSHG's, Uzhavar Santhai etc.

They coined their group name and brand name as Royal. They have a plan to form Joint Liability Group to get financial assistance from bank to upgrade their enterprise. Through our initiative all, the five members along with Mr. Arul Doss are running their Mushroom units successfully with our continuous technical support and marketing tie up. Because of their interest and involvement, they get more profit and this helps to sustain their venture even in critical situations. On seeing this success, many of the un employed rural youth and women SHG members got motivated and wanted to start a mushroom unit at their end.

Impact Economic Gains

At present, he gets mushroom yield on an average of 800gm to 1kg per bed of 12"x24" cover size. He maintains 250 to 300 bags in his mushroom shed. Along with his other farm work he able to grow and market the mushrooms as supplementary income. Out of this mushroom cultivation, he earns Rs 10,000 to 12,000 per month as profit. In addition to this he also earns Rs. 600/month through mushroom pickle and he earn Rs. 3750/month additionally by selling vermicompost.

Impact on Employment Generation

The Royal group members spend only 2 to 3 hrs per days in preparing the mushroom beds, watering and harvesting the mushrooms daily. Employment generation can be created for about 120 – 150 man-days per year per individual through mushroom cultivation and its value addition.