

# Women-led farm initiatives

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By using organic farming methods, developing connections with markets, generating income, and enhancing their own and their communities' quality of life, two women entrepreneurs are making impact in spreading organic agriculture. Additionally, they are encouraging and supporting other women to pursue organic farming as a viable and long-term career.

Women entrepreneurs play a vital role in the rural economy and contribute to food security, poverty reduction, and gender equality. Some of the opportunities rural farm women have are in increasing demand for organic and healthy food. While organic farming is beneficial for health and environment, yet women face several challenges in

building an enterprise related to organic farming owing to lack of access to land, credit, markets, technology, training and extension services. Here are two examples of successful women-led farming initiatives where they overcame barriers and emerged successful.

## Mrs. Hitesh Choudhary

Mrs. Hitesh Choudhary belongs to Chak Chaavi village in the district Amroha district, Uttar Pradesh. As a progressive woman farmer, the main objective of Mrs. Hitesh was to increase farmer's income through agricultural activities. Initially, she used to grow wheat, lemon grass, sugarcane, turmeric and mustard by adopting traditional methods of cultivation.

She is a person who is always keen to adopt new ideas and technologies in farming. She channelised her energies in few areas. She worked on organic lemon grass cultivation; maintaining nutritional Kitchen Gardens; developed expertise in organic input production techniques; motivated and trained fellow farmers on organic farming.

After participating in the Training of Trainers program organized by Patanjali Organic Research Institute, Haridwar during 2018, she started farming by organic and natural methods. She is currently growing mustard, vegetables, lemon grass, wheat, sugarcane, turmeric and guava in 2-acre land. She has also converted large chunks of land to organic cultivation.

As part of nutritional garden, she grows, Onion, Potato, Carrot, Radish, Spinach, Coriander, Cabbage, Fenugreek Banana Fruit Plants Papaya, Brinjal, Sweet Potato, Turnip Guava Plants, Arbi, Bottle Gourd, Luffa.

She started using the manures and fertilizers prepared through natural methods, namely, *Beejamrut*,





*Panchagavya, Jeevamrut and Ghanjeevamrut.* She used cow dung in preparing compost. She collects and uses Cow urine in preparing natural farming inputs which are helping her with huge savings on inputs for crop production.

She sells Lemon grass oil, wheat, sugarcane, mustard, sorghum, turmeric direct to customers and in Mandi. She uses Organic Vegetables, cereals and mustard grown for home consumption. She has considerably improved her incomes, rather doubled her income through adopting organic farming methods.

Initially she faced many challenges at family and societal level. Without any family or monetary support, she started her journey with self-conviction and now she has reached this position where she is helping others in the field of organic farming. She supports several SHGs groups and FPO in Amroha district.

Mrs. Hitesh was honored as progressive and innovative farmer with awards conferred by Social Organizations



and District Administration, She received honours from Directorate, Min of Agriculture, GOI; VC, Sardar Vallabhbai Patel University; Ministry of Agriculture, Uttar Pradesh, and also Governor of UP. Her name has been also recommended for the Padma Shri award by the Uttar Pradesh Government.



## Mrs Savita J. Yelne

Mrs. Savita J. Yelane belonging to village Kanhapur, Wardha Dist. Maharashtra, started organic farming in the year 2008 in one acre land. She was trained by the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) based in Secunderabad, Telangana. Subsequently, she also attended training organized by the State Agriculture Department, Maharashtra. During an exposure visit, she visited the organic farm of Mr. Subhash Sharma, known as 'smart farmer' across Maharashtra. After shifting to organic farming on 6-acre land in 2012, subsequently, she bought another 3 acres of land under organic farming. She is associated with "Maharashtra Rajya Jeevan Unnati Abhiyan", through which she is now imparting training in organic farming to the women of Wardha district. She is a member of Yogahaar programme of Patanjali Organic Research institute (PORI) which is especially a dedicated program to organic farming. Presently she is also selected as a trainer farmer by PORI. She shares her experiences from time to time to the aspirant organic farmers. Nearby farmers are getting motivated by the work of Savita and now more than 30 farmers have started growing organic food, especially for their own consumption and also selling the surpluses. She has converted about 15 acres of land into fully organic and about 50-acre land into 50% organic.

Slowly she started selling her farm produce outside her farm on Wardha-Nagpur road. Her organic shop is located at Wardha Nagpur national highway. There she sells seasonal vegetables, wheat flour, pulses, mustard, coriander and fenugreek seeds and sugarcane juice. Crops in which she does processing and value addition are wheat, sugarcane, mustard, and pigeon pea. She sells the sugarcane juice during the summer season mainly in May-June from her outlet. She is selling all her farm vegetables, processed chick pea (chana) and pigeon pea (toor), turmeric powder and papaya. Soybean and remaining pigeon pea is sold in mandi at market rates. People like to buy the Organic/Natural product from her shop because she is selling all her farm products at



market rates without charging any premium price for organic.

Mrs. Sarita was honored by Taluka and district level authorities for her efforts in innovative organic farming practices such as use of compost, vermicompost and other organic sources for nutrient management, mulching, crop rotation etc

She is an individual entrepreneur. Mrs. Savita told during her conversation that *"during initial stages she faced resistance from the society. People used to say that she is crazy, she doesn't understand her husband, she does farming herself but now things have changed and they also started practicing organic farming."* She has also motivated and trained near-by farmers to practice organic farming.

Mrs. Savita is happy with her journey and has been able to provide desirable education to her children. Her daughter has recently completed B.E. and her son has also completed MSc. Agriculture. Her husband and children also help in farm management.

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