

Mushroom Cultivation-A Boon to Rural Poor (Case Study)

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Growing of Oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus species*) is an ideal income generating activity for the landless women and unemployed youth (Kumar and Bindra Ban, 1994). Labour intensive nature, significant value addition, dependence on locally available, abundant and cheap raw material (straw), low initial investment, simple technology and limited space requirement make it a worthwhile proposition. This transfer of technology aims at giving a comprehensive description of the methodology posed, in enabling the resource poor illiterate landless women to undertake an apparently sophisticated mushroom cultivation technology, as a supplementary source of income. Mushroom as a diet material plays an important role in rural and urban areas (Kaul, 1978). Women can be actively involved in this activity and can be an integral part of any development programmer involving mainly women (Xavier and Kumuthakalavalli, 1998).

It has been proved that mushroom cultivation once considered to be a commercial enterprise of a few resource endowed entrepreneurs, can now taken up by resource poor illiterate rural women also, provided efficient technical guidance, timely initial support and proper motivation given to them (Savithri et al., 1996).

Mayilu is a married lady staying with her husband and two children at Annanagar quite nearer to Gandhigram Rural institute where mushroom centre is imparting training to rural people. Her husband, a coconut vendor could earn a very little money with which they could not maintain the family. Hence Mayilu has engaged herself in agricultural labour. By this, she could earn Rs.10/- per day. Her monthly income never exceeded Rs. 250/-. They met hardship in running the family.

The extension programme on technology transfer of oyster mushroom conducted by the mushroom project, Department of Biology of Gandhigram Rural institute (Deemed University), has motivated Mayilu to get training on

this venture to seek self employment and improve income. She has undergone 15 days training programme on the cultivation, marketing and preservation aspects of oyster mushroom. On completion of the training she had hired a site, built a thatched shed with the size of 30x20 feet for cultivating mushrooms. The mushroom spawn bottles had been supplied to her from the centre and technical guidance also given.

She had cultivated mushroom efficiently in the local situation and made the secondary sources of income. She could produce around 5 kg of fresh mushroom every day, sell it in the local areas and get a profit of Rs.100/- per day.

With a view to provide full employment for herself and her husband, she has established a medium size mushroom unit with tissue culture room and spawn preparation room by spending Rs.12000/- (This amount was generated by her through sale of mushroom).

The daily production of mushroom at this farm has developed a demand among the hotel owners of this district. On payment of advance, orders have been placed with Mayilu by these people for the regular mushroom supply. This success story had developed a confidence in her to lead a prosperous life.

The officers of the mushroom project Gandhigram, suggested to apply for loan in the bank for farm establishment. Due to continuous efforts, hard work, encouragement from the family, motivation from the project officials and adoption of low cost technology a farm labour become the owner of a mushroom farm.

Now a days scientists are also trying to establish a relationship between the removal of poverty and achieving a higher quality of life. In most of development efforts, the emphasis has been on economic development without trying to improve the quality of life of the rural poor. Therefore, till the end of this century

our goal should be not only to initiate economic development but also a process which will improve the quality of life through an integrated effort.

KEY WORDS Socio-economic Development. Commercial Enterprises.

ABSTRACT The need of the hour is to evolve a rural development approach by technical empowerment for the upliftment of women. The cultivation of mushroom is labour intensive and provides opportunities to landless labourers weaker section of the society in our country. The socioeconomic development of rural women through mushroom cultivation is briefly analyzed in this paper.

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