



Vegetable gardening:

Boon for Agri-farmers of Punjab

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Agriculture in Indian economy is a main source of livelihood security because more than 50% of population depends upon agricultural sector directly or indirectly. In the rural areas, its importance is more relevant. Many experts and policy makers give more importance to horticultural crops such as vegetables, fruits as well as production of flowers. Vegetables are not only important as protective food and highly beneficial for the maintenance of health and prevention of disease, but also a source of livelihood security for farmers. The kitchen gardening has been found to play a crucial role in improving food security for the resource poor rural households in developing countries. Sale of surplus production from kitchen gardening provides direct source of income to family as well as income is procured from the savings achieved by not buying the same commodities from the market. Current article describes the success story of Sh. Jagtar Singh a beneficiary farmer under Farmer FIRST Project in adopted village Moom of Barnala district, Punjab. He has adopted vegetable gardening as an entrepreneurial venture and earning the profit from this worthy venture.

Keywords: Boon, Farmers, Vegetable gardening, Venture

INDIAN agriculture has experienced a considerable degree of crop diversification in terms of changes in the area under various crops since the green revolution, which has largely been in favour of food grains to meet the objective of self-sufficiency and country's food security. But during the last one decade, the changes in cropping pattern are more towards the horticulture sector. Coming to the current scenario in Punjab, paddy and wheat yield have reached the point where only a marginal increase in level of production per acre is possible. Serious repercussions are being felt in form of resource depletion, soil degradation, nutrient deficiency and fall in ground water table. Heavy doses of fertilizers and chemicals are further causing environmental degradation. The current scenario presents three major challenges, viz. the maintenance of food security for the ever growing population; the maintenance and enhancement of agricultural profitability and lastly, the maintenance and improvement of environmental quality where increasing the area under vegetable farming has number of advantages. In the wake of these constraints, the need has been felt to propagate crop diversification in Punjab. Therefore, multiple cropping systems have been recommended by the scientists. Vegetable/nutritional gardening is a technology which enables us to grow bacteria free fresh vegetables at home. Increased health awareness, high population growth

rate, changing dietary patterns of increasingly affluent middle class and availability of packaged vegetables has generated high demand for vegetables round the year. Nutritional gardening contributes to household food security by providing direct access to food that can be harvested, prepared and fed to family members, often on a daily basis. Even very poor, landless or near landless people can practice gardening on small patches of homestead land, vacant lots, roadsides or edges of a field, or in containers. Vegetable gardening may be done with very less resources, using locally available planting materials, green manures, bio-fencing and indigenous methods of pest control. In order to preserve health and prevent malnutrition, we should promote the farmers to develop a nutritional garden to grow fresh and clean vegetables and make them a part of our daily diet.

Success story of Sh. Jagtar Singh

Jagtar Singh 58 years old farmer, beneficiary since 2016-17, under Farmer FIRST project, implemented by GADVASU, Ludhiana in adopted village Moom of block Mehel Kalan in Barnala district, Punjab is one of the perfect example of a marginal farmer who is doing nutritional gardening at a good scale. He was practicing agriculture from a long time in his 6 acres of land and had two buffaloes. He was not earning much profit from agriculture venture due to less productivity, more



Glimpses of Nutritional gardening venture started by Sh. Jagtar Singh (FFP beneficiary farmer)

expenditure and was getting very less net returns. He was cultivating two crops (rice-wheat monoculture) every year on his land. Under this project, he showed keen interest for vegetable cultivation and was trained by the experts to grow the summer and winter vegetables. Winter and summer vegetable kits were provided to him in order to diversify the routine agricultural practices through nutritional gardening interventions. Jagtar Singh found this venture quite lucrative and started growing vegetables on his land on routine basis. Now, he is practicing vegetable gardening from last five years.

Jagtar Singh took training and routine advice from horticulture experts in the project team and saved his input cost by cultivating different types of vegetables on his agricultural land. He started growing lemon, cabbage, cauliflower, turnip, radish, carrot in winters (*rabi*) season and okra, brinjal, cucumber, chilly, squash melon, bitter gourd, bottle gourd, long melon in summer (*kharif*) season. After taking expert advice from GADVASU and PAU about vegetable cultivation, he started implementing protected techniques like managing weed and pests, timely irrigation which further helped him in increasing yield and maintaining fertility of the soil. He does nutritional gardening on 1.5 acres of his land. Earlier, along with agricultural crops, he was getting net profit of ₹86,276/year/acre but with the vegetable gardening intervention, he is earning net worth of ₹1,90,00/year/acre showing considerable growth in his income. He further mentioned that wheat and paddy took 6 months for the whole cultivation process and one could not grow another crop on that land whereas in vegetable cultivation one can grow 4–5 crops on the same land as their cultivation process takes less time. He sells his vegetables in nearby villages and earns good profit.

Jagtar Singh is a very active farmer on social media.

He frequently takes the help of social media for sharing his knowledge and experience on kitchen gardening. He keeps on reading horticulture based articles from magazines and internet. He uses WhatsApp and Facebook groups to promote this venture. Other farmers usually take advice from him and he motivates other beneficiaries to adopt this venture. He is planning to expand his venture by cultivating more vegetables and covering more area of his land. Moreover he plans to sell his vegetables in the main market of the city and making strong linkages with the stakeholders. He is taking keen interest towards this intervention and many other fellow farmers have started nutritional gardening after getting motivated from him.

SUMMARY

Jagtar Singh serves as a perfect example for the promotion of nutritional/vegetable gardening venture. He has not only created livelihood as well as nutritional security for himself but also motivated other beneficiary as well as non-beneficiary farmers of the operational area. He serves as a role model for small and marginal farmers who can earn lots of profit from adopting this lucrative and profit making venture. He is also providing desired knowledge and skills regarding vegetable gardening to the fellow farmers who are new in this venture by guiding them and showing the results on his demonstration farm. He is making good efforts so that more and more number of fellow farmers of his village or nearby villages are able to adopt this intervention as an entrepreneurial venture and can earn more and more profit from this exemplary enterprise.

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