

Kisan mela: Empowering emerging entrepreneurs in agriculture and allied sectors

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The Directorate of Extension Education plays a leading role in organizing the “All-India Farmer’s Fair and Agro Industrial Exhibition” popularly known as Kisan Mela, held twice annually before the rabi and kharif seasons. All Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) under the jurisdiction of G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, along with their Self-Help Groups (SHGs) showcase their technologies and products during this event. Each of the four days of the mela is highly significant for farmers, as distinct activities are conducted daily to encourage and empower them. Sponsorship for SHG stalls is provided by various institutions, including NABARD, which helps enhance the visibility and participation of these groups. Farmers bring their unique products and innovative ideas, significantly increasing the mela’s appeal and impact. A key highlight of the mela is the Krishi Gosthi, conducted throughout all four days. This interactive forum serves as a game-changer for farmers by providing valuable knowledge, insights, and opportunities for direct engagement, ultimately fostering agricultural growth and innovation.

Keywords: Extension, Kisan mela, Krishi gosthi, KVKs, Self Help Groups

ESTABLISHED in 1960, Govind Ballabh Pant University of Agriculture and Technology (GBPUA&T), Pantnagar also known as Harbinger of Green Revolution, holds the distinction of being the first agricultural university in the nation. Renowned for its significant contributions to agricultural sciences, technology, engineering, and allied fields, the university plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of agriculture. Offering a wide range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programmes across diverse disciplines such as agriculture, horticulture, veterinary science and engineering, university is committed to excellence in education and research. With state-of-the-art facilities and a steadfast focus on enhancing agricultural practices and sustainability, the university continues to be a leader in advancing agricultural innovation and improving the livelihoods of farmers. The Directorate of Extension

Education of the university plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between scientific research and practical farming applications. Directorate of Extension Education organizes “All India Farmers’ Fair and Agro Industrial Exhibition” also known as “Krishi Kumbh” to showcase the latest agricultural advancements, fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration among farmers, researchers and industry players. This fair is organized twice in a year. One before the *kharif* season and another before the *rabi* season i.e. *kharif* mela and *rabi* mela. Over the period from 2019–21, the average attendance for the *rabi* mela was recorded at 3,333, while the *kharif* mela saw an average attendance of 6,278. However, between 2022 and 2024, there was a significant increase in attendance. The *kharif* mela recorded an average of 10,500 attendees, while the *rabi* mela saw a remarkable rise to an average of 22,500 attendees.

Kisan mela

The dissemination of the latest agricultural technologies and information plays a crucial role in driving agricultural development. It serves as a vital method of extension education, helping farmers stay informed and adopt innovative practices. Over the years, this approach has gained significant momentum, proving to be an effective means of empowering farmers and enhancing agricultural productivity.

Main attractions of kisan mela

On the inaugural day of each mela, a vibrant horticultural exhibition is held at the mela ground, where farmers are recognized and awarded for their unique produce in various categories, including fruits, vegetables, and floriculture. This event celebrates their innovation and dedication to advancing agricultural practices. The second day of the mela features the highly anticipated cattle auction at the Institutional

Dairy Farm in Nagla, drawing farmers from across the nation to showcase their prized livestock in a competitive and lively atmosphere. On the third day, attention shifts to the fisheries sector with a captivating exhibition, where farmers display different species of aquatic life, demonstrating the growth and advancements in fisheries practices. Throughout all three days, the “*Krishi Gosthi*” served as a vital platform for farmers from diverse regions to engage with scientists and seek expert advice. This interactive session offers solutions and guidance to help farmers to enhance their agricultural practices and address challenges faced in the field.



Interaction of Hon'ble Governor with SHG members

Fourth day of mela starts with the essence of valedictory session generally held at Gandhi Auditorium of the University. The valedictory session commences under the chairmanship of eminent guests, often graced by the Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand, who serves as the Chancellor of the University. On this occasion, the Governor addresses the assembled farmers and students, congratulating them on their remarkable growth and achievements in their respective fields. In his inspiring speech, the Governor praised the dedication, resilience, and contributions of farming community. Valedictory session concluded with a formal prize and certificate distribution ceremony, recognizing the hard work and achievements of the participants. This moment celebrates the remarkable efforts of those who have excelled in various agricultural domains.

Significance of kisan mela for farmers

The kisan mela plays a pivotal role in the empowerment and

upliftment of farmers, offering them a unique platform to share their innovations and insights with fellow farmers across the nation. The kisan mela serves as a vibrant gathering that brings together the rural community, providing them an opportunity to showcase their creativity and agricultural advancements to a global audience. Held at the iconic “Gandhi Park” within Pantnagar University, the event sees participation from a wide range of stakeholders, including agricultural input supply companies, banks, cooperatives, Self Help Groups, NGOs, and various government departments. These entities come together to exhibit their diverse approaches in transferring agricultural technologies, thus ensuring that farmers are equipped with the tools and knowledge needed to enhance their productivity and livelihoods.

Advantages of kisan mela

Exposure to the visitors: The kisan mela offers an excellent opportunity to increase exposure to visitors, particularly farmers and agricultural enthusiasts. By participating in this event, farmers can engage with a wide range of agricultural products, services, and innovations, gaining valuable insights into the latest farming techniques and technologies. It serves as a platform for knowledge exchange, where visitors can connect with experts, learn about new agricultural practices, and explore solutions to enhance their farming methods. Additionally, the kisan mela fosters networking opportunities, allowing visitors to interact with progressive farmers, suppliers, and industry professionals, ultimately contributing to their personal and professional growth.

Socialization: The kisan mela provides a unique platform for socialization, where farmers, industry professionals, and agricultural enthusiasts can come together and engage in meaningful conversations. This event encourages the exchange of ideas, experiences and best practices

fostering a sense of community among participants. Through networking opportunities, visitors can build valuable relationships with peers, experts, and suppliers, which can lead to collaborative ventures and enhanced knowledge sharing. Socialization at the kisan mela not only promotes personal growth but also helps in the collective advancement of the agricultural sector, creating a stronger and more informed farming community.

Awareness among farmers: The kisan mela plays a crucial role in the dissemination of modern agricultural techniques, offering farmers a valuable opportunity to learn about the latest advancements in farming practices. Through interactive sessions, live demonstrations, visits and expert talks, farmers are introduced to innovative technologies, tools, and methods that can significantly enhance productivity and sustainability.

Farmers get chance to showcase their unique production systems: The kisan mela offers farmers a valuable opportunity to showcase their unique agricultural productions, allowing them to display their hard work and innovation. By participating in the event, farmers can highlight their distinctive crops, livestock, or products, gaining recognition for their efforts. This platform not only boosts their visibility but also provides a chance to receive feedback from industry experts, potential buyers, and fellow farmers. It fosters a spirit of pride and accomplishment while encouraging the exchange of ideas, which can inspire further improvements and innovations in their farming practices. The kisan mela, thus, empowers farmers to celebrate and share their contributions to the agricultural sector.

Importance of kisan mela for self-help groups

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are formed by individuals who come together to address common issues, share resources, and provide mutual support. These groups from across the nation participate in kisan

Table 1. Transformative impact of kisan mela on income generation by self-help groups

Product	Type	Year and season								
		Kharif 2023			Rabi 2023			Kharif 2024		
		CP	SP	Profit (%)	CP	SP	Profit (%)	CP	SP	Profit (%)
Processed Millet	Biscuit, namkeen, cake	10,200	2,97,00	191.17	8,40,000	15,40,000	83.33	9,14,000	17,45,500	88.36
Handicrafts	Baskets, pen stand, coater (moonj grass)	14,200	34,000	139.4	1,60,000	3,25,000	103.12	3,06,500	9,48,000	209.29
Candle making	Scented candles	-	-	-	-	-	-	55,000	95,000	72.72
Agri produce	Seedlings and saplings	70,100	1,20,500	71.89	2,06,000	4,55,000	120.87	4,51,600	8,54,500	89.21
Value added products	Jam, jelly, pickle, candy	22,300	37,900	69.95	2,80,000	7,40,000	164.28	25,670	50,260	95.79

CP, Cost price; SP, Selling price.



Felicitation of SHG members by Honourable Vice Chancellor

mela to showcase and sell their products. The products offered can be categorized into the different categories like value-added food products, agricultural implements, crockery, artificial jewellery, utensils and cosmetics, etc. This diversity of products highlights the creativity and resourcefulness of SHGs, offering visitors a unique range of locally produced and high-quality processed agricultural products and their value-added products.

Farmers' products and participation

A significant variety of products such as processed millet-based products, handicrafts, agri-produce, and value-added goods are being sold by farmers. Notably, farmers are increasingly motivated to diversify their products like scented candles showing promising profitability. This shift not only broadens the scope of income-generating opportunities for farmers but also demonstrates a growing trend of entrepreneurship within the agricultural sector. The substantial profit margins across

various product categories further incentivize farmers to continue expanding their product range and capitalize on emerging market opportunities.

Farmers are continually enhancing their skills, and a notable improvement has been seen in their product offerings. Previously, farmers sold partially processed ghee in plastic bottles, which often led to a decline in product quality. To address this, Directorate of Extension Education in collaboration with Agri Business Management College and Department of Process and Food Engineering, Pantnagar organized a training session on branding, packaging, and promotions during the first two days of the mela. As a result, the quality of the products has significantly improved, and farmers are now receiving better prices for their goods. The shift from plastic bottles to glass jars for packaging ghee, pickles, jams, and other edibles has not only enhanced the storage quality but also contributed to presentation of

their product. Buyer-seller meets conducted by university on the third day of kisan mela has widened the market for farmers. It has enhanced the opportunities for the farmers to earn better profits.

The number of participants in both the *rabi* and *kharif* kisan melas is steadily increasing, highlighting the growing significance of these events. Additionally, there is a noticeable rise in the participation of female farmers and farmers from remote areas, demonstrating the inclusivity and wide-reaching impact of the melas. The variety of food items at the mela is expanding each day, with a growing emphasis on millet-based products. Female participants are actively promoting millets by offering ready-to-eat dishes such as millet momos, mushroom pakodi, and mushroom biryani. Their efforts have been widely appreciated, with the Governor of Uttarakhand acknowledging their contribution.

SUMMARY

Kisan mela acts as a platform for the farmers to showcase their innovative ideas and products. The participation of the female farmers has also increased over the years demonstrating inclusion and their active participation in enhancing livelihood. In addition, farmers can scale out their enterprise by meeting promising buyers besides improving their skills through training and exposure in kisan mela.

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