

Smt. Subhadra Kanwar's inspiring agricultural journey with natural farming

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Chemical farming injects toxic substances into the soil, fruits, and grains and could not be adopted as a long-term strategy. Farmers frequently incur significant debt as a result of their dependency on chemical inputs. In this regard, natural farming has emerged as a sustainable way to address these issues in recent years. This article presents the success story of Smt. Subhadra Kanwar, a natural farming woman farmer, who is becoming an inspiration to women farmers in her district. The inspiring journey of her consists of farm operations of cultivating crops and adopting mixed farming approach to the processing into value-added household and kitchen products.

Keywords: Diversification, Farm woman, Processed products, Sustainability, Soil health

CHEMICAL farming was introduced during Green Revolution to ensure food grain security to large population. Since, chemical fertilisers, pesticides, and weedicides injects toxic substances into the soil, fruits, and grains, it could not be adopted as a long-term strategy. There will never be an end to this cycle of mutual poisoning across the food chain. Hence, there is a need to give up chemical farming and adopt a sustainable farming practices. Natural farming is based on the principles of nature and thus sustainable for the long term. Natural farming, with its emphasis on biodiversity, soil health, and reduced chemical inputs, is gaining traction across India's agricultural landscape. Practices such as mulching (dry or live mulch), no-tillage, and intercropping provide high quality agricultural products and preserves ecosystem.

Smt. Subhadra Kanwar, a natural farming woman farmer, hails from Sujaila village, Solan, Hiamchal Pradesh. She is practicing natural farming in 12 bigha of land under rainfed conditions. Her primary sources of income are cultivation of vegetables, fruit crops, cereals, as well as processed and value-added farm products. She serves as an inspiration to women farmers in her district through her farming. Her journey to shift from the conventional farming to natural farming was not pre-decided. While attending training on beekeeping at Dr. Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry,

Nauni, Solan, she got an opportunity to attend a session by Padam Shri Subhash Palekar. She was motivated with the concepts and benefits of natural farming and then decided to resolutely switch from conventional farming to natural farming in 2018.

Her journey towards natural farming

After getting motivated by Padam Shri Subhash Palekar, Smt. Subhadra Kanwar approached Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Solan to get training on natural farming principles and practices. KVK Solan provided her training on natural farming in 2018. During this training programme, she visited the 'Sansadhan Bhandhar' of KVK along with field demonstrations of natural farming in plum, peach, apple, kiwifruit and capsicum + pea based farming system. These demonstrations highlighted the importance of intercrops, *acchadan* and *wapsa* in addition to the application of *jeevamrit* and *ghanjeevamrit*. Getting knowledge from the training and the being motivated with the results of KVK demonstrations, she started practicing natural farming in her farm. KVK Solan helped in creating her own 'Sansadhan Bhandhar' of natural farming inputs by providing the inputs at the beginning and also conducted the natural farming demonstrations in her farm providing her planting material of main crop and intercrops, dry grass for *acchadan* besides technical



Zero tillage and mulching

assistance. Soil samples were also analysed before and after the demonstrations which enabled her to know the status of soil health. To make the natural farming a real success, she also started rearing three Sahiwal cows.

Earlier, she was growing cauliflower, tomato and capsicum with conventional farming methods but her profit was decreasing every year with the exponential increase in input costs. Thus, motivated with the reduced input cost and health benefits of natural farming, she started adopting natural farming practices. She is now growing four different types of wheat and turmeric in addition to tomato, capsicum, cauliflower and other vegetables.



Intercropping and wapsa conditions in the field

Innovation, initiative and benefits

To cater the present day need of the farmers and also as a step to reduce farm wastage, natural farming was largely promoted by KVK Solan and ATMA. Keeping this in view, she has been nominated as one of the Bio-Input Resource Centres (BRCs). She is also

Table 1. Farming situations of the enterprise before and after KVK's intervention

Particulars	Before interventions	After interventions
Farming situation	Rainfed, Chemical farming	Rainfed, Natural farming
Area	3 acre	3 acre
Variety	Hybrid, Local	Local
Seed treatment	-	Seed treatment with <i>beejamrit</i>
Crops	Vegetable and cereal crops	Vegetable crops + cereal crops + Fruit crops + Cow rearing + Processed products
Intercropping	-	Leguminous crops
Mulching	-	Live mulch and dry grass mulch
Soil Sampling	-	Soil samples were analysed before and after the demonstrations
Nutrient management	Fertiliser application	Application of <i>jeevamrit</i> , <i>ghanjeevamrit</i> , green manuring crops, intercropping, mulching, etc.

been promoted as master trainer for natural farming trainings. Smt. Subhadra Kanwar is preparing her own natural farming inputs like *jeevamrit*, *ghan jeevamrit*, *beejamrit*, *keetnashee* and *rognashee dawayain* for soil enrichment and pest management. She is providing these inputs to the farm women of her area free of cost for the promotion and adoption of natural farming. She has considerably reduced the cost of cultivation involved for the purchase of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. With the continuous application of natural farming inputs, she has not only increased yields of vegetable and cereal crops but also maintain the soil health. 'With the application of natural farming inputs and reducing the application of chemical, I have noticed that the shelf life of vegetables has increased besides net returns', said Smt. Subhadra Kanwar. Along the net returns, benefic:cost ratio has increased considerably after adopting natural farming. Embracing a mixed-farming approach allowed her to harvest and sell crops throughout the year, securing a loyal customer base, even in advance for marriages, due to the freshness and taste of the produce.

Socio-economic impact

Smt. Subhadra Kanwar is an active member of her self-help group. She actively participated in the kisan melas organised at District/State level and displayed her natural farming products. Her natural farming products either fresh or processed were in great demand during these kisan melas. She is selling cow milk locally @ ₹90/L and cow ghee @ ₹1,200/kg. She has also started soap making from 2024 which surprisingly doubled her income, as the soap were much more attractive and were made from different ingredients such as honey, turmeric, goat milk, aloe vera, etc. She manufactures goat milk soap which sells @ ₹100/100 g. She is also preparing shampoos from locally available medicinal plants. Her



Smt. Subhadra demonstrating her products

homemade oils from *amla* powder, *bheda* powder, dried *karii patta* powder and *beet root* powder are also in great demand. She is also selling dry turmeric powder. She after collecting, washing and drying the turmeric roots in shade and market to the distant. Furthermore, she started producing aloe vera gel @ ₹100/200 mL.

Her naturally cultivated wheat and turmeric are being sold not only in India but in abroad like Canada, America and Germany. She is fetching ₹120/kg for black wheat flour, ₹2,000/kg for black turmeric powder and ₹400/kg for amla turmeric powder for their health benefits. Black wheat has more anti-glucose and components, and a lower glycemic index than other refined wheat products which helps to maintain blood sugar level and

body's immunity. *Kali haldi*/black turmeric powder is a rare, powerful, and antioxidant-rich type of turmeric that is valued for its anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and digestive qualities. It has highest concentration of curcumin compared to any other species which assists in respiratory and cardiovascular support, pain relief from arthritis, skin rejuvenation, immune strengthening, and possible cancer prevention.

In addition to this, she has sold 3 q of naturally grown wheat to the Department of Agriculture @ ₹60/kg. With the integration of dairy farming and processed products, she has increased her income with ₹52,578 and ₹259,550 net returns in cow rearing and processed products, respectively.

Awards and recognitions

- Outstanding Farmer Award in 2026 by JICA-Himachal Pradesh.
- Awarded cash prize of ₹ 10,000/- from her Member of Legislative Assembly.
- Received numerous recognition prizes for her displays in the district, state, and national level kisan melas.

Influence on other farmers

Smt. Subhadra Kanwar has influenced farmers across Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Rajasthan by distributing soap, organic wheat, organic turmeric and natural farming formulations. Her adoption of natural farming presents a women-led model of sustainable agribusiness, encouraging farmers to reduce chemical inputs and adopt high-value, climate-resilient crops. Her work has received recognition for promoting climate-resilient, chemical-free agriculture. Smt. Subhadra Kanwar actively shares her experiences with fellow farmers from her own and nearby villages and consistently motivates other farmers to adopt this approach. Her success in enhancing farm income and

maintaining soil health has established as a role model for natural farming in the region. Her model demonstrates that natural farming not only ensures profitability but also safeguards health and the environment. Through her training sessions and knowledge sharing, she has influenced farmers in multiple states to adopt natural farming practices, proving that sustainable farming is the path toward a resilient agricultural

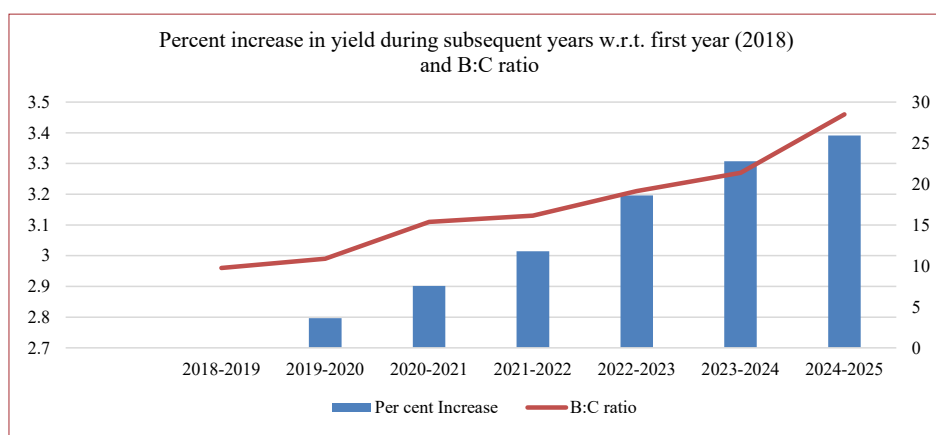


Table 2. Year wise farm economics of cow rearing and processed products

Years	Enterprise	Yield	Cost of cultivation (₹/ha)	Gross returns (₹/ha)	Net returns (₹/ha)	B:C ratio
2023-2024	Cow rearing (1)	1,150 L	54,650	97,750	43,100	1.79
2024-2025	Cow rearing (2)	1,270 L	61,722	114,300	52,578	1.85
	Soap, shampoo, gel, dry powders, flour, etc.	50 kg	2,40,450	500,000	259,550	2.08



Awards and recognition of Smt. Subhadra's efforts

future. She has established strong linkages with about 80 farm women; through women self help groups who are motivated to adopt natural farming. Farmers visit her farm to gain first-hand exposure to NF practices and develop confidence that the natural farming system can provide good economic returns per unit area while producing chemical-free and healthy food. She also participates in kisan melas organised by KVK Solan and the Department of Agriculture, where she displays her products for encouraging farmers to shift towards sustainable farming systems.

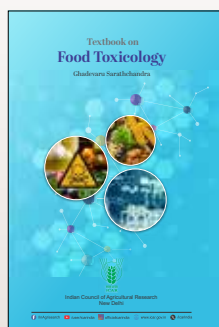
SUMMARY

Smt. Subhadra Kanwar has implemented a diversified natural farming system that integrates many crops, to achieve ecological sustainability and economic viability. She adopted mulching extensively using locally available organic materials such as dried leaves,

grasses, and crop residues, which conserve soil moisture, minimise weed growth, prevent root rot and diseases, regulate soil temperature, and gradually enrich the soil with organic matter. She implemented *wapsa* conditions for ensuring minimal soil disturbance, efficient water use, and long-term soil sustainability. Integration of animals is a key feature of her system. She prepares all natural farming inputs and all *rognashi* and *keetnashi* aster. These practices enhance microbial activity, root health, and crop immunity while reducing dependency on chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Cultivating a sustainable future through natural farming is not just an agricultural shift but also an ecological transformation. By restoring harmony between humans and nature, through maintaining soil health, safer food, stronger rural community and more resilient planet.

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