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Entrepreneurial approach in turmeric farming: Experience of Mr Ram Sanehi

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This article provides details of the success story of Mr Ram Sanehi, who in times of crisis took risk and now has become an inspirational story for many. In the times of Covid-19 pandemic, he found that turmeric has health benefits as well as market potential both as raw and value-added product. Turmeric has an important standing in our culture and is being used on daily basis in the kitchen. With the help of the experts, scientific knowledge, training and his willingness, Mr Ram Sanehi was able to change the economics of his farm in a positive way.

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AGRICULTURE in India is not merely a source of livelihood, it is a way of life deeply embedded in rural culture and tradition. Yet, in recent decades, farmers have been facing numerous challenges such as fluctuating market prices, declining soil fertility, increasing input costs, and limited crop diversification. These constraints often restrict farm income and reduce economic stability in rural households. In such circumstances, progressive farmers who adopt scientific technologies and entrepreneurial thinking are playing a transformative role in reshaping rural economies.

One such inspiring example is Mr Ram Sanehi, a 54-year-old progressive and visionary farmer from Village LalaBaxara, Post Alampur, Block Devmai, Tehsil Bindaki, District Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh. He lives in a joint family system, has one son who is currently pursuing his education, and two daughters, both of whom are married. Although he has been engaged in traditional farming for many years, Mr Ram Sanehi has always believed in continuous learning and innovation. His remarkable journey into turmeric cultivation began during one of the most challenging periods of modern times—the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beginning of the journey

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 brought unprecedented disruption to livelihoods, markets, and social life. Movement was restricted, economic activities slowed down, and uncertainty surrounded the agricultural sector as well. While many people remained confined to their homes with anxiety and fear, Mr Ram Sanehi utilised this period for reflection and planning. Instead of allowing the crisis to discourage him, he began thinking seriously about how to strengthen his livelihood and ensure better economic security for his family.

Two important questions occupied his mind: how could he contribute to improving health and immunity naturally, and how could he generate a stable and higher income from farming? During this time, he actively explored agricultural possibilities through YouTube videos, online farmer discussions, and various self-learning platforms. Through careful observation and study, he discovered the immense medicinal and commercial potential of turmeric, a crop widely recognised for its immunity-boosting properties, anti-inflammatory benefits, and strong market demand both domestically and internationally. Realising that turmeric could serve as a dual-benefit crop, he decided to pursue it seriously.

Institutional linkage and scientific guidance

With determination and clarity of purpose, Mr Ram Sanehi approached the Department of Horticulture in Fatehpur to seek guidance regarding quality seed material and scientific cultivation practices for turmeric. The officials appreciated his interest and advised him to contact Acharya Narendra Deva University of Agriculture and Technology, Kumarganj, Ayodhya, for improved varieties and expert consultation.

In 2020, he visited the university and interacted with agricultural scientists specialising in spice crops. During detailed discussions, he learned about improved production techniques, balanced

nutrient management, proper land preparation, irrigation scheduling, insect and disease management, and post-harvest handling practices. He procured the high-yielding and popular turmeric variety '*Narendra Haldi-1*', developed by the university. This scientific intervention marked a turning point in his agricultural career, as it provided him with a strong technical foundation and confidence to adopt turmeric cultivation in a systematic manner.

Table 1. Growth and yield performance of cultivated turmeric varieties

Variety	Plant height (cm)	Number of tillers/ plant	Rhizome weight/ plant (g)	Average yield (q/ acre)	Remarks
Narendra Haldi-1	110–120	3–4	650–750	180–190	High yielding, uniform rhizomes, widely adopted by farmers
Pragati	100–110	3–4	600–680	165–175	Good rhizome quality and moderate disease tolerance
Pratibha	95–105	2–3	550–620	150–165	Suitable for diversified cultivation and stable yield

Initial cultivation and encouraging results

In the same year, Mr Ram Sanehi initiated turmeric cultivation on a small area of land using the *Narendra Haldi-1* variety. He meticulously followed the scientific recommendations provided by the university scientists. From careful seed selection and soil preparation to timely irrigation and crop protection measures, every step was executed with precision and dedication.

The results were highly encouraging. The crop exhibited excellent rhizome development, uniform growth, better tolerance to diseases, and superior yield quality. The performance of the crop exceeded his expectations and strengthened his belief in scientific agriculture. Unlike traditional cereal crops that often-provided limited returns, turmeric offered higher profitability, better market stability, longer shelf life, and significant opportunities for value addition. The success of his first attempt inspired him to gradually expand the cultivation area in the following years.

Expansion, learning and technological upgradation

Mr Ram Sanehi firmly believed that learning should never stop. In his quest for advanced knowledge, he visited the ICAR-Indian Institute of Spices Research (IISR), Kozhikode, Keralam, to understand improved turmeric production technologies and value addition techniques. There, he gained insights into advanced cultivation practices, high-yielding and disease-resistant varieties, and scientific post-harvest management systems. He also learned about processing methods that could significantly enhance market value.

By integrating the knowledge acquired from ANDUAT, Kumarganj, Ayodhya and ICAR-IISR, Kozhikode, he systematically expanded his turmeric enterprise. By the year 2025, his cultivation area had increased to eight acres. Along with *Narendra Haldi-1*, he also introduced improved varieties such as *Pragati* and *Pratibha* to diversify and strengthen his production system. Over time, his farming operations transitioned from subsistence-based agriculture to a structured commercial agribusiness model, characterised by planning, efficiency, and market orientation.

The varieties cultivated by Mr Ram Sanehi are known for their good curcumin content and attractive rhizome colour, which contribute to higher consumer preference and premium market rates. The adoption of proper curing, boiling and polishing techniques further helps in maintaining the quality and chemical composition of turmeric rhizomes, thereby enhancing their commercial value.

Table 2. Yield and curcumin content of turmeric varieties grown

Variety	Curcumin content (%)	Market preference
Narendra Haldi-1	5.5–5.8	High demand due to bright colour and high curcumin
Pragati	5.3–5.6	Good quality and stable yield
Pratibha	5.2–5.4	Moderate demand with acceptable quality

Pest management

During the initial years of turmeric cultivation, He also encountered certain insect-pest and disease challenges that commonly affect turmeric crops. Among the insect-pests, shoot borer (*Conogethes punctiferalis*) was occasionally observed causing damage to the central shoots, resulting in drying of the affected tillers. To manage this problem, he followed the recommendations provided by agricultural scientists, including regular field monitoring and timely application of recommended insecticides and neem-based biopesticides.



Field view of farmer field (*Narendra Haldi-1* variety)



Turmeric boiler and polisher at farmer's village

Among diseases, rhizome rot caused by *Pythium* species and leaf blotch caused by *Taphrina maculans* were occasionally noticed, particularly during periods of high rainfall and excessive soil moisture. Mr Ram Sanehi effectively managed these problems through proper drainage, crop rotation, use of healthy seed rhizomes and seed treatment with recommended fungicides before planting. In addition, periodic sprays of suitable fungicides helped in controlling the spread of foliar diseases.

By adopting these integrated pest management practices along with balanced nutrient management and proper field sanitation, he successfully minimised crop losses and maintained high productivity and quality of turmeric rhizomes.

Post-harvest management and value addition

Understanding that true profitability depends not only on production but also on quality enhancement and value addition, Mr Ram Sanehi invested in post-harvest infrastructure. He installed a steam boiler for proper curing of turmeric rhizomes and a polishing unit to improve the physical appearance and market appeal of the produce. These technological interventions significantly enhanced product quality and ensured higher returns in the market.

On average, the cost of cultivation per acre ranges between ₹65,000 and ₹70,000, while the average yield is approximately 180 q/acre. After deducting all expenses, his net profit reaches nearly ₹4,00,000/acre/yr. Such impressive profitability highlights not only the productivity of the crop but also his efficient management, value addition strategies, and sound marketing approach.

Community impact and farmer mobilisation

Mr Ram Sanehi's success did not remain confined to his own farm. His achievements attracted the attention of farmers in neighboring villages, many of whom visited his fields to observe the crop performance. He willingly shared his knowledge, provided guidance, and encouraged others to adopt turmeric cultivation. Through field demonstrations, informal discussions, and experience-based learning, he motivated fellow farmers to diversify their cropping systems.

As a result of his continuous efforts, nearly 100 acres of land in his region are now under the *Narendra Haldi-1* variety. Farmers who adopted turmeric cultivation have reported increased income, improved livelihood security, and reduced dependency on low-income traditional crops. His initiative has contributed to the emergence of a turmeric cultivation cluster in Fatehpur district, strengthening rural economic resilience and promoting sustainable agricultural diversification.

Marketing strategy and future vision

Mr Ram Sanehi markets his turmeric produce at Kanpur Mandi, where he receives premium prices due to superior quality, proper curing, effective polishing, and consistent supply. Over time, he has built a reputation for reliability and quality, which has further strengthened his market position. His entrepreneurial approach demonstrates how scientific cultivation combined with value addition can transform small-scale farming into a profitable and sustainable enterprise.



Turmeric powder

Looking ahead, he envisions expanding turmeric cultivation further and motivating more farmers across Fatehpur district to adopt high-yielding varieties such as *Narendra Haldi-1*. He also aims to strengthen farmer networks and promote rural-level processing units to enhance collective income. His broader goal is to improve both economic conditions and health awareness in rural communities through turmeric-based farming systems.

SUMMARY

The journey of Mr Ram Sanehi from a small farmer experimenting with turmeric during the COVID-19 lockdown to becoming a regional leader in turmeric cultivation is truly inspiring. His story underscores the importance of self-learning, institutional collaboration, scientific agriculture, diversification, and farmer-to-farmer extension. Through innovation, determination, and entrepreneurial spirit, he has not only transformed his own livelihood but has also catalysed sustainable rural development in Fatehpur district. His example stands as a model of progressive farming that combines knowledge, vision, and perseverance to empower rural communities and ensure long-term economic resilience.

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