

Challenging traditional farming practices

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Bihar is endowed with fertile soils and water resources. Most of the population depends on agriculture for livelihood. Farming through traditional methods is labor-intensive and does not yield good results, leading to losses. Adoption of modern farm machinery can come to the rescue of farmers, thus increasing agricultural produce and profits. However affordability of these machines is sometimes a barrier for farmers to procure them.

Sehgal Foundation, under its village development project in Bihar, provides farm machinery to poor farmers at subsidized rates. Apart from reducing drudgery, these machines save time and labor. The project focuses on and identifies marginal farmers in the village and provides them with training and capacity building on farm mechanization. The project beneficiaries receive the machines on the premise that they share the benefits with fellow villagers, simultaneously working for the betterment of the community as a whole. The project also focuses on building an enterprise model where the farmer receiving the machine at subsidized cost benefits by receiving extra income by renting out the machines to fellow farmers.

Rampukar Kushwaha, a farmer from Pakri Dayal, Chakia Block, East Champaran, has been assisted by Sehgal Foundation since he became aware of farm machinery and the advantages of using it on the field.



“Even though I was always open to using farm machinery, but I did not know how to access them and also couldn’t afford them because of their high prices. After I learnt about the community meetings held by Sehgal Foundation on good agricultural practices, I decided to attend the meeting held in my village. I was impressed by the team’s demonstration of the machine and learned about the advantages of farm mechanization. Soon I got in touch with team members and had more discussions

with them. My potato farming was not giving good yields, so I decided to invest money in a potato planter. My family members were not in favor, as they did not trust modern technology in the field and preferred the traditional ancestral methods. But I decided it was worth taking a risk. So I

bought the machine. In this process, I had to contribute only Rs 20,000 and the rest was covered by the foundation.”

“The potato planter has benefited me a lot. In terms of monetary savings, laborers charge around 400 rupees per kattha (one acre equals 32 kattha) for field preparation for sowing. The money that would have previously been spent in hiring labor was saved. In terms of time, a potato planter can sow almost five acres of land at once. Manual labor would amount to Rs 3,200 per acre, but the machine brings the cost down to 1,800 rupees.”

Noticing the impact of the potato planter, Rampukar decided to buy another machine, a laser land leveler. A laser leveler helps make the land level and suitable for farming. He adds, “Sehgal Foundation contributed 50,000 rupees and also helped in the process of availing the rest through a government subsidy and from the Agriculture Department.”

Rampukar rents his machines to fellow villagers at an affordable rate, thus earning additional income by extending the benefits and motivating farmers in the process. He is a promising and active community member who is a perfect example of learning by doing.

(Upasana Upadhyaya is working with Sehgal Foundation as an Ideosync UNESCO Information Fellow)