



### Swasam Naturals: A Case Study on Small Scale Millet Based Entrepreneurial Unit

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Farm women are the backbone of agricultural workforce. Women empowerment in rural areas has always been a major challenge, but the active participation of women in the cooperative movement in India, especially in the agriculture and allied sectors has incredible impact on women development.

#### Introduction

Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy and contributes nearly 50 percent of the total national income with over 70 per cent of the country population supported by farming. Even while India's industrial and services sectors are growing by leaps and bounds, growth rate of agriculture is below 2 per cent. Therefore, the development of the country depends on agricultural development where both men and women shoulder the responsibility of work. Alleviation of poverty and hunger is the major pillar of development (Ganessamurthy, 2007). The role of women becomes the most important guiding factor in this regard. To instrumentalise women for achieving comprehensive socio-economic-ecological-sustainable development, their skill development and empowerment are to be focused. Agriculture in the present scenario is highly competitive and confined to marketability of the agricultural commodity produced (Nair, 2005). Agriculture in India is basically a family enterprise in which women are active participants. Women are a cultivator, co-operator, laborer, and contributor to farm decision making and family income. Women are responsible for at least 50 percent of the total food production of the country. It is known from early civilization that women were the first agriculturists, while men were out for hunting and tending livestock.

#### Women Development

In India, women empowerment is considered as the phenomenon of nineties and is defined as giving power to creating power within and enabling. The word empowerment means multidimensional social process that helps people to gain control over their own lives in different spheres of life. To increase the food production at the rate of at least three per cent per year the efforts of government organizations alone is not sufficient. In this context, appropriate training of practicing farmers, extension personnel and the agricultural teachers and trainers is very crucial in increasing agricultural production. Since ancient times women constitute an important segment of the society. They contributed significantly in shaping the fate of any society and performed a pivotal role in progress of any nation. Even in modern era the women constitute more than 50 per cent of the world's population, one third of the labor force and perform nearly two third of working hours.

#### Nutri-rich Millet

Millets are unique due to their short growing season. They can develop from planted seeds to mature, ready to harvest plants in as little as 65 days. This is important in heavily populated

areas. If it is stored properly, whole millets can be kept for two or more years. Millets are recognized as an important substitute for major cereal crops to cope up with worldwide food storage and to meet the demands of increasing population of both the developing and developed countries. They can be well exploited as special purpose food in view of their better nutritional and functional qualities by using appropriate processing technologies. Scientific knowledge and technical competency of this area had turned our farmers and self help group women into entrepreneurs and also improved their socio-economical status.

### **A Case Study on Swasam Naturals**

**Socio-economic status of the rural women entrepreneur:** Mrs. R. Sathya, 49 years old women entrepreneur who lives in Kondayampatti village of Madurai district runs small scale millet based entrepreneurial unit as a sole women. She completed her primary schoolings from the same village. She got married at the age of 22 with a military man. She had 3 girl children's. After few years her husband expired, she went through a bad economic crisis. Then, she attended ICAR-AICRP on Home Science free training program on "Value added products from millets" at Entrepreneurial Development Centre, Home Science Extension, Home Science College and Research Institute, Madurai during the month of January 2016. During training program she was actively involved in all the activities, she made good networking among the peer groups. Initially, she prepared small amount of Adai mix, Kali mix and she sold to neighbors. She had good opinion from neighbors and started a small scale unit. She is directly procuring raw materials (Black Gram, Millets, Sorghum, Ragi and Maize) from Allanganallur, Pallemedu farmers paying them in ready cash. All the grains were properly cleaned, soaked and sun dried then powdered in the form of flour mix. She has own brand name called SWASAM NATURALS (Natural Breath) with attractive labels pasted in the stand pouch cover. Based on the market value, she used to fix the rates for the products. The quantity of the products varies from 150g to 300g. She has also tried with new evolving novel products such as Maize dosa mix which is fetching good demand in local market. She has also done good amount of marketing strategy for the products. Issuing Pamphlet to the public is one of the ways of promoting brand name. She has exhibited her products in *Krishi Vigyan Kendra* fair, Agri-Science fair, Food festival etc.

**Impact of technological empowerment:** Self help group women entrepreneur technically empowered to prepare the products and to explain the same to their peer groups meetings, mass media, agri-expo, traditional food fest mela, etc. Under the AICRP on Home Science project, by the technical support of this team nearly 50 Self Help Group women were trained and sold the millet based products in their home. They acted as master farmer under Tamil Nadu state Women Development scheme at Madurai district.

**Economic impact per month:** Gross Expenditure = Rs.11,500/-, Gross Income = Rs. 22,000/-  
Net profit = Rs. 10,500/-

### **Conclusion**

The self help women groups were involved in income generating activities like dairy enterprise, goat rearing and crop husbandry with training from competent institution. It shows that women's are very much willing to empower themselves to live socio-economically sound well beings in the Tamilnadu state.

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