

Strawberry Production for diversifying agricultural Income: A success story from Samba district of J&K

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Abstract

This paper highlights the success story of Mr. Sham Singh, a commercial farmer who has been successfully integrated into the main stream economy through production and marketing of Strawberry along with vegetable and fruit production. This case study provides an insight of establishment of farming business and the road map he used in pursuing his dream of becoming a commercial producer of strawberry, mango and vegetable production. The report highlights the lessons learned in the production, diversification, competitive and marketing strategies and how Sham Singh designed his farming operation to maximize the annual income from farming. The report ends with challenges that he is encountering and how he plans to address them. This success story will provide information that will be helpful for upcoming strawberry entrepreneurs.

Keywords:

A success story is a narrative—usually between three to four pages—highlighting the achievements and progress of a program/activity. A success story can document program improvement over time and demonstrate the value of program activities. When presented effectively, success stories can be a useful tool for educating your stakeholders about the outcomes of your work and the results you are achieving. Even as you conduct your program's activities, it is important that you take the time to capture the accomplishments your program attains along the way. Sharing your achievements as the program progresses will put you in an advantageous position when policymakers or other stakeholders make decisions that affect your program.

In the agricultural context, diversification can be regarded as the re-allocation of some of a farm's productive resources, such as land, capital, farm equipment and paid labour, into new activities. These can be new crops or livestock products, value-adding activities, provision of services to other farmers. Factors leading to decisions to diversify are many, but include; reducing risk, responding to changing consumer demands or changing government policy, responding to external shocks and, more recently, as a consequence of climate change. He has understood the fact that being a small only diversification of the crops can help them earn more. He also understood that small farmers can only sustain themselves if they diversify their cropping system and that was



Figure 1: Photographs related to Strawberry production at farmer's field

the major reason that they were motivated to grow more of vegetables, flowers, fruits, etc

Strawberry is one of the most desired commodities in India. It is one of the most important fruit crops which can be used as culinary purposes, value added products like, jam, jelly, preserves, ice creams, etc. It is produced throughout India, with most of the production emanating from the commercial sector and a small contribution from the smallholder sector. The industry is operating in a free market economy, where prices are determined by demand and supply. The industry contributes significantly to the livelihoods of many people in India, including income generation for producers and job creation for many people in the primary and secondary industries.

Sham Singh, the focus of this study, is a successful strawberry producer in the Jammu district of the Jammu & Kashmir State. He has been producing it since 2002 and has continued to reap the rewards of

becoming strawberry growers, supplying runners to the farmers of his area and informal markets. Farming has not come easy for him. However, through the assistance of Krishi Vigyan Kendra Jammu and Department of Agriculture, he has managed to overcome many difficulties and is become as a successful commercial strawberry farmer.

Who is Sham Singh?

Sham Singh S/o Sh Buti Singh is 64 years old, and is a successful producer of strawberry. He owns 3.80 ha farm at Badoi village of Vijaypur block of Samba District which is around 26 km from Jammu. He is also growing broccoli, onion, mango, paddy and wheat. His land is cent percent irrigated through bore wells. By education he is only matriculate but has grasped practical skills in his area of farming. Out of 3.8 ha in 2013 he had grown Paddy in 2 acres, Wheat in 4 kanals, Maize in 6 kanals, Vegetable in 1.5 acres, Mango in 1 ha and Litchi in 2 ha.

Motivation, initiation and technical assistance

Despite his belief in lifelong learning and the academic standard passed by Sham Singh is high school. He had no formal training in strawberry, except for knowledge passed onto him through informal talks with experts from Krishi Vigyan Kendra-Jammu, Department of Agriculture and other scientists from the Division of Fruit Sciences, SKUAST-J.

He is doing farming since 1987, when he was having 5 acres of land. Once he visited Nepal in 2002 and saw strawberry was being sold by one of the vendors. He was surprised to see the red and cherry colored fruit. After enquiring, he came to know that it was strawberry. After coming back he requested the then Chief Agriculture Officer, Jammu to provide him know-how. He started growing strawberry in 2 kanals of land and since then he has not looked back.

His knowledge has also been broadened by frequent visits to SKUAST-J, KVK Jammu and Department of Agriculture. Currently, Sham Singh receives assistance from various sources. An important aspect recognized by Sham Singh is the value of consultants who visit his farm to ensure that production isn't negatively affected by diseases and pests. Farming requires continuous monitoring of all the activities on the farm, including the crop itself. According to him, fellow farmers in his area have been very helpful since he started farming. KVK Jammu provided valuable assistance to him. Sham Singh highlights marketing information that guides his marketing decisions, information on developments and participating in meetings (for example, the information of new varieties).

Farmer's Practices before Intervention

Before intervention of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Jammu and Department of Agriculture Jammu, the Sham Singh mostly concentrated on the traditional cropping pattern of Rice -Wheat and few vegetables for home consumption. Being a resident of irrigated area, he was not aware of the potential of vegetables and floriculture as an enterprise. Krishi Vigyan Kendra Jammu has intervened in 2007 and shown them the potential of fruit and vegetable cultivation

and he was provided desired information in fruit and vegetable cultivation. He was also given proper orientation about market and marketing his produce in Jammu and other nearest mandies.

Technical Intervention by KVK

The prioritized problems of that area were thoroughly discussed by conducting group meeting with the active involvement of KVK Scientists and his interest in diversification, it was decided to diversify from Rice-wheat cropping system to Floriculture, vegetable production and fruit cultivation which giving good returns as compared to only cereal crops. This has motivated him to-

- ☐ Grow strawberry and its value addition.
- ☐ Grow vegetable (Broccoli, Onion, Cauliflower, turnip, etc) commercially along with Rice & Wheat.
- ☐ Commercial cultivation of Flowers like gladiolus.

Formation of Strawberry growers association

He has framed the strawberry association and is acting as president of this association. This association is working in Jammu province of Jammu & Kashmir state. In his president ship, strawberry has taken a momentum and farming community as well as consumers are aware of this commodity.

Horizontal spread of Technology

The KVK has limited resources and manpower so it cannot reach directly to the each and every farmer of the district and cannot have close contact at all times. The KVK Jammu has conceived the idea of horizontal spread of technology through its resource farmers. In this context the KVK has selected few farmers for intensive training so that they can train to fellow farmers. Keeping in view KVK trained farmers used as resource persons for strawberry and vegetable cultivation in this area. Sham Singh has already trained more than 1000 farmers of the state. Farmers are coming to him regularly for advice and he is sincerely guiding them and providing technical as well as logistic facilitation.

Agriculture infrastructure

He has a tractor; three bore wells, drip irrigation system and sprinkler system.

Production Strategy

He is following the crop rotation as under:

- ☐ Paddy- Wheat
- ☐ Paddy- Strawberry
- ☐ Maize –strawberry
- ☐ Paddy- Vegetables (Onion, Broccoli, Cauliflower, turnip)- Gladiolus

Paddy: He has grown paddy (Sharvati and Basmati) in 3 acres of land and in 2013. His production was 50 quintals in basmati from 1 ha and 13 quintals from 4 kanals of Sharvati variety. Over all the net profit was Rs 2, 90,000/- . Similarly in 2012 he has earned a net profit of 1, 40,000/-.

Wheat: It is grown in only 4 kanals of land for personal consumption in which he got a yield of 2 quintals per kanal.

Maize: In 2012 & 2013 the maize was grown in 6 kanals of land. Even the total and is irrigated but because of its hard work he got the yield of about 10 quintals. The total profit earned was Rs 18000/-

Vegetables: He is growing different vegetables like Onion, Broccoli, Cauliflower, turnip, etc in 1.5 acres of land and his total net income is Rs 1.70 lakhs.

Fruits: He has grown mango in 1 ha of land in which 100 plants are planted and in 2013 it has given a total yield of 67 quintals. From this his total income was Rs 67000/-. Similarly, in 2 ha area he has planted 240 plants. In 2013 for the first time a net profit of Rs 10500/- was earned by him.

Floriculture: He is also growing gladiolus in 5 kanals and from which he earned a profit of Rs 50000/-

Strawberry: The specialty of Sham Singh is strawberry. In 2011-22 he has planted runners in 24

kanals of land and earned a net profit of Rs 2.5 lakhs, Similarly in 2013 he earned a net profit of 1.7 lakhs from 14 kanals. From 2004 onwards he, took initiative in strawberry cultivation and from Rs2500/- his net profit was moved to Rs 2.5 lakhs in 2011-12. Based on his performance he was nominated a president of the strawberry growers association.

Value addition and Marketing: When the fruit value is down in market in the month of May-June, he conceived the idea of its value addition and started preparing strawberry jam. For this he has contacted a Haryana company and even it was marketed through a Delhi company “Fresh Fruit Company”. In 2012 his total income from jam sale was Rs 1.5 lakhs and in 2013 he earned Rs 70000/-.

Over all his total net profit in 2011-12 was Rs 8.55 lakh and in 2012-13 the net profit was 5.5 lakhs. .

Awards: He was awarded at various occasions.

- ☐ In 2013, Punjab Kissan Union has awarded him as a “Best Progressive Farmer”.
- ☐ In 2012, Sh. N.N. Vohra, His excellency, Governor has awarded him with a “Best Strawberry Grower” at SKUAST-Jammu.
- ☐ In 2011, Department of Agriculture has awarded him with a “Best orchardist”
- ☐ In 2010, Department of Agriculture has awarded him with a “Best Diversified Farmer”

Future plans and constraints

Since labour is very costly now a days and looking into this constraint, he has started promoting floriculture and horticulture as it is less labour intensive. He is facing lot of problems in getting things done for logistic support and that's why he wants a single window system to solve all problems related to agriculture, electricity, water and marketing.