

From Farm to Table: The Successful Transformation through Organic Farming

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D. Gangatharan, a 59-year-old former mechanical engineer turned organic farmer, has paved a way for the sustainable and thriving future in agriculture. His remarkable journey from the world of machines to the lush fields of organic farming serves as an inspiration to all the generations. In this success story, we delve into the remarkable transformation of a man who turned his passion for farming into a flourishing business.

From Mechanical Engineering to Organic Farming



Gangatharan's story begins with an impressive academic background. He graduated with a B.E. in Mechanical Engineering from CIT, Coimbatore and spent 25 years as the principal of ITI Annur. However, his roots in agriculture ran deep as he had been assisting his father in farming alongside his education. At the age of 52, he felt that his true calling lays in the fertile soil and decided to make a monumental change

in his life by taking voluntary retirement and dedicating himself to agriculture.

Embracing Organic Farming

Gangatharan's transition to organic farming was inspired by his attendance at Nammalvar and Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) training sessions. He then passionately embraced the principles of organic farming, vehemently denouncing chemical pesticides and fertilizers; and believed that organic farming not only nurtures the soil but also enriches it with essential micronutrients from compost, plant residues, and food waste.

Overcoming Challenges

However, Gangatharan's journey was not started without its hurdles. Initially, he faced criticism from those around him for his commitment to cultivate only organic crops. The early years were so tough with poor yields that he couldn't generate reasonable profits from his hard work. In addition, water scarcity was another major challenge, with an open well drying up during the scorching summer months. The slow degradation of farm manure due to insufficient moisture hindered the absorption of soil nutrients, and the scarcity of labour added to the difficulties.

Adding Value to Produce



Undeterred by these obstacles, Gangatharan then decided to add value to his produce as a strategy to improve profitability. He still believes that value addition is an essential key to make farming more

remunerative. In his five acres of land, he cultivates sugarcane, rice for household purpose and bananas, turmeric, teak, moringa, and various other crops for marketing. But these products would not just reach market in their raw form, but they undergo value addition before hitting the market.

Gangatharan makes country sugar out of that organic sugar cane. From one ton of harvested raw sugarcane, he extracts around 720 litres of sugarcane juice, from which he would obtain 120–130 kg of country sugar. To make country sugar, cane juice is first heated to a boil for three hours, and it is then transferred to another vessel, where it gets constantly stirred. Instead of using hydro powder, he is using one litre of cow's milk just after reaching the boiling point to impart natural white colour to sugar. The common method for clearing the scum formed while boiling the sugarcane juice is using cleansing lime (calcium bicarbonate) but he uses Bhendi and Aloe vera extract to remove that formed scum.

In scientific terms, on addition of these mucilaginous plant extracts during the boiling stage of sugarcane juice, the albumins present in the mucilage coagulates and carries the colloidal and suspended impurities present in the juice to the surface as the scum which are then removed. The natural plant-based materials are considered to be advantageous compared to chemical clarificants because of their natural origin, ecofriendly ness, local availability, so that plant materials can be collected in large quantities and simple method of extraction of mucilage. The production cost is also much lower compared with that of synthetic clarificants. Therefore, the application of plants mucilage as clarificants in jaggery production can get the market potential to meet the domestic and international requirements.

Innovative Farming Techniques

Gangatharan's farming practices are also innovative. He employs drip irrigation for his sugarcane, strategically placing it near its root zone to boost crop root length and survival even under challenging conditions. In shaded areas, he cultivates turmeric and ginger, which yield bountiful harvests.

Natural Remedies for Soil Health

For soil health, Gangatharan uses natural remedies such as Jeevamrutham and Bijamrutham. Jeevamrutham, made from cow dung, cow urine, country sugar, and horse gram flour, is used for foliar spray and fertigation. He strongly believes that it promotes biodiversity in the soil. Bijamrutham, on the other hand, is used to treat seeds and enhance seedling health.

Value-Added Products

Gangatharan's approach to value addition is remarkable. He produces organic country sugar, which got recognition for its quality and no-added chemical making process. His turmeric powder found its way into markets, while Moringa leaf powder has become a staple during dry seasons.

Sustainable Farming for the Future

Gangatharan's commitment to sustainable farming extended to planting fruit trees along his land's fence for generating year-round revenue, and protecting his farm from natural disasters as they serve as wind breaks. He admits that organic farming might yield lower quantities but provides higher quality produce. And this approach paid off, as he started receiving orders for his organic country sugar from countries like Canada and Vietnam, fetching impressive prices.

A Call to Embrace Organic Farming

Gangatharan's story serves as a testament to the potential of organic farming and the importance of value addition. He believes that farmers can secure better market value for their products by embracing organic practices. As his organic produce gains recognition both domestically and internationally, Gangatharan's journey stands as an inspiration for all those looking to embark on a path to sustainable and profitable farming. This remarkable transformation of Gangatharan to a successful organic farmer and entrepreneur showcases the power of dedication, innovation, and a deep connection with the land. Gangatharan has not only cultivated crops but also a future filled with promise and abundance.

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