

MKUY paving way towards Farm Mechanization through Women Entrepreneurship

Background of the Entrepreneur: Ms. Hemlata Sahoo, a young women farmer from Naiguan village of Salepur block in Cuttack district along with her husband Mr. Bijaya Kumar Sahoo are engaged in paddy cultivation in their 3-acre land. It is mostly labor intensive and time consuming. They hired laborers in the peak cultivation and harvesting season and at times, they faced difficulty of shortage of labors which affected their crop cycle. After thorough discussion with her husband, she decided to approach Agriculture Engineering division to know about subsidy-based schemes for availing farm machineries. There she came to know about Agro-Service-Center enterprise under MKUY scheme promoted by APICOL. She then realized that with this enterprise, she would not only use farm machineries in own field but also can utilize it as service provider on rental basis and help the fellow farmers too. Thus, she applied for the scheme and availed the benefit for establishment of Agro-Service-Center in her village.

Constraints faced by entrepreneur: Ms. Hemlata and her household faced the major constraint like lack of awareness and hands-on training on the appropriate use of the implements. Farm machinery being expensive with maintenance and repairing costs, lack of capital and financial assistance also posed as a challenge for her. But, with the guidance and help from the agriculture department, she decided to start the venture.

APICOL and MKUY intervention: In coordination with district scheme officers, Ms. Sahoo got to know about the application process and then she logged in for the enterprise through NIC portal with a project cost of INR 39.76 lakh and received the Go-Ahead letter on January 2021. Then with the assistance of HDFC Bank (Jholasahi, Cuttack) with loan amount of INR 15 lakh and her own contribution, she was able to complete the project by November 2021 and submitted the required documents to APICOL for release of subsidy. After all necessary verification, a subsidy amount of more than INR 15 lakh (15,65,239) was released to entrepreneur's bank account by APICOL under the scheme.

Establishment of Agro-Service-Center and benefit: Under MKUY scheme, Ms. Hemlata was able to establish the center with various farm machineries - Combine Harvester (Kubota), Tractor (Mahindra), Power tiller and Rotavator (Shakti man), Pumping set (Mahindra), a Sprayer and Brush Cutter (Kreft). She has started the business of the center on custom hiring basis to farmers at affordable rental rates. Currently she has started the custom hiring business in nearby panchayats covering 10-12 villages. She caters the cultivation needs of agricultural crops like paddy, vegetables and provides the farm machinery services when the demand for the farm machineries rises mostly during land preparation (April) and harvesting period (December, January). This has provided a relief to the farmers from implications of high cost of labor and its unavailability. Now she has increased her revenue to INR 12 lakh per annum with an estimated profit of INR 4 lakh. The increased revenue has led to her improved standard of living and secure higher savings for her family. She thanks APICOL for the same and quotes *"The release of subsidy has given us the confidence to establish and run business units with higher investment. Also, it has reduced the burden of loan repayment on us as the subsidy amount was set off with loan amount. Overall, I am very happy with MKUY scheme and look forward to expanding my business further"*



Future plans and way forward: After starting the business operations in nearby areas, she is planning to increase the geographical coverage to other blocks and some areas of West Bengal where there is high demand for combine harvester. In fact she has started renting combine harvester to areas like Jaleswar, Balasore and some parts of Bengal. She is focused on increasing the revenue from this business and expand the service network. Additionally, the increasing adoption of farm mechanization and other modern technologies is expected to drive demand for ASC services, as farmers seek to improve their productivity and cost efficiency. Ms. Hemlata Sahoo is an inspiration to all women entrepreneurs of the district who not only started her entrepreneurial journey but also provide solution to grass root problems of the farmers through MKUY.