

## ***Innovate. Automate. Succeed: The Entrepreneur's Journey in Farm Mechanization***

**Entrepreneur background:** “Victory comes from finding opportunities in problems”. This line best suits to Mrs. Kalpana Pradhan, a native of a small village R.Katapali of Jharsuguda district who is a successful agri-entrepreneur under MKUY and has taken up the Agro. Service Centre (ASC) business after assessing the problems of farmers at the village level. Being from an agricultural family, they knew the high cost of labour in harvesting and post-harvesting activities, this thing ignited her with the idea of establishing ASC for ensuring the availability of farm mechanization and reduced labour cost for the farmer community.

**Constraints faced in business:** The establishment of ASC involved a higher capital investment of around 40 lakhs for the purchase of machinery and equipment. Mrs. Pradhan initially was reluctant as she was sceptical about the successful running of the business on such a huge investment. Then she got to know about the MKUY scheme which provided good financial assistance on this kind of project. Secondly, there was some delay in loan sanction from the bank side but eventually, she got a loan from Punjab National Bank (PNB), Jharsuguda after regular follow-up and bank visits.

**APICOL and MKUY intervention:** In coordination with Agri. dept. officials at the block and district level, Mrs. Pradhan knew about MKUY scheme in detail and related benefits. Then she applied in NIC portal for the ASC project with a project cost of more than INR 50 lakh and received Go-Ahead on 17.03.2021. She completed the project within the timeline with the support of bank finance of INR 42 lakh and after the joint verification, the file was moved to APICOL for admin. comparative and release of subsidy. Subsequently, she received a subsidy amount of INR 16 lakh from APICOL for her established centre.

**Establishment of Agro. Service Centre and benefit:** Mrs. Pradhan established the centre named Sai Anshika Agro Service Centre with 8 farm machineries and equipment's – Tractor with Trolley, Rootavator, Combine Harvester, Power Weeder, Sprayer Pump, Grass Cutter and Water Pump at the village level. She has adopted a model of Custom Hiring Centre renting the machineries on hourly basis to the farmers of nearby panchayats covering around 140 farmers of 15 villages during the season (paddy cultivation and harvesting). She looks after the operations along with her husband and maintains the record of usage of machineries by the farmers for assessing the correct revenue and running hours. According to her, it has been a great business model as she is able to earn around INR 20 lakh per annum with an estimated profit of INR 4 lakh. This has helped her to support the family with additional income and maintain good standard of living. She takes great satisfaction in providing farm mechanization solutions to farmers who were not able to access these services timely and incur higher cost of cultivation. She also engages 5-6 staff during the season time for the operational activities of centre thus providing employment through her business. She is very elated to receive the subsidy amount and quotes “*The provision of subsidy in the scheme gave me the confidence to take risk of higher capital investment and start the centre as I had the assurance of getting the financial rebate in the form of subsidy. The MKUY scheme has emerged as a problem solver for farm mechanization issue in my region. I extend my whole-hearted thanks to APICOL and Govt. of Odisha for implementing such robust scheme for entrepreneurs in Odisha*”.



**Future plans and way forward:** Mrs. Pradhan has been successfully running her business from last year and providing services to farmers. Further to increase the reach to more no. of farmers she wants to buy 1 more Combine Harvester under the scheme for providing the services as still there is large requirement for it in the region. She is determined to bring in more support for the farmers through her entrepreneurial venture. So, through entrepreneurs like Kalpana Pradhan MKUY has been very instrumental at the ground level to solve agriculture related problems as well as improve the standard of living of people.