

## Ajinkyatara farmers co-operative fruits, flowers and vegetable, sales-purchase society

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Ajinkyatara farmers co-operative marketing society is a unique example in Maharashtra. The Society along with marketing of flowers, also provides technical guidance and inputs required for flower production at reasonable rates. The Society is unique, in the sense that the member gets payments and inputs at his door steps. The Society has played a vital role in upliftment of small farmers and thereby improved the rural economy.

Satara, a progressive district in Maharashtra, has provided the most successful Co-operative Banking pattern to Maharashtra and also to whole India. In this district, an experiment of co-operative flower marketing was launched in 1997 and its result came in sight within next 2-3 years. The small farmers in the district are engaged in Hi-Tech Agriculture and have started green house farming. A large number of small green houses are established in the district. Due to this, Satara has become the largest flower producer district in the state. Now, the Satara district is identified as a Green Houses district.

The geographical area of Satara district is 10,480 sq. kms., which is about 3.4% of total geographical area of Maharashtra. The district includes 11 Tahsils and comes under western part of Deccan plateau. The district can be broadly classified in three regions viz., hilly, irrigated and drought prone. These three regions have different agro-climatic conditions and there is diverse cropping pattern. The hilly region includes Patan, Mahabaleshwar, Jawali and western part of Karad, Satara and Wai tahsils.

The irrigated area is on the banks of river namely,

Krishna, Koyana, Venna and their tributaries in Karad, Satara, Wai and some part of Koregoan and Phaltan. The dry land region of Satara district consists of Man, Khatav, Khandala, some part of Koregaon and Phaltan Tahsil.

The district is having dry to somewhat cool climatic condition. Annual rainfall is about 400 to 1000 mm. Initially, the farmers in this area were growing vegetables like tomato, chilli, cauliflowers, cabbage, brinjal, turmeric, ginger, onion and fruits like, mango, guava, sapota, grapes etc. But the farmers were not getting satisfactory returns due to lack of marketing facility, lack of storage facility and environmental effects on crop. In 1995, the progressive farmers along with bank officers visited Israel and collected information regarding green houses and hi-tech agriculture. After coming back, some of them decided to start green house farming. In 1997, these farmers started their green houses. For this purpose, the bank officers provided technical guidelines and financial support. Initially, these farmers produced 'coloured capsicum' in their green houses and they achieved tremendous success. Now a days, as per market demand, they have diverted towards flower production in green houses and they are cultivating the flowers like gerbera, carnation etc. They have achieved good success also. This is only because of marketing support and technical services rendered by the Society.

### Formation of society:

Initially, the flowers produced by the farmers in green houses were marketed to private traders at Pune, Mumbai and Delhi, individually. In this practice, the farmers were suffering due to delay in payment, huge commission taken by middlemen and high transportation cost.

The problems of the farmers regarding marketing of flowers were noticed by the veteran leader in the co-operative field and former minister for Co-operation of Maharashtra, Late Shrimant Chatrapati Abhaysinghraje Bhosale. He decided to help farmers to overcome these problems. He took a lead and decided to give justice to farmers by establishing a Co-operative Marketing Society.

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