

A CASE STUDY

Livelihood enhancement of tribal farmers through value addition and collective marketing of safed musli (white gold) - A case of Dang district of Gujarat

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ABSTRACT

The poor farmers had little knowledge of how to market their produce, so they fetched very low price for their produce, sometimes which even ran into losses. The market study hinted at the fact that raw safed musli is unprofitable to sell, so the farmers should go for value addition, like making musli powder, packaging, branding and selling either in wholesale or retail markets. For this in Dang district, some villages have made sincere effort in value addition through purchasing of machineries by jointly /co-operative basis. This effort helped these villages in terms of more production, quality improvement, process improvement and higher earnings. For marketing, villagers have tied up with some retailers. They are also thinking to establish their own wholesale and retail counters at Waghai, Saputara (major tourist centers) and Surat (major market for medicinal plants in south Gujarat). However, to start with, it was decided that farmers would be educated to start collective marketing of safed musli at a better price at terminal markets in India. A number of big traders were identified in Indore, Nasik and Mumbai; their terms and conditions were compared and a trader was finalized. Due to collective marketing the net benefit was found around Rs. 100-250 per kg. of safed musli.

KEY WORDS : Value addition, Collective marketing, Livelihood enhancement, Processing, Packaging

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Safed Musli is a valued for botanical gift from the nature to human kind; locals call it 'safedsona' (white gold). safed musli is hindi term for botanical herb named *Chlorophytum borivilianum*. Safed musli is an annual herb with tubers, crown, leaf and flowers as different parts. It

naturally occurs in forests in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and is listed as a rare species of India. This divine herb was earlier available in abundance in our forests but due to unplanned and improper use, this herb is on the verge of disappearance.

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The market of safed musli :

The largest global markets of Safed Musli are China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, UK and USA. Japan has the highest per capita consumption of botanical medicines in the world.

Nasik and Mumbai are present market channels for Safed Musli for both Valsad and Dang districts.

Processing of safed musli :

After digging out the musli tubers from the soil, they

are thoroughly washed in fresh water. The large and healthy fingers are separated from the tubers and the small once are kept aside to be used as planting material for the next season. The large fingers are the taken for processing. The outer brown skin is peeled off with a stainless steel knife and sun dried for three to four days. Dried fingers are packed in polythene bags and sent to the market.

The poor farmers had little knowledge of how to market their produce, so they fetched very low price for their produce, sometimes which even ran into losses. The market study hinted at the fact that raw safed musli is unprofitable to sell, so the farmers should go for value addition, like making musli powder, packaging, branding and selling either in wholesale or retail markets. For this in Dang district, some villages have made sincere effort in value addition through purchasing of machineries by jointly /co-operative basis. This effort helped these villages in terms of more production, quality improvement, process

improvement and higher earnings. Similar results were also obtained by Amrutha (1994) on paddy, Balasubramanian and Prema (1996); Maurya *et al.* (1995) on aonla; Singh *et al.* (1994) on pulses and Srinivas and Singh (1989) on mustard.

Safed musli in Waghai cluster, Dang forest division :

During April-June, safed musli seed supply is ensured and during Oct.-Dec., peak trading season of safed musli takes place.

Village level based price (2013 prices) of safed musli is approximately Rs. 600/- per kg. and of seed is approximately Rs. 450/- per.

Safed musli price decreased from Rs. 3200/- to Rs. 2600/-, Rs. 1800/-, Rs. 900/-, Rs. 800/- and Rs. 700/- during last 7 years due to larger production based in different states and its shrinking demand in tobacco industry.

Agents from Waghai (Ahwa) comes to village to procure

Table 1 : Different phases of strategy adopted by the safed musli farmers

Level	Immediate intervention	Mid-term intervention	Long term intervention
Pre-harvesting input	Planning for organic treatment and opening of input supply center at cluster level Choosing suitable economy variety	Ensuring supply of organic input materials	Organic safed musli cluster development
Harvesting/producing	Planting and harvesting of hybrid safed musli seed accepted is the market	Demonstration of organic safed musli cultivation.	Expansion of area of cultivation and the production Production of export quality safed musli
Storage	Supply of rain proof and supportive polythene materials	Making available household level storage system in safed musli cluster	Institutional level storage system in safed musli cluster
Value addition	Quality testing of safed musli Electronic weighing Standard packing Branding (aranyak brand)	Procurement of safed musli processing equipment	Preliminary preparation for medicines (tablets, capsules) for local use Export quality branding

Table 2 : Comparison of benefits between collective and local marketing of safed musli

Lot	Local price (Rs.)	Price at which linkage done (Rs.)	Quantity (in kg.)	Total revenue (through local marketing) (Rs.)	Total revenue (through collective marketing) (Rs.)	Net benefit due to price difference (Rs.)	Per kg. benefit
1.	650	800	100	65,000	80000	15000	150
2.	650	775	175	113750	135625	21875	125
3.	650	750	525	341250	393750	52500	100
4.	550	750	600	330000	450000	120000	200
5.	550	750	500	275000	375000	100000	200
6.	600	750	300	180000	225000	45000	150
7.	550	800	200	110000	160000	50000	250
Total			2400	1415000	18,19,375	4,04,375	

Note: There are a number of other benefits which accrue to the farmers by doing collective marketing; these have been calculated to be more than Rs. 2 lakh as a whole

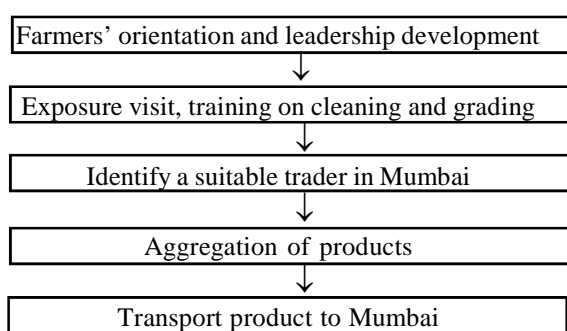
safed musli from village level agent.

Marketing strategy adopted by farmers :

A strategy was formulated to promote safed musli based livelihood in Waghai cluster; the strategy has been divide into three phases as below:

However, to start with, it was decided that farmers would be educated to start collective marketing of safed musli at a better price at a terminal market in India, most suitably, Mumbai (Vashi Mandi) Hugar (1980) on vegetables; Singh and Sidhu (1974) on goundnut; Singh (1998) on food grains; Wen (1966) on banana also worked on the related topic.

The process followed for collective markets :



A number of big traders were identified in Indore, Nashik and Mumbai; their terms and conditions were compared and a trader was finalized.

More than 5 rounds of orientation programmes were held to educate and oriented the farmers; a leader Shri Bhaskarbai was identified and motivated.

Products were aggregated by going door-to-door (the practice would be changed next time) as it was the first time the farmers were doing this (Janardhan, 1980; Subranamian and Sudha, 1992 and Yembhatnal, 2007).

Other benefits :

Weight :

The small time traders cheat the farmers at the time of weighing their products; this cheating amount to at least 5-10 per cent of the total revenue. In this intervention, electronic standard weighing machines were used for weighing the product so that the farmers get full value of their product.

Cleaning and grading :

The small traders procure the products from the farmers and then grad them into A, B and C qualities, which fetches them another 5-10 per cent. The farmers were trained how to cleaned and grade their products; this helped them realize the value further the value further.

Saving in time,

Saving in operational cost,

Saving in drudgery.

Similar work related to the present topic was also done by Geeta *et al.* (1988) on cotton yarn and Madhuri and Kamini (2003) on watermelon.

Policy for future development :

- Production in more areas,
- Process improvement,
- Processing at Common Facility Centre(CFC): powder,
- Organic certification.

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