

The sweet taste of success

Farming sweetcorn transforms community

Deciding to grow a new crop is a difficult step. Help from our Foundation has turned sweetcorn into a major source of income for smallholders in northern India.

For years, Manoj Bage had suffered sleepless nights from financial worries. Like many small farmers from the Ranchi area of Jharkhand in northeast India, he leased a small patch of land and grew paddy and a few vegetables. However, the income he earned was not enough to feed, clothe and educate his family.

Then the team from Syngenta Foundation India (SFI) came to the area with some new ideas. Yuvraj Madeshawar and Prasant Nanda had put together an innovative partnership with a modern retailer that offered farmers a starter pack of sweetcorn seeds, fertilizer and other essentials for a good yield worth around INR25,500 (approx US\$390). They also guaranteed to buy the produce, giving farmers access to a reliable market.

Even so, farmers were hesitant to take on an unfamiliar crop. Manoj thought hard, but was determined to improve his family's life. With the guidance of the SFI team, he planted sweetcorn on 1.7 acres of his 2.5 acre plot, in the *kharif* (monsoon) season.

It was a good decision.

In less than three months Manoj harvested a bumper crop of 7.2 tonnes of sweetcorn, earning him INR65,000 (approx US\$1000). This was a huge increase on the INR50,000 he had previously earned in an entire year. Our photo shows his wife with some of the harvest.

Farmers in the surrounding area were not slow to show interest in Manoj's success. SFI and local NGO partners PRADAN and Mahila Torpa Sangh have shown his model farm to more than 750 other farmers, and sweetcorn production has surged as a result. A total of eight acres yielded a crop of 29 tonnes and income of around INR2,50,000 (approx US\$3,850). SFI has ambitions to increase the area under sweetcorn to 100 acres in the next *kharif* season and is increasing its outreach efforts.

Manoj has used his additional income not only to improve his family's standard of living. He has also bought his younger brother a motorized rickshaw, enabling him to set up his own business and further increase family income.

He is proud of his achievement, and proud of its influence on the wider community. Success tastes sweeter when it is shared.

