

EMPOWERING FARMERS: ANETH SANGMA AND THE IMPACT OF IVCS



Many rural tribal communities continue to rely on traditional methods of cultivation. While these practices carry cultural value, they are increasingly unsustainable in today's context. Years of continuous farming have reduced soil fertility, and limited farmland makes shifting cultivation difficult. Climate change further compounds these challenges, leaving farmers vulnerable. To overcome these issues, there is a growing need to integrate traditional wisdom with modern agricultural techniques, ensuring higher productivity and long-term sustainability.

Aneth's livelihood depended largely on small business activities and traditional vegetable farming. Yet, the lack of technical knowledge meant that nearly half of his produce was unsellable. For example, his cabbages often failed to mature properly, and his cauliflowers began flowering prematurely before reaching full growth. These issues reduced both yield and quality, leaving him with minimal income and no savings. His earnings were modest, barely enough to meet his family's basic needs, and he faced the same financial insecurity that burdened many rural farmers.

Turning Point: The Establishment of IVCS

Although the Chengkaldare Integrated Village Cooperative Society (IVCS) was formed in 2019, Aneth's village was included only in 2023. That same year, he became both a member of the cooperative and an Off-Season Vegetable (OSV) Service Provider. This marked a decisive turning point in his life and livelihood.

Through IVCS, Aneth actively participated in multiple training programs focused on modern vegetable cultivation. He gained valuable knowledge in crop management, pest control, and sustainable farming practices, skills that helped him overcome the limitations of traditional methods. Importantly, he did not keep this knowledge to himself. Instead, he mentored fellow farmers, guiding them to adopt improved techniques that boosted productivity across the community.

Over the past three years, Aneth has successfully cultivated crops such as ginger, cauliflower, cabbage, onion, and tomato. With the support of training and cooperative resources, he now sells up to 92% of his produce, compared to only 50% earlier. This dramatic improvement has significantly increased his revenue, transforming his farming enterprise into a sustainable and profitable livelihood.

Financial Support

In 2024, Aneth received financial assistance of Rs. 50,000 from the IVCS. This support enabled him to expand his farming operations, invest in better inputs, and improve crop yields. The funding provided a strong foundation for scaling up his agricultural enterprise and achieving greater financial stability.



Impact and Contribution

Aneth's journey reflects the transformative power of IVCS in rural communities. By sharing his expertise, he empowers other farmers to adopt improved cultivation practices. His role strengthens the IVCS's mission of collective progress and rural transformation. Through consistent earnings from multiple crops, he has achieved financial stability and created a sustainable livelihood for his family. More

importantly, his success inspires young farmers to view agriculture not merely as subsistence but as a profitable and dignified enterprise.

Seed and Input Procurement

To sustain his farming activities, Aneth procures most of his seeds from the Dadenggre market, which serves as a key hub for agricultural inputs in the region. However, access to certified organic seeds remains limited, making it challenging to maintain consistent quality and standards. Alongside seeds, he sources vermicompost locally, ensuring that his crops receive nutrient-rich organic fertilizer. This practice not only improves soil health but also supports his commitment to sustainable farming. By relying on locally available inputs, Aneth reduces costs and strengthens the link between his farm and the community, though the scarcity of high-quality organic seeds continues to be a hurdle in scaling up production.

Market

Aneth sells most of his produce in nearby local markets, particularly at Dadenggre and Damal A-sim. These markets provide him with direct access to consumers who value fresh, locally grown vegetables. In addition to market sales, many customers prefer to visit his farm directly to purchase produce, appreciating both the freshness and the trust built through personal interaction. This dual approach, selling in established markets and directly from the farm, helps him maintain steady demand and strengthens his connection with the community.



Challenges

Market Challenges in Organic Farming

Despite the growing demand for organic vegetables, particularly cabbage and cauliflower, Aneth continues to face significant challenges in sustaining his farming enterprise. One of the biggest hurdles is market competition. While many consumers appreciate the quality and health benefits of organic produce, a large segment of buyers remain highly price-sensitive. Since organic vegetables are typically priced Rs.15–Rs.20 higher per unit than their inorganic counterparts, these customers often choose the cheaper option, directly impacting Aneth's sales volume.

Increasing Threats to Crop Health

Another growing concern is the increasing prevalence of pests year after year, which threatens crop health and reduces yield. Managing these pests organically is more complex and costly, requiring constant vigilance and specialized techniques.



Limited Access to Organic Seeds

Access to quality organic seeds is also limited, making it difficult to maintain consistent production standards. Without reliable seed sources, planning and scaling up cultivation becomes a challenge.

Crop Growth Challenges

Around 20% of Aneth's cabbages often fail to mature properly, resulting in smaller heads that are unsuitable for sale. Similarly, his cauliflowers tend to flower prematurely before reaching full growth, reducing both quality and market value. These issues highlight the difficulties farmers face when relying on traditional methods without adequate technical support. Such irregular growth not only lowers productivity but also affects income stability, making it harder for small-scale farmers to compete in the market.



Livestock Threats to Farming

Between January and April, livestock, especially cattle and goats are allowed to roam freely under community traditions. While this practice is culturally significant, it poses serious risks to farmers. If fencing is not properly constructed or if farms are not monitored regularly, there is a high chance that roaming animals will damage or destroy crops. For small-scale farmers, such losses can be devastating, undoing months of hard work and investment.

This challenge highlights the importance of proper farm management practices, such as durable fencing, regular supervision, and community level agreements to balance traditional livestock grazing with the protection of cultivated land. Strengthening these measures can help safeguard crops and ensure farmers' efforts are not wasted.

Future Plans

- **Strengthening Crop Health:** Adopt **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** with natural controls, rotate crops, and use resistant varieties to reduce pest damage.
- **Expanding Organic Seeds:** Build community seed banks with fellow farmers to ensure reliable access to quality organic seeds.
- **Boosting Growth & Yield:** Seek expert guidance on soil and irrigation, run small trials of improved practices, and use digital tools to monitor crop health.
- **Protecting Farms from Livestock:** Invest in durable fencing, establish community grazing agreements, and organize rotational monitoring to safeguard fields.

Future Plans for Sustainable Farming



“Initially, I was able to sell only 50% of the produce from my farm. However, after becoming an Off-Seasonal Vegetable (OSV) Service Provider (SP) and receiving opportunities to venture into vegetable cultivation training initiated by the MBMA under Megha LAMP through IVCS, I applied the knowledge I gained during the training. As a result, I am now able to sell 92% of my produce. I sincerely thank MBMA, Megha LAMP, and IVCS for their support.”- Aneth Sangma