

EMPOWERING FARMERS THROUGH PINEAPPLE TRIAL MARKETING IN EAST GARO HILLS



Pineapple is one of the major fruit crops cultivated in the East Garo Hills district. The region is blessed with abundant production, and this fruit has been an integral part of the community's agricultural tradition since the time of their ancestors. Despite the plentiful availability of pineapples in the district, farmers face significant challenges in marketing their produce. The lack of proper market linkages and fair pricing mechanisms often prevents them from receiving the value they truly deserve for their hard work.

This situation highlights a pressing need for better infrastructure, organized supply chains, and cooperative marketing strategies. If farmers were provided with improved access to markets, storage facilities, and fair trade opportunities, pineapple cultivation could become not only a cultural legacy but also a sustainable source of livelihood and economic growth for the East Garo Hills.

See this all the Meghalaya Livelihood Access to Market Project (MLAMP) under Meghalaya Basin Management Agency (MBMA) set up Collective Marketing Centre (CMC) almost across all the block of the District in the Integrate Village Cooperative Society (IVCS).

Under the MLAMP, the MBMA has established CMCs across nearly all blocks of the district. These centres operate through the IVCS, serving as organized platforms where farmers can collectively market their produce.

The creation of CMCs is a significant step toward addressing long-standing challenges faced by farmers, such as poor market access, lack of bargaining power, and unfair pricing. By pooling resources and working through cooperative structures, farmers are better positioned to negotiate prices, reduce dependence on middlemen, and ensure that their hard work translates into fair income. This initiative

not only strengthens local livelihoods but also builds a sustainable framework for rural economic growth in Meghalaya.

Collective Supply of Pineapple – Trial Marketing (2004)

In 2004, five IVCS, Bolchurani IVCS Ltd., Dechakki IVCS Ltd. , Silchang Dimrimbri Palwang A-ding IVCS Ltd. , Millawe Songma IVCS Ltd., and Jamge IVCS Ltd., came together to collectively supply 122.935 tons of pineapple to the Umdhihar PRIME Hub.

This initiative was part of a trial marketing effort designed to test the feasibility of organized aggregation and supply from rural producers to a central hub. Through this collaboration, approximately 500 farmers directly benefited, gaining access to structured markets, fair pricing, and improved income opportunities.

The trial demonstrated the potential of cooperative action in strengthening rural economies, showcasing how collective supply chains can empower smallholder farmers, particularly in regions where market access is limited. It also laid the groundwork for future scaling of such initiatives, emphasizing the importance of community-driven models in agricultural marketing.

Grading and Pricing System:

The Integrated Village Cooperative Societies (IVCS) aggregated the pineapples into two categories:

A Grade and B Grade. Farmers sold their produce to the IVCS at the following rates:

- **A Grade:** Rs. 13 per kilogram
- **B Grade:** Rs. 8 per kilogram

Subsequently, the IVCS sold the pineapples to the Umdhihar PRIME Hub at higher rates:

- **A Grade:** Rs. 19 per kilogram
- **B Grade:** Rs. 14 per kilogram

This system of collective marketing not only ensured proper grading of the produce but also allowed farmers to access better markets through the IVCS. By channeling their harvest through cooperative structures, farmers were able to secure fairer prices compared to traditional local markets, though the margin between farm-gate and hub prices also highlights the importance of strengthening farmer bargaining power and reducing intermediaries.

The farmers earned Rs 3 more from the IVCS from the grade A and the same Rs 3 from the grade B as around 300 farmers benefited from these trial marketing.

IVCS Pineapple Aggregation and Marketing Data (2024–2025)

IVCS Name	Product	Year of Aggregation	LAMP Trial Marketing	Aggregated Qty (KG)	Procurement Price from farmer (unit/INR)	Sale price (unit/INR)
Bolchurani IVCS Ltd.	Pineapple	2024	85000	8500	Grade A Rs. 13/kg & Grade B Rs. 8/kg	Grade A Rs. 19/kg & Grade B Rs. 14.5/kg
		2024		7094	Grade A Rs. 13/kg & Grade B Rs. 8/kg	Grade A Rs. 19/kg & Grade B Rs. 14.5/kg
Dechakki IVCS Ltd.	Pineapple	2024	51000	2000	Grade A Rs. 13/kg & Grade B Rs. 8/kg	Grade A Rs. 19/kg & Grade B Rs. 14.5/kg
		2024		3420	Grade A Rs. 13/kg & Grade B Rs. 8/kg	Grade A Rs. 19/kg & Grade B Rs. 14.5/kg
Silchang Dimrimbri palwang A-ding IVCS Ltd.	Pineapple	2024	190000	15400	Grade A Rs. 13/kg & Grade B Rs. 8/kg	Grade A Rs. 19/kg & Grade B Rs. 14.5/kg
		2024	204000	24210	Grade A Rs. 13/kg & Grade B Rs. 8/kg	Grade A Rs. 19/kg & Grade B Rs. 14.5/kg
		2025		14154	Rs. 13/kg	Rs. 16/kg
Millawe Songma IVCS Ltd.	Pineapple	2024	136000	10295	Grade A Rs. 13/kg & Grade B Rs. 8/kg	Grade A Rs. 19/kg & Grade B Rs. 14.5/kg
Jamge IVCS Ltd.	Pineapple	2023-24	190000	14410	Grade A Rs. 13/kg & Grade B Rs. 8/kg	Grade A Rs. 19/kg & Grade B Rs. 14.5/kg
			306000	21452	Grade A Rs. 13/kg & Grade B Rs. 8/kg	Grade A Rs. 19/kg & Grade B Rs. 14.5/kg
		2025		2000	Rs. 13/kg	Rs. 22/kg

Market Pricing and Benefits of Pineapple Grading

Weight Classification of Pineapples: Pineapples are categorized into different grades based on their size and weight; this grading system helps buyers and sellers distinguish between premium and standard produce.

Local Market Pricing: The local market offers different price ranges depending on the grade:

- Grade A Pineapples: Priced at Rs. 18–20 per piece.
- Grade B Pineapples: Priced at Rs. 10–15 per piece.

Although the price difference between the two grades of pineapples is not very significant, Grade A pineapples tend to attract more buyers because of their larger size and superior perceived quality. A Grade A pineapple typically weighs around 3 kilograms, which translates to a trial marketing price of approximately Rs. 39. In comparison, a Grade B pineapple weighs about 2 kilograms and is sold for Rs. 18.

Farmers' Advantage through Trial Marketing: Farmers have reported receiving better prices through trial marketing initiatives compared to traditional local market sales.

- Trial marketing allows farmers to showcase the quality of their produce directly to buyers.
- It creates opportunities for higher margins, especially for Grade A pineapples, which are more competitive in organized or premium markets.
- This approach reduces dependency on local markets, where prices are often lower and less stable.



Broader Implications

The grading and pricing system highlights two important aspects:

- Quality differentiation ensures that larger, better-looking pineapples fetch higher prices.
- Market innovation such as trial marketing can significantly improve farmers' income by connecting them to buyers willing to pay more for quality produce.

Marketing of the Product:



The East Garo IVCS collectively supplied its produce to the Umdihar PRIME Hub, which then took the lead in marketing and distribution. Through its network, the hub successfully sold the products to diverse destinations, including traders in Assam and major metropolitan markets such as Bangalore and Delhi. This strategic outreach not only connected local farmers to wider commercial opportunities but also demonstrated the hub's role in bridging rural production with urban demand. By expanding into both regional and national markets, the initiative strengthened the visibility of local produce, enhanced income opportunities for farmers, and contributed to building a more resilient supply chain.

Challenges in Trial Marketing

Limited Maturity of Produce: During the trial marketing phase, one of the major challenges faced was that not all fruits matured at the same time. This uneven ripening made it difficult to sell the entire harvest in one go.

Restricted Sales Volume: As a result of the staggered maturity, farmers were only able to sell approximately 60% of their produce through trial marketing. The remaining portion had to be held

back until it reached marketable quality, which limited immediate income opportunities.

Impact on Farmers: This challenge highlighted the need for better post-harvest management, storage facilities, and coordinated marketing strategies. Without these, farmers risk losing potential revenue and face difficulties in maximizing the value of their produce during trial phases.

The product of the farmers not only contain A and B grade products but they have C grade products as well which the buyers don't buy it as they have to sell in the local markets which is another problem of the farmers.

Some years do not get the quantity demand by the buyers as some years do not bear fruit as per the farmer's expectation as well

Challenges with Grade C Pineapples

Local Market Dependency: Farmers are often compelled to sell Grade C pineapples in local markets, as these products are not accepted by larger buyers or premium hubs.

Difficulty in Bulk Sales: Since Grade C produce is usually available in large quantities, farmers struggle to sell the entire stock at once. This leads to delays and storage issues, further reducing profitability.

Reduced Pricing: In many cases, farmers are forced to sell Grade C pineapples at prices lower than the usual market rate. This significantly impacts their overall income and highlights the need for better market linkages and value-addition strategies for lower-grade produce.

Product Quality and Market Acceptance: Farmers produce a wide range of agricultural products that are classified into different grades such as A, B, and C. A and B grade products are generally accepted by buyers and fetch better prices. C grade products, however, are often rejected by buyers because they are harder to sell in larger or premium markets.

As a result, farmers are forced to sell these lower-grade products in local markets, where demand and pricing are limited. This creates a significant challenge, as the income from C grade produce is much lower, reducing overall profitability.



Fluctuations in Yield and Buyer Demand: Another major issue farmer's face is the uncertainty of agricultural yield. In some years, crops do not bear fruit as expected due to factors like weather conditions, pests, or soil fertility. This leads to a mismatch between the quantity demanded by buyers and the quantity produced by farmers. When production falls short, farmers struggle to meet contractual obligations or market expectations, which further impact their financial stability.

The Broader Impact: These challenges highlight two interconnected problems:

- Market rejection of lower-grade produce, forcing farmers into less profitable local sales.
- Unpredictable harvests, which make it difficult to consistently meet buyer demand.

Youth and Women engagement during Trial Marketing

During the trial marketing exercise, approximately 15 individuals were engaged to support operational activities. Out of these, 10 were youth and women, who played a key role in tasks such as aggregation, weighing, loading and collection of products. Their participation not only ensured smooth execution of the process but also fostered inclusivity by involving local community members.

For their contribution, each participant received wages ranging between Rs. 300–500 over a period of 2–3 day. This engagement provided short-term employment opportunities, encouraged active involvement of women and youth in community-driven initiatives, and highlighted the potential of such projects to generate both social and economic benefits.

Waste Management

During the trail marketing activities, all waste generated was carefully collected and disposed of in a designated dug-out pit created specifically for this purpose. This method was adopted because the area falls outside municipal jurisdiction, as there is no formal waste collection service available. By organizing waste disposal in this way, the team ensured that the environment remained clean and that the waste was managed responsibly despite the absence of municipal facilities.



Future Plan:

To maximize the value of their produce, IVCS/CBOs place emphasis on identifying the most suitable buyers, determining competitive price points, and selecting effective marketing channels. Establishing these elements at an early stage enables them to design a strong selling strategy before transitioning into full-scale marketing.