

SUCCESS STORY

Title: Entrepreneurship Development through Processing of Underutilized Seasonal Fruits and Vegetables: The Journey of Mrs. Techa Hongsha

Farmer Profile:



Mrs. Techa Hongsha, a 52-year-old woman farmer from Khangshim village in Chandel district, Manipur, is a graduate (B.A.) and part of a small nuclear family of three members. Despite owning only 0.25 hectares of agricultural land, she has successfully carved a niche for herself in the field of value addition, focusing on seasonal fruits and vegetables. With a clear vision and unwavering determination, she transformed her humble resources into a viable enterprise, becoming a role model for rural women across the region.

Situation and Challenges:

Chandel district of Manipur is rich in underutilized seasonal fruits and vegetables, which are abundantly available during the harvesting season. These local fruits are not only nutritious—rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants—but also possess significant commercial potential due to their bioactive compounds. However, the perishable nature of these commodities poses a serious challenge. Without proper post-harvest technology, much of this produce deteriorates quickly and goes to waste. Until recently, there were no appropriate processing techniques available locally to convert these seasonal resources into value-added products, resulting in lost income opportunities and significant post-harvest losses.

Response and Intervention by KVK Chandel:

Recognizing the need to equip rural women with modern skills in food processing, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Chandel conducted several training and demonstration programmes. Mrs. Techa actively participated in both short- and long-term capacity-building sessions focused on recent technologies for processing, preserving, and packaging seasonal fruits and vegetables. Training manuals, leaflets, and instructional books distributed during the programmes served as valuable references. Additionally, exposure visits and field days organized by KVK played a critical role in inspiring women like her by showcasing success stories and teaching practical methods of production, packaging, and marketing.

Seeing her potential and enthusiasm, KVK Chandel, under the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) of ICAR, Umiam, supported the establishment of a small-scale community processing unit named Lamjing Food Processing Centre, branded as Mangthel. The center not only gave Mrs. Techa a platform to scale up production but also encouraged her to diversify the range of products using locally sourced fruits and vegetables.

Results and Achievements:

Through her dedication and use of newly acquired skills, Mrs. Techa began producing a wide range of value-added products including squash, RTS beverages, juice, chutneys, candies, dry preserves, chips, pickles, jams, and jellies. Many of these items were made from indigenous and previously underutilized fruits such as olive, hog plum, wild apple, peach, carambola, plum, amla, heibi, heibung, chow chow, and papaya.

To manage supply efficiently, she adopted the practice of bulk preservation during peak seasons, especially in the form of fruit juices, which were later sold during lean periods. Her products

quickly gained popularity due to their quality, natural flavor, and uniqueness in preparation. They were showcased and sold at prominent events such as ICAR and KVK Kisan Melas, SHG Mela, Saras Mela, Sangai Festival, and in local markets in Imphal and neighboring districts. She even began exporting her products to other states.

The distinctive methods she used for processing and preserving fruits—combined with attractive packaging and proper labeling—made her products stand out. Her products received excellent sensory evaluation scores for appearance, color, taste, and overall acceptability. As a result of this growing demand, she now earns more than ₹1.7 lakh annually from her enterprise.

Awards and Recognition:

Her achievements have been widely recognized. She won the second prize in the Mushroom Exhibition during National Mushroom Day 2019, organized by AICRP on Mushrooms, ICAR Manipur Centre, in collaboration with ABI Centre. She also received the second prize for Citrus Fruit Biodiversity at the National Seminar on Conservation and Commercialization of Citrus Biodiversity in NEH Region, conducted by the Directorate of Research, CAU, Imphal, on 18–19 February 2021. Furthermore, she was awarded the first prize at the Saras Mela, organized by MSRLM, Government of Manipur.

Evidence of Impact:

Mrs. Techa Hongsha has not only become a successful entrepreneur but has also emerged as a community leader and trainer. Her journey has inspired many women in and around Chandel district to take up food processing as a livelihood. As a result of her entrepreneurship, she has improved her family's socio-economic status, including better education for her children and greater social participation. She now enjoys higher status and influence within her community.

Her enterprise has also generated local employment, as she began hiring workers on a contractual basis to meet growing demand. The technologies and practices she adopted have now spread to neighboring villages and districts. She has been involved in training interested farm women and rural youth, encouraging a new generation to embrace agro-based entrepreneurship.

Monthly sales data and annual income figures clearly indicate the growth and success of her business before and after KVK's intervention, as depicted in the graphs (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).

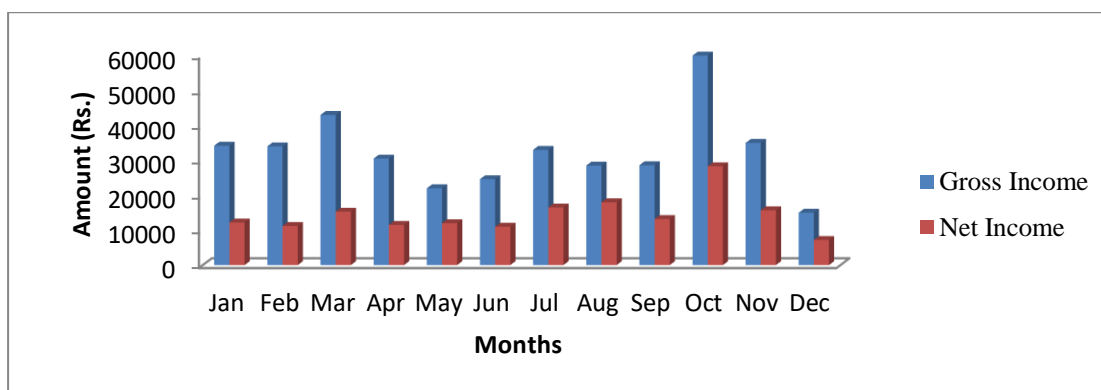


Fig.1 Monthly sales realization

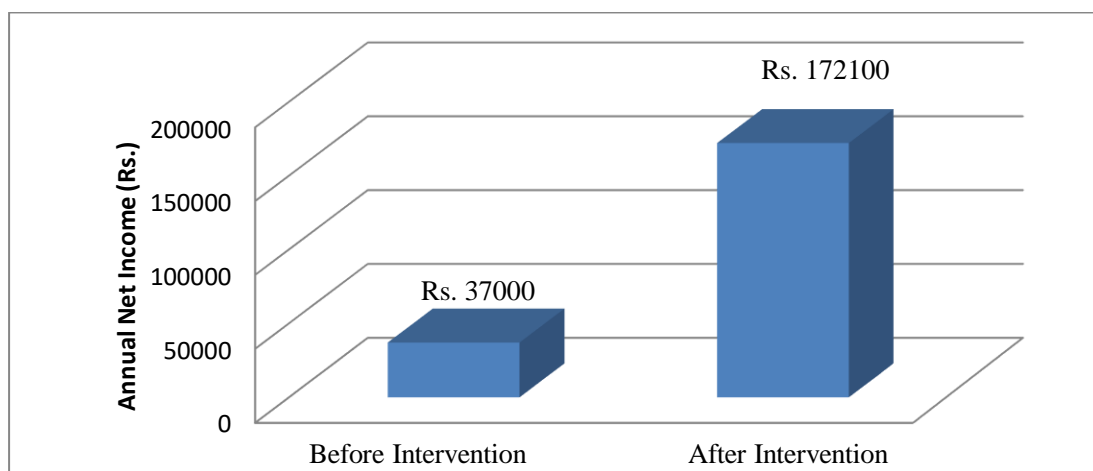


Fig.-2 Annual income before and after intervention

Lessons Learned:

Mrs. Techa’s journey shows that with strong willpower, consistent effort, and the right support, even perishable and underutilized agricultural resources can be transformed into valuable commercial products. She realized that dreams can become reality through perseverance and by continuously upgrading skills through training and learning. Despite facing challenges such as lack of funds, equipment, and market access, she tackled them by attending training sessions and seeking assistance from KVK, which helped her to remain updated with the latest technologies and trends.

Today, she feels confident that starting another such venture would be much easier, given her thorough understanding of food processing, packaging, and branding techniques.

Supporting Statements and Dignitary Visits:

Her work has earned praise from senior scientists and officials. Dignitaries such as Dr. N. Prakash, Joint Director, ICAR Manipur Centre; Dr. S.S. Roy, TSP In-Charge; Dr. S. Hazarika, TSP Nodal Officer, ICAR Barapani; and Dr. Ng. Iboyaima, Principal Scientist, CFTRI Mysore, have visited the Lamjing Food Processing Unit. They commended her efforts, product diversity, innovative packaging, and commitment to entrepreneurship.

Conclusion:

The story of Mrs. Techa Hongsha is a shining example of how rural women, when empowered with knowledge and support, can lead agricultural transformation. From traditional home-based practices to becoming a recognized entrepreneur, her journey reflects the true potential of value addition in enhancing livelihoods. Her initiative has not only created wealth from waste but has also inspired a wave of entrepreneurship across the region—proving that small-scale agro-enterprises can bring about significant socio-economic change when driven by knowledge, innovation, and determination.



Products of Lamjing Food Processing Unit



Visit by the dignitaries to Lamjing Food Processing Unit



Fig. Award received by Techa Hongsha