

GRAINS TO GAINS

Empowering women through brown rice in Karlaghati

UPHOLDING COMMITMENT TO TRADITION, THESE WOMEN ORGANICALLY GROW THE ENDANGERED INDIGENOUS PADDY VARIETY 'LUSURI' AND MANUALLY PROCESS THE RICE USING THE TRADITIONAL TOOLS LIKE 'DHENKI', SHOWCASING A LABOUR OF LOVE THAT HONORS THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, Nov 19: In the picturesque village of Karlaghati, a transformative journey unfolds as 20 self-help group (SHG) members of Karlaghati Van Surakhya Samiti (VSS), under Ujalpur forest management unit in Sundargarh forest division, carve a path to self-reliance and sustainable agriculture.

Empowered by the Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project (OFSDP-II), Shivani SHG and Maa Maria SHG initiated brown rice business in 2019, and they have not looked back ever since.

Over the past four years, these determined women have turned their dreams into reality through relentless dedication and strategic collaboration. With crucial support from the OFSDP-II and the guidance of the P-NGO team leader Digambar Upadhyay and development officer Manoranjan Mallick, they have not only established a thriving brown rice enterprise but also demonstrated a remarkable entrepreneurial spirit.

In 2022, the SHGs achieved a significant milestone by selling an impressive 64 quintal brown rice,



translating into substantial revenue of Rs 3.20 lakh. Undeterred by challenges, their success story continues into 2023, with the earnings reaching Rs 98,000 in just nine months.

The journey of these 20 women goes beyond economic success; it is a narrative of self-reliance, determination, and community resilience. Through the OFSDP-II in Sundargarh forest division, they have not only contributed to economic growth but also embraced the responsibility of preserving local traditions and safeguarding the environment.

An integral part of the initiative involves the cultivation of the endangered indigenous paddy variety 'Lusuri' using organic methods

on five acre of land. Upholding their commitment to tradition, the women manually process the rice using the traditional tools like 'dhenki', showcasing a labour of love that honors their cultural heritage.

As Karlaghati's brown rice revolution continues to unfold, it serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration for rural communities, demonstrating the potential for self-reliance and sustainable practices in agriculture.

Malati Ekka, a successful brown rice seller, said, "With the support of OFSDP-II and the ongoing collaboration with the voluntary organisation 'SEWAK', we have

achieved self-reliance through the trade of organic brown rice.

"In the upcoming days, the goal is to involve every woman in the village, with the aim of exporting our organic brown rice and establishing it as a unique brand within the state and beyond," she added.

Sundargarh DFO Pradeep Mirase wholeheartedly supports and commends the inspiring women of Karlaghati for their dedication to sustainable agriculture and community well-being. He attributes the success to the hard work and consistent efforts of these visionary women.

Through the OFSDP-II, essential support in the form of a revolving fund, capacity building, and market linkages for their organic brown rice is provided, offering alternative livelihoods to reduce pressure on forest resources.

As these empowered women continue to lead the way in self-reliance, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship, the anticipation is for the on-going growth of this remarkable journey. Their success story stands as a beacon of empowerment and sustainable progress, serving as an example for others to follow.