

Successful pace of mushroom farming in chamba district of himachal pradesh

Diversification in any farming system imparts sustainability. Mushrooms are one such component that not only impart diversification but also help in addressing the problems of quality food, health and environment related issues. One of the major areas that can contribute towards goal of conservation of natural resources as well as increased productivity is recycling of waste agro-wastes including agro-industrial waste. Utilizing these wastes for growing mushroom can enhance income and impart higher level of sustainability. The average land holding in chamba district is 0.88 hectare and of traditional crops is no more profitable occupation for the people. Mushroom cultivation being a new concept in chamba district was initiated by green gold scheme of DRDA under the technical guidance of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, chamba in the year 2008. Cultivation of button mushroom on trial basis was started by procuring compost. Similar efforts were also made by NAIP project team in Mangla, Bharmour and Sihunta clusters of its study area under the technical guidance of KVK and CSKHPKV, Palampur. But due to non availability of compost in the district, need of mushroom composting unit was felt. Therefore, a mushroom composting unit of 60 tonnes capacity per cycle was constructed in the village Udaipur to meet the farmers demand at doorstep. A team operating the unit was trained and supervised by KVK scientists, helping in compost preparation spawning and casing.

The spawned compost bags were then sold to the farmers at subsidized rate by DRDA in the year 2011 and 2012. Krishi Vigyan Kendra, chamba along with DRDA, CSKHPKV Palampur is promoting mushroom cultivation among small and marginal farmers, landless labourers and resource poor farmers through on campus and off campus trainings, methods demonstrations and spot solution. Till date KVK has organized 20 training in three years and trained 459 farmers in different components of mushroom production technology. Indoor cultivation of mushrooms utilizes the vertical space and is regarded as the highest protein producer per unit area and time which is almost 100 times more than the conventional agriculture and animal husbandry. This hi-tech horticulture venture has a promising scope to meet the food shortages without undue pressure on the land. Monetary gain is the prime factor for the growth of any profession. Mushroom farming is highly remunerative enterprise with quick returns in the very short period. Despite all the favourable conditions prevailing in the district Chamba, mushroom farming is not spreading fast. There are certain inherent problems or bottlenecks which hamper fast spread of mushroom farming in Chamba. A mushroom cultivation is based on agro-waste, the raw materials required for its cultivation are usually transported from plains to hills in huge quantity and mushroom growers have to pay heavy transportation charges resulting in unavoidable increase in cost of production and reduction the net profit. Even then mushroom farming is gaining in popularity among farmers and youths in chamba district, as it is now considered a viable crop to grow because the farmers who once started have not abandoned the cultivation.