

Nadia farmers cash in on berry cultivation

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KRISHNAGANJ: Villagers of Krishnaganj block in Nadia are very happy as they are making good money by selling Bau Kool (berry) in the market. This business initiative has made the poor villagers self-employed and improved their economic condition.

'Griha Samridhi' is an MGNREGA initiative of Nadia district administration. In this scheme, berry farming was encouraged to make the villagers self-employed. The scheme is implemented in five phases. As berry farming is very profitable, the poor people with small agricultural plot of land have taken to cultivating berries.

Krishnaganj block is situated beside the river banks of three

I HAVE IMMENSELY BENEFITTED FROM BERRY FARMING. I AM SELF-SUFFICIENT NOW

KARTIK SADHUKHAN, farmer

rivers: Mathabhanga, Churni and Ichhamati. So the agricultural land of this block is very fertile and the orchards grow quality products.

Inspired by orchard farming, the small and marginal farmers took the initiative to grow berries in their own lands with the help of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme. Majdia is the closest railway station which helps farmers to transport their prod-

uct to other places on train and sell it in the markets. A top official of Nadia MGNREGA cell Babulal Mahato said, "From every unit (10 katha) of berry orchard, 300 kg of berries can be harvested twice in a year. This fruit is sold at Rs 20/a kg. That means from a 10 katha orchard, the per capita income is about Rs 12,000."

In Roypara and Pabakhali village under Shibnibas gram panchayat of Krishnaganj block each family has benefited from the scheme. About 2,400 families in Krishnaganj block are engaged in berry farming. "There are two types of berries. Bau-I and Bau-II; both look like an apple. It is called BAU berry as Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) released it," Mahato said.

According to him, berry orchard established under

Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Scheme has helped each poor family to earn an amount of Rs 20,000 to Rs 40,000 per annum.

BAU-I and BAU-II bears fruit from the very first year of its plantation. Presently, Roypara, Pabakhali, Gobindapur, Khatura, Ghughuragachhi and Krishnapur villages are involved in berry cultivation and all families are benefiting from the scheme.

Berry cultivator Kartik Sadhukhan said, "I have cultivated berry in a few katha of land. I have immensely benefitted from it. My berry goes to local market as well as to Kolkata by train. I am self-employed now." Another cultivator Pradip Roy said, "Now I can give my children a better education as well as fulfil their basic needs. I want to concentrate in berry cultivation so that I can earn more."