

Fostering economic independence for fellow farmers
Case study: Rajesh Patil (Entrepreneur farmer and opinion leader)
village Jalke

Rajesh Patil is one of the progressive farmers of Jalke village and probably the most educated, as he has acquired a masters degree in Physics. He has almost 100 acres agricultural land in which he grows less labour intensive crops like banana, papaya, turmeric and cotton. For summer cotton he grows saplings of cotton from seeds and after a light shower in the month of June, transplants the saplings in the field. Rajesh uses drip system for complete irrigation of his farm. Since he has a big farm to irrigate, buying conventional drip systems would have required huge investments. So Rajesh has invested in buying KB Drip for a very large area, which is connected to an electric pump lifting the water from a deeply dug well. Rajesh is very happy with KB drip as he is now able to cultivate the entire farm, which he could not do earlier. He experienced better quality and quantity of bananas by using drip. He pointed out that if there was a proper system of rewinding KB drip system it would be very helpful in its storage.

Rajesh got associated with IDEI when he bought KB drip. But his committed presence as opinion leader in IDEI conducted farmer meetings, stems from his passion to work for fellow farmers who are less fortunate. He uses the farmer meetings as a platform to share his experience with KB drip. He talks about the technological aspects, and how even very poor farmers can suitably use it on their small plots to increase productivity. He gives various other agronomical inputs to them and answers their queries on seed varieties, germination, transplantation etc. Lately Rajesh has started motivating the farmers to produce organic fertilizers through vermicomposting to reduce their cost of inputs and also to improve on the soil quality. Various exposure visits to his farm has been organized for farmer groups as a demonstration site for KB drip and Vermicomposting.



Three years back Rajesh attended a training program on producing organic manure organised by an organic farming group. He learnt that organic manure can replace use of commercial fertilizers completely. It conserves natural resources like soil and water and also the produce can command a much better price.

Being an educated and a progressive farmer, he sought more information and started with a Vermi composting unit in his farm. Rajesh has now completely shifted to organic farming, using the vermiwash as a micronutrient, he delivers it through the drip system. He saves on about Rs 60-70 thousand which was spent earlier on the chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Rajesh has recently made about 20 cemented structures for vermicomposting, and a very efficient system of collecting vermiwash from them through a network of pipes.

Rajesh plans to form an organic farming group by motivating the smallholder farmers to produce organic fertilizers through Vermicomposting on their own farm. This will help them to enhance their incomes as it reduces the cost of inputs considerably and also the organic produce can get better returns through proper output linkage. The mandate of "Mandal" or the group will be to train farmers to produce organic manure and biological means of pest control.

Two years back, Rajesh started cultivating turmeric which is not very common in the region and therefore commands a good price. Turmeric is grown in the months from June to February, and Rajesh uses drip during the last three months, when the rainy season is over. He plans to



work specifically with small farmers to train them to grow turmeric as a high value crop and also provide them with turmeric seeds.



IDEI looks at these progressive farmers like Rajesh as partners in facilitating the process of integration of the poor farmers with the market systems effectively as micro-entrepreneurs. Revered and looked upon by the local farmer community as icons in the field of agriculture, these farmers are well aware of the local farming needs of the poor farmers. They can suitably mobilize and guide the poor farmers to increase their productivity, so that they can rise above subsistence agriculture to a small scale commercial farming.