

FOREWORD

Himalayan Action Research Centre (HARC), as a mission, is actively engaged in sustainable development and community empowerment of the mountain people. HARC believes that growth in the difficult mountainous regions of Uttaranchal is only possible if the local community based institutions are strengthened and empowered. It also believes that for a sustainable growth, the capacity and skills of the local people should be enhanced so that they can work collectively for their own betterment.

It has been observed that the developmental programmes that are being implemented in the different states have not been able to empower the local people nor has been able to have a sustainable growth. This clearly indicates that for a sustainable and continuous growth, the local people should be empowered and encouraged to participate actively in the developmental programmes as a community.

A large amount of products grown in the plains of Uttaranchal are being sold in the hilly regions of the State due to which the logistic facilities in the plains are well developed. The logistics in the hills are still not up to the mark because of which the local people find it difficult to market their products. This discourages them to manufacture different kinds of products. The situation is slowly changing now since the people have started working collectively in groups and federations. The hill products are now readily available in the markets.

These kinds of measures can improve drastically if the local panchayats also get involved. They can play a positive and emulative role in strengthening and organizing systematic manufacturing and marketing of agricultural products. For the development of the villages, it is very important that the people work collectively and form cooperatives for their own growth.

Organic products are now becoming a way of life. There is a growing awareness of organic products all over the world. Keeping this in mind, farmers should be encouraged to do organic farming that will help them to preserve the fertility of their land and get a better price for their products. For this, a systematic programme should be developed that would help the farmers in cultivating their land in a scientific way. The farmers

should be trained in organic farming and latest information should be imparted to the farmers regularly.

The state of Uttaranchal came into existence due to developmental and employment issues. Importance therefore, should be given to programmes related to agriculture. People should be encouraged to work collectively. This will generate self-employment and will motivate the youth to utilize their energy for the growth of the state and themselves.

Himalayan Action Research Centre has developed various programmes for the empowerment and development of the local community based institutions. These interventions by HARC have brought about a change in the thinking and working style of the local people. They are now aware of the advantages of working collectively. A comprehensive report of the past two years of all the interventions done by HARC and its effect has been compiled in this annual report.

IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF PRODUCTION AND THE PRODUCER DUE TO STRONG MARKET LINKAGE: TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE IMPARTED BY THE ASSOCIATION TO INCREASE PRODUCTION

Naugaon Developmental Block, consisting of 107 village Panchayats and spreading over 37,227 square metres of land, is the largest block of Uttarkashi district. The literacy rate of this area is approximately 39 percent. The land price of this area is more than any area of Uttarkashi. The people of this region are dependent on agriculture, floriculture, animal husbandry, forest products and water. 98% of people in this area are involved in agriculture. Due to limited and scattered land for farming, the farmers face a lot of difficulties. Keeping all these conditions in mind, Himalayan Action Research Centre (HARC) is promoting empowerment of the local people through capacity building programmes for sustainable development. These programmes enable the farmers to work collectively for their own social and economic development. To make this a reality, HARC is encouraging the people of the Rawain Valley to form groups so that they would be able to work collectively for their own development. For empowering the groups, HARC organized various capacity building programmes. These programmes have brought about a remarkable difference in the quality of production and the producer.

The farmer groups formulate production strategy based on technical capability, market strategy, market demand, decrease in the cost of production and marketing. Himalayan Action Research Centre assisted the Groups in developing a better marketing strategy by surveying different wholesale markets of vegetables and fruits, by organizing interaction with big wholesalers, survey of market related logistics, grading and packaging. The main drawback was that the production was not up to the market standards. For technical intervention, HARC took the help of the scientists and experts. This helped in the production of crops systematically and scientifically. At present more than 6000 producer families are in direct contact with the market. The number of families has increased 2-3 times in the past 5 years. Due to the support and encouragement received from HARC, the farmers of this region have learnt the technique to make optimum utilization of the land and thereby have been able to improve their economic status.

Under the capacity building programme for the farmers and the federations, more than 1000 farmers were able to meet the farmers of Himanchal Pradesh. This helped the farmers of the Rawain region to prepare themselves for proper and optimum utilization of their land. These educational trips helped the farmers to develop entrepreneurship qualities. Since there are no technical institutions in this area, HARC arranged educational trips and trainings for the farmer members in the two big universities of Agriculture and Horticulture of Himanchal Pradesh. This helped to raise a cadre of 100 para technicians who are helping the farmers to do scientific farming.

Himalayan Action Research Centre organized exhibitions of more than 500 kinds of hybrid vegetables in the farms to motivate the farmers to grow good quality vegetables. More than 2000 farmers benefited from these exhibitions in increasing their confidence in

growing different kinds of vegetables and then marketing them. Vegetables that would grow in these areas were only exhibited. Depending on the demand, techniques of production of a variety of vegetables were promoted. Special emphasis was given to crop protection techniques and the usage of medicines. All these efforts have helped in the good and efficient functioning of the Rawain Vegetable and Fruit Producer Association in the Rawain Valley.

REASONS FOR THE FORMATION OF THE ASSOCIATION

The farmers of the Rawain Valley were involved in cultivation according to the needs of the big wholesalers. Farming inputs like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and packaging materials were supplied by the wholesalers because of which all the benefits went to them and the farmers were at a loss. All this was due to the absence of *mandies*, backward linkage and no technical knowledge. The farmers even after putting in a lot of effort were being unable to benefit economically. Another difficulty that the farmers faced was the exploitation by the transporters and bad road conditions. The problems got worse as the farmers were not working collectively. At this juncture, HARC inspired the farmers to form groups and work collectively. To solve all the above problems, the farmers got together to form Rawain Valley Fruit and Vegetable Producer Association.

FORMATION PROCEDURE OF THE FEDERATION

Himalayan Action Research Centre (HARC), since the year 1990, is continuously imparting technical knowledge of farming to the farmers of the Rawain Valley. HARC gave technical training to a group of farmers with a progressive bent of mind. These farmers were called the paratechs. The paratechs met every month to discuss various techniques of vegetable cultivation. A strategy based on the outcome of these meeting was chalked out for the production of vegetables. Due to this, the cultivation of vegetables increased manifold in this area. In the year 2001, the farmers of this area cultivated tomatoes on a huge scale but faced a lot of problems in marketing them. The paratechs met to discuss the problems of marketing and came to a consensus that the farmers should come together and market the tomatoes collectively. For solving the problems, a sub committee was formed by the Rawain Valley Fruit and Vegetable Producer Association. HARC got the Association registered under the Society Act 1860 in 2001.

VILLAGE LEVEL MEETINGS HELD ON THE FORMATION PROCEDURE OF THE FEDERATION

The Rawain Valley Fruit and Vegetable Producers Association did not form overnight. It is the result of the empowerment process that was being carried out since five years. To make the para techs aware of the working and responsibilities of a federation, HARC organized educational trips to different successfully working federations. This helped the farmers to develop an organizational feeling. Various village level meetings were organized with the help of the para techs to discuss the different aspects of the working of

a federation. Membership to the federation was only given to those farmers who were doing farming themselves.

FORMAT OF RAWAIN VALLEY FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCER ASSOCIATION

For the formation of the federation, 68 villages in the intervention area of HARC, were divided into 7 wards and a ward incharge was appointed in every ward. The groups at the local village level selected the ward incharge. The ward incharge represents the ward in the management committee of the federation. They are the mediators between the village and the federation. At the village level the president of the Farmer Groups are members of the ward level committees.

AIMS OF RAWAIN VALLEY FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCER ASSOCIATION

Keeping in mind the welfare of the members and the federation, Rawain Valley Fruit and Vegetable Producer Association has formulated a list of aim.

They are as follows:

- To work for the development of economic and social conditions of the members.
- To increase production of off season vegetables and fruits and create market linkage for the same.
- To work for the welfare and protection of the members.
- To stabilize agricultural system and link it with economic development.
- To encourage the farmers to work collectively for their own welfare.
- To make constructive use of the delicate environment of this area.
- To develop network with different institutions for providing technical knowledge to the members.
- To create awareness for increasing organic farming.
- To increase diversification of crops by imparting technical knowledge to the local farmers.
- To always work as a non-government organization.

PROCEDURE TO EMPOWER THE ASSOCIATION

The formation of the Association is not as important as the need to build the capability of the members and empowering them. A federation can only grow if it has some latent qualities. For this, HARC organized trainings on leadership building, management techniques, accounts management, organizational capacity and various techniques of production to the members of the Rawain Valley Fruit and Vegetable Producer Association. Along with this, to create awareness and knowledge of the market, educational trips and surveys were conducted of different *mandies*. This has made the federation capable enough to do their work own their own.

To improve the quality of the products, Himalayan Action Research Centre got involved in a quality control drive at the village level. Information about the quality of the products demanded by the market, technical system of harvesting, good quality of seeds etc. were imparted to the farmers. This helped to improve the quality of the products as well as the producer.

Rawain Valley is becoming an inspiration to the other regions in the area of professional farming. Vegetables like tomatoes, capsicum, cabbage, pea, potato and French beans are not only being supplied from this area to the local *mandies* but is also supplying to 'Mother Dairy', a wing of National Dairy Developmental Board. At present the farmers from this region are supplying vegetables worth crores of rupees. The Rawain Valley Fruit and Vegetable Producer Association is striving to make the technique of growing fruits and vegetables more systematic and more scientific.

ORGANIZED MARKETING BY ASSOCIATION NAUGAON

The tenant farmers of the Rawain Valley were facing a lot of difficulties in marketing their products. Even after putting in a lot of effort they were not gaining anything. The wholesalers and the mediators were the main beneficiaries. All these difficulties compelled and prompted more than 800 producers of this region to collectively formulate a proper marketing strategy. As a result of this collective effort, Rawain Valley Fruit and Vegetable Producer Association came into existence.

In the beginning, very few producers were involved with the Association but slowly more and more producers joined in this noble effort. At first, farmers from only 5 villages were members but now farmers from more than 36 villages are associated with the Association and farmers of 15 more villages have shown their interest to join the Association.

To empower and strengthen the association, HARC is involved in market orientation, trips to different mandies, surveys of the market and of the market demand, networking with the seed and fertilizer companies, study of the logistics and inspiring the farmers to cultivate crops according to the market demand. All this has led to the participation of the seed and fertilizer companies to participate in the federation meetings every month. This has helped the farmers to understand the market better and has also helped them to produce good quality products. To strengthen their marketing the

federation has now been able to make agreements with the wholesalers of Kanpur and Delhi. In the initial stage the wholesalers had to pay a security deposit of Rs 50,000 each.

The federation has been able to establish a good link with the market. Now the Federation is trying to formulate a strategy to supply their produce directly to the markets of Kathmandu, Nepal.

In the initial stages the federation supplied their products to the local markets. Due to limited option of marketing they were unable to get a good price for their products. The federation with the help of HARC has been able to establish good connections with the marketing agencies. The federation is now supplying various products to the market, mainly comprising of vegetables and fruits like tomatoes, capsicum, peas, French bean, pears etc. In the year 2002, the federation was able to meet their target of supplying 450 tons of vegetable. In the same way, the federation successfully completed the target to supply 700 tons of vegetable in the 2003 and 1200 ton in 2004. The federation chooses vegetables for production according to the market demand so that the farmers get maximum benefit. Due to all these efforts made by the federation the farmers are growing more than 50 varieties of vegetables in the Rawain Valley.

To systemize marketing, various provisions for crop planning, market demand and selection of products have been made at the different village level committees. On the basis of this, the local committees demand transport for marketing the products of their members.

HARC provides daily market rates to the federation through its website which helps the federation to market their produce. The website also provides information on the facilities available in the mandies based on the survey of logistics, facility of transport available in all parts of the country and government policies. All these information help the federation to formulate its marketing strategy.

COST OF PACKAGING

The federation purchased 2300 plastic crates to market their products. The crates help to carry the vegetables easily and safely to the markets. Purchasing of crates has helped to reduce the cost of packaging by 95%. Collection Centers have been set up at different villages to systemize marketing. These Centers take special care in grading and packaging so that only the good quality products are sent to the market. The federation consulted different packaging companies on various packaging systems available in the market for packaging the fruits.

COMPARISON OF PRODUCTS BASED ON NEW TECHNOLOGY

Technical intervention has helped to make the producers more capable. Based on the market demand, Rawain Valley Fruit and Vegetable Producers Association has formulated a Yearly Crop Cycle Plan. Taking into consideration the circumstances of the

region and on the basis of the crop cycle plan, different varieties of crop are being cultivated. Previously only 800 kg of tomatoes were being cultivated in 0.1 hectare of land but now 2000 kg of tomatoes are being produced keeping the delicate ecological balance in mind. The federation is trying to boost production on the basis of technical knowledge. The farmers for the production of tomatoes used wire-staking technique. Organic farming is being promoted on a large scale. The farmers of this region are marketing vegetables like cabbage, French bean, peas, capsicum, lettuce and broccoli apart from tomatoes. A comparison chart is given below to show the net income of the farmers by marketing vegetables.

S.No.	NAME OF THE CROP	NET INCOME IN RUPEES (in 0.1 hectare of land)	
		Traditional style of cultivation	Scientific way of production
1.	Tomato	3000	6400
2.	Capsicum	500	2750
3.	French bean	1000	5100
4.	Cabbage	1500	7900

A DETAILED COMPARISON OF COST INCURRED IN TRANSPORTATION

When the farmers were not organized in groups and had no marketing strategy then the farmers had to send their produce to the markets individually. Due to this, the farmers had to spend Rs 36 for marketing every 10 kg of produce. This expense on marketing got reduced by 70% due to the organized and good marketing strategy of the Rawain Valley Fruit and Vegetable Producer Association. The benefit went straight to the farmers. With the help of HARC, the federation has strengthened their relation with different marketing agencies and a survey of different *mandies* of the country has also been carried out. The producers have also been given information of the logistics. All this has helped the federation to directly deal with the transporters and marketing agencies. A detailed comparison of the cost of transportation is as follows:

S.No.	NAME OF THE CROP	NET EXPENSE OF TRANSPORTATION IN RUPEES (in 0.1 hectare of land)	
		Marketing system of Federation	Individual marketing
1.	Tomato	14	36
2.	Capsicum	15	40

3.	French bean	12	30
4.	Cabbage	14	30

NETWORKING OF FEDERATION WITH DIFFERENT AGENCIES

To empower, strengthen and develop the federation, networking has been done with the various seed and fertilizer companies. Networking has also been done with the technical universities to educate the farmers about the various technical aspects of farming. All this has made them confident to do their work independently. The federation has been able to establish networking with big marketing agencies like Mother Dairy. The experts of Mother Dairy are training the federation members in grading and packaging and are also helping them to develop capabilities in different avenues. The federation fixes their marketing strategy with Mother Dairy every year and encourages the producers based on this strategy and target. The producers of this area have made a niche for themselves by using good quality hybrid seeds. The federation chalks out an agreement with these marketing agencies based on which the agencies render help to the federation.

S.No.	Details	Number
1.	Seed companies	26
2.	Organic fertilizer & Technical Institutes	12
3.	Universities & Research Centres	08
4.	Marketing Agencies / Businessmen	08
5.	Scientists	24
6.	Financial Institutes	05
7.	Packaging Institutes	02

To look after the day-to-day work of the federation 4 people have been employed by the federation. The federation is continuously growing by increasing their assets. The federation is so strong and empowered now that after opening Collection Centers are now contemplating to buy trucks and build ropeways for improving the transport system.

DETAILS OF MARKETING FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Rawain Valley Fruit and Vegetable Producer Association is extending marketing facilities to its members since the year 2001. The federation did an agreement with Mother Dairy in Delhi and with some good wholesalers of various different *mandies* to

market the produce of its members. Collection Centers were set up by the federation to facilitate systematic marketing. For quality control, special attention was given to grading and packaging in these collection centers so that the producers can reap good benefits. In the first year only tomatoes were marketed but this year along with tomato, capsicum, cabbage, French bean, pea and apple has been supplied to Mother Dairy.

Year	Details of Vegetables (in Kg)	Sum of money (in Rs)
2001	80	8,00,000
2002	448	42,00,000
2003	600	60,44473
2004	31500	40,000,000

FACILITIES GIVEN BY THE FEDERATION TO ITS MEMBERS

In the bylaws of the Rawain Valley Fruits and Vegetable Producers Association clearly mentions that it would work for the welfare of its members. The federation gives the following facilities to its members –

- The federation keeping in mind the welfare of its members has established a Relief Fund. The federation charges Rs 2 from its members as a contribution towards the Relief Fund for every 10 kg of produce marketed. This fund is utilized when a member of the federation incurs loss caused by the destruction of his crops due to unforeseen circumstances. This helps the member to overcome his economic loss.
- The federation has direct contact with seed, fertilizer and pesticide companies to help its members to procure good quality seeds and pesticides at a reasonable price. The federation does agreement with the organic fertilizer companies so that the farmer members get these agri inputs on time.
- Agreements are done with different marketing agencies like Mother Dairy to help the members in marketing their products. The farmers are paid through cheques and for this they do not have to spend any money.
- Small farmers who were not in a position to market their produce due to very little production are now, with the support of the federation, able to sell their produce in the market. This has instilled a high level of confidence in the members towards the working of the federation. Today, these farmers have increased their production because of the help and support they are receiving from the federation.

- The federation has purchased 2300 plastic crates which they lend to their members for packaging. This has reduced the packaging cost by 70%. The federation charges 10 paise per kilogram of production from the members against the use of the crates.
- With the help and support of HARC, the federation provides agricultural inputs like spray machines, sowing machines etc. to its members. The federation charges a nominal amount from the members for borrowing these machines. In turn, this money helps the federation to buy new machines for the members. The federation buys magazines, newspapers etc. from different agriculture and horticulture universities to impart latest technical knowledge to its members.
- To improve the quality of production, the federation trains its members in grading and packaging. For this the federation takes help from the experts of HARC from time to time. For continuous supply of products to the market, the federation chalks out a Crop Production Cycle according to the geographical condition of the area.
- The federation issues an identity card to all its members. The members use this during the federation meetings, market survey, inspection, and for having discussions with different businessmen. This has helped to infuse a sense of belonging in the members and have developed an organizational feeling amongst them.

The federation also helps its members to procure Kissan Credit Card from the banks to buy agricultural inputs. For this the federation is in continuous touch with the banks. Many farmers have benefited from this and have been able to get their credit cards easily.