

# From Strawberries to Scooty: How One Woman is Farming Her Way to Upward Mobility

**F**armers in rural Jharkhand have traditionally faced challenges like erratic rainfall, sparse irrigation resources, lack of well-oiled mechanisation and inadequate access to credit and markets. Yamuna Kumari from Bero was no exception. For generations, her family had subsisted on the bare minimum yield due to poor infrastructure, low-value crops, increasing input costs, and knowledge gaps. She grew paddy, wheat, and vegetables on a five-acre land and earned a meagre income. But then something changed, and today Yamuna is being upheld as a shining example of a progressive woman farmer with an annual income of INR 10–11 lakhs. The obvious financial rewards have also given Yamuna, agency as well as mobility. She recently purchased a scooter, which enables her to travel longer distances. How did she get this far?

She was mentored by Transform Rural India's (TRI) Millionaire Farmer Development programme (MFDP) to adopt modern, sustainable agricultural practices, and Yamuna is now reaping healthier, disease-resistant premium crops like strawberries, French beans, and grafted brinjal. Along the way, she has steered a growing community movement to prove that farming is no longer just a male domain.

Yamuna reflects, "I now choose the right fertilisers and seeds that yield healthier crops and good income. Thanks to TRI's support, I have learnt how to do season-appropriate farming in a scientific way. By testing soil as well as using organic fertilisers, my crop is now healthier and more abundant. This has inspired other farmers to adopt newer methods as well."



## “Jharkhand's Yamuna Kumari has broken the generational cycle of poverty by embracing sustainable agricultural practices”

Not too long ago, this success seemed unreachable as Yamuna was struggling to make ends meet with her husband, two young children, and four other family members. She was pursuing a postgraduate degree in Geography from KCB College, Bero, but she knew that in order to make farming profitable, she needed to access practical knowledge.

After attending TRI's Farmer Field School (FFS), a training centre equipped with the latest technologies, she, along with other local farmers, received hands-on training and exposure to modern agricultural practices such as polyhouse farming, nursery management, mulching, drip irrigation, root zone irrigation, and trellis systems.

She learnt to break past the dependency on local markets and also went on to access high-quality seeds and fertilisers, deal with water scarcity and protect her crops from pests and diseases with the help of integrated pest management (IPM). TRI's team also organised visits to other districts for her to learn advanced practices.

She now conducts regular soil tests to assess nutrient levels, applies balanced fertilisers and uses farmyard manure (FYM) and vermicompost to enrich soil and promote microbial activity. Organic mulch and polythene mulch enable her to conserve moisture, suppress weeds,



regulate soil temperature and reduce plant stress. Drip irrigation, on the other hand, ensures efficient water delivery, minimises waste and prevents fungal diseases. Neem oil and targeted chemical interventions have helped her to manage pests.

TRI, a development design organisation working on transforming India's bottom 100,000 villages into flourishing communities, guided her regarding area and crop selection, annual crop calendar making and imparted the best practices for fertiliser and manure application. She was also given access to a solar pump set, which supports cost-effective irrigation, along with a training hall and a nursery structure to experiment with new crops and motivate others. The continuous support from Community Resource Persons (CRPs) has played a key role in her journey.

Today she practices round-the-year farming, and grows a diverse range of crops including mangoes, wheat, French beans, potatoes, grafted brinjal, marigold, cauliflower, green pea, ginger, green chili, and strawberry with additional crops during the Kharif season.

Her success is now helping her to empower others, including women farmers who are now following in her footsteps and taking up high-value agriculture. Her own increased income now helps her to provide better education and healthcare to her family, making her a proud 'Mahila Kisan' who is blazing a trail for others to follow.