

Educating & empowering **women in India to** become potato farmers



What was *the market situation?*

India is a major global potato producer, growing millions of tons of potatoes region-wide. Over the years, processes have evolved, making way for increasingly modern and sustainable methods of farming. Mindsets have changed and are continuing to change too, with women now successfully starting to play a key part in potato cultivation.

Until now, potato farming has traditionally always been viewed as a male-dominated profession in India. But thanks to a pioneering partnership between Bayer and PepsiCo, women in West Bengal have been given all the training they

need to empower and enable them to go on to become successful potato farmers. Since 2019, they've received dedicated support and guidance in all aspects of potato farming, ranging from the fundamental production processes, such as field preparation and management, to overcoming technical challenges, including pests and disease and blight. At the same time as learning about best practice methods, the women have also been trained on how to farm in accordance with the latest health and safety guidance.

What were *the challenges?*

Before the Food Chain Partnership between Bayer and PepsiCo was implemented, very few women in India were involved with potato farming. And if they were, it was in a laborer capacity. As a result, the women's knowledge of farming was extremely limited. Not only did the training need to teach them about potato cultivation from the ground up, but it also needed to change their mindset and show them they could become successful potato farmers.



What was *the solution?*

Bayer and PepsiCo initially worked with a group of ten women, who have called their farming group Eid Mubarak. They were provided with dedicated training sessions, which took place at the women's one-acre farm.

During these sessions, they were introduced to potato cultivation practices, step-by-step. This included teaching them how to prevent and deal with pests and disease and use pesticides safely. Prior to the training, they used to wear short-sleeved shirts when spraying their fields; now they fully cover themselves up to minimize exposure to the chemicals, which includes wearing masks, too.

The group is now also fully up-to-speed on all of the various different equipment and how to use it. For example, they know the difference between the nozzles for herbicides and insecticides. Before they took part in the training, they only used one nozzle.

They also analyze the land and keep detailed records of everything they do, which enables them to refine their actions and continuously improve the quality of their crops. For instance, they may decide to sow their potatoes differently or alter the chemicals from one year to the next, depending on the conditions.





INDIA



What did *we achieve?*

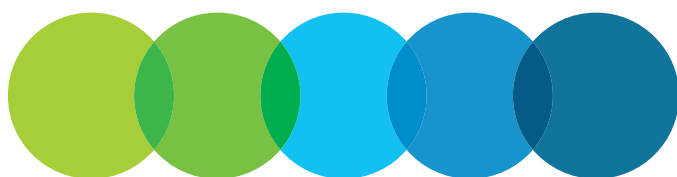
Eid Mubarak has gone from being a group of ten women with no knowledge of potato farming, to a highly successful team of female farmers. Such is their success, a second group has been set up. Further project achievements include:

- 11.9 tons of production in one acre, resulting in ₹14,300 profit between 2019–2020
- Increase to 14.2 tons of production in one acre between 2020–2021, resulting in ₹55,035 profit
- Creation of several self-help groups consisting of more than 1,200 women farmers in South Bengal

The women are all extremely confident and competent in all aspects of potato cultivation. What's more, they've been empowered to lead the way in showing women in and around West Bengal that it is possible for female farmers to enjoy the same successes as their male counterparts. More importantly, they've been provided with the practical and technical support and guidance to enable them to farm efficiently, effectively, and sustainably now, and for many years to come.

About Food Chain Partnership

Consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of the need for healthy nutrition. Food Chain Partnerships help to supply consumers with high-quality fresh produce, which forms the basis of a healthy diet. But such partnerships can only succeed if they involve every player in the food chain – from the farmer and processor to the exporter or importer and retailer. The Crop Science Division of Bayer has the global experience and cutting-edge expertise to create a successful partnership at every level.



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