

Fulfilling Nutritional and Health Needs of Family through Kitchen Gardening

Vanita Santosh Khekde is 37 years old and living with her husband and two children in the village *Malkapur (Bodad)*. The family leases inland for cultivation every year. She is educated up to 9th class and her husband is educated up to 7th class. In the year 2013-14 they leased in 3 acres of land for farming at the rate of Rs. 2000 per acre. Besides helping in farming Vanita also undertakes tailoring work. The family is recognized for their hard work and good social behavior in the village. Vanita's elder son is 10 years old and younger son is 2 years old.

Vanita joined *Ramai Jagrut Maila Shetakari Samiti* (a women farmers' group promoted by M S Swaminathan Research Foundation) in the year 2013. Through the *samiti* she received the guidance on importance of balanced diet and having a kitchen garden to help enhance the health status of her family members. Moreover she also received guidance on adoption of mixed cropping pattern..



Vanita utilized 34 sq. ft. of open space in her backyard for growing kitchen garden. As learnt during village level training she kept paths in the kitchen garden as a working space. The family doesn't have any cattle. So Vanita collected cow dung from the village streets and prepared integrated fertilizer (Cow dung + chemical fertilizers). She applied this to the kitchen garden as basal dose. She had grown almost 23 types of vegetables in her garden from the month of June to March. This year she had planted lemon, guava and papaya tree in her kitchen garden. She diverted waste water of her house to irrigate kitchen garden along with tap water. She prepared extract of neem leaves and sprayed on growing vegetables twice in a month. She shared that as a result of practicing this she could manage the pest manifestation at minimal level. Besides that she got enhanced production.

Types of vegetables cultivated in kitchen garden
Leafy vegetables <i>Fenugreek, Amaranthus (spp), Spinach, coriander, curry leaves and Colocasia leaves</i>
Other vegetables <i>Brinjal, Tomato, Chili, long beans, Ladies finger, Heti, Maize, Pigeon pea, Nachani (minor millet), Ajwayan, Fennal, Broad beans, cucumber, pumpkin, bitter guard and Ridge guard</i>
Fruits Lemon, Papaya and Guava
Tubers <i>Beet root, radish and carrot</i>

Vanita shared that it was not possible for them to purchase vegetables from market regularly as the monthly expenditure on purchase of vegetables was nearly Rs. 1000 /-. By growing kitchen garden she could not only meet the needs of family but also she could gain income of Rs. 10000 /- in the year 2013-14 and Rs. 15000 /- in the year 2014-15 by selling her surplus vegetables in the market. She prepared chili powder and coriander powder with the dried chilies and seeds for consumption. She harvested *Nachani* (minor millet) which is highly nutritious and helps in improving the hemoglobin level. She

prepares *parathas* (a type of bread) with mixture of flour of this minor millet with flour of 2-3 types of pulses and grains. This is a new food grain added to their food basket. Now she prepares number of recipes with vegetables produced in her back yard. She participated in the diet display activity organized at village level collectively by all *samitis*. In this activity Aganwadi Worker narrated the importance of diversification of food items in the diet. Vanita also cultivated *Ajwayan* and fennel from her kitchen garden which are used as mouth fresheners after meal and has medicinal properties to heal digestive problems.



As she experienced the benefits of growing kitchen garden she kept seeds of all varieties of vegetables for next year use. Inspired from her activity of kitchen garden her neighbors started growing kitchen garden. Vanita said that she will share extra seeds of vegetables with other women in the village to extend the adoption of growing kitchen garden. Her husband developed interest in the growing kitchen garden and helped her to turn it into an enterprise. He used to take the surplus vegetables to the market at taluk place for sale and even sold vegetables on bicycle within the village. Vanita's elder son helps her in sowing seeds in the kitchen garden and in irrigating the garden. He also helps the mother to store the seeds properly.

This year Vanita has planned to cultivate turmeric in her kitchen garden. She feels confident that she can effectively deliver information regarding importance of kitchen garden and best practices for growing kitchen garden to fellow villagers.

Narrations of Accredited social health activist (ASHA) Worker – Aruna Waghmare

Aruna is a ASHA worker. She is also a member of the *samiti*. She shared that –



“Two years back Vanita was very weak. Her Hb was low and she used to fall sick very frequently. Her children are also underweight. Her younger child weight slowly rose to normal child’s weight due to consumption of healthy vegetables. Her elder son is still underweight. The normal weight of 10 years boy should be around 30 to 35 kg and his weight is 20 kg. But as a result of consumption of variety of vegetables he remains healthy. Similarly Vanita’s Hb level is lower than normal but has registered an improvement. The family is happy because they could save money on purchase of vegetables, fulfilling nutritional needs, reduced medical expenditure and earning money from excess of produce. This is possible because of Vanita’s strong desire to conquer anemic conditions of her family along with hard work and support of her family. The guidance provided by MSSRF played a very crucial role to bring turning point in their lives.”