

WADI Model Transforming Rural Lives



Mr Sukhdev, a resident and farmer who has developed WADI under LIC HFL Project in Kota, Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh

In the dry and water scarce district of Sonbhadra, lives Sukhdev with his family. Sukhdev depends on his small agricultural land to sustain his family. With scarce natural resource, cultivating two crops in a year barely makes ends meet. There are tough phases when he seeks daily wage work in nearby cities to keep his family afloat. There are many like Sukhdev who leave the tranquil village life in order to simply sustain their family and lack of livelihood opportunities clubbed with redundant agriculture technology makes it all the more difficult for small farmers to cope up with the fast-changing world.

Attempts have been made in past to have a robust and multifaceted village economy, and one such intervention is done by Development Alternatives (DA) with support from LIC HFL HRIDAY project; The WADI Model of farming (a common practice in Gujarat), is an integrated and sustainable farming approach designed to improve the livelihoods of small and marginal farmers in rainfed or semi-arid regions. This agricultural model focuses on enhancing the productivity and resilience of farming systems in areas that are largely dependent on rainwater for crop cultivation.

In the year 2022, Sukhdev participated in a training program on the WADI model, organised by Development Alternatives and something stirred within him. He saw a lifeline in the WADI model, a chance to transform his family's fortunes and he was determined to make it work on his land.

During his training programme, Sukhdev delved deep into the intricacies of the WADI model. The DA team, along with the community resource person from Kota, left no stone unturned to ensure that farmers like Sukhdev grasped the model thoroughly. They organised sessions with agriculture experts and introduced Sukhdev to fellow farmers who had already tasted success with their WADIs.

His excitement grew as he absorbed the potential benefits of the WADI model. He eagerly contacted the DA team, seeking their guidance on the necessary preparations. From digging pits to preparing the soil and using compost, he was determined to follow every step meticulously.

Soon, his piece of land was adorned with Mango and Guava plants for his WADI, and Lemon and Shegoan plants for bio fencing. While his knowledge of farming was already substantial, the DA team continued to support him, making regular visits to offer updates and recommendations.

He knew patience was the key and waited for the day when the Mango and Guava trees would bear fruit. The WADI model was an investment in the future, and he was willing to wait three long years to see the fruits of his labour. But Sukhdev's journey did not stop there. As part of the project, he set up a vermicompost unit near his farm. Armed with earthworms and the waste from plants and cattle, Sukhdev began producing compost. It was not just about farming anymore; he saw it as the beginning of a new venture. During a farmers' meet, he expressed his vision of expanding his vermicompost unit into something bigger, a testament to his determination and ambition.

Sukhdev's journey is a story of transformation. It is about how initiatives like the WADI model can breathe new life into the livelihoods of marginalised farmers, giving them hope and prosperity right in their own villages. His determination and the support from organisations like Development Alternatives are shining examples of how rural migration can be curtailed, making way for a brighter future within the embrace of the countryside.