

# Odisha tribal farmers becoming 'lakhpatis' by adopting drip irrigation

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📷 Representational image Odisha tribal farmers revolutionising farming techniques using drip irrigation method

There is no pucca road nor electricity in the tribal village of Tangiriapal of this district but drip irrigation has reached the small and marginal farmers here, helping them to harvest round the year and get better returns.

In fact, tribal farmers in 68 villages of Harichandanpur block, who were highly dependent on monsoon and were harvesting hardly one crop a year, are taking advantage of drip irrigation and growing crops for commercial purpose.

Drip irrigation is a method of controlled irrigation in which water is slowly delivered to plants, which results in efficient use of water and fertiliser.

Many tribes who were selling their crops in a local haat at lower rates have started marketing their produce at higher prices in a nearby mandi for the first time ever in their lives and becoming 'lakhpati kisans'.

"I have 4 acres of land. I have cultivated chilli using drip irrigation in less than a half acre, while paddy in a traditional way. The chilli crop is fetching me good returns," Babla Hasda from Tangiriapal village told PTI.

So far, Hasda has sold about 35 quintals of chilli for around Rs 1,05,000 at an average rate of Rs 3,000 per quintal.

"I have saved Rs 25,000 after spending on crop inputs, repaying the loan and other expenses. I have liquid money from chilli crop now," he said.

For Hasda, a visit to the nearby mandi for the first time was a mind-altering experience where he learnt how the agri-produce was weighed accurately on a digital weighing machine and sold instantly to traders at a higher rate.

"Earlier, we were scared to grow crops in bulk as we were unaware of any mandi nearby. About 11 farmers have grown chilli for the first time using drip irrigation in 3 acres of land. We are getting a better price," Hasda said.

According to Tangiriapal Village Association Secretary Sumitra Kudu, the transformation in the village was possible because of the training and handholding support from the Collectives for Integrated Livelihood Initiative (CInI), an associated organisation of Tata Trusts.

After learning about drip irrigation technique from an exposure visit organised by CInI, 11 families adopted drip irrigation in three acres of farmland in Kotagati hamlet (comprising 53 households) of Tangiriapal.

The cost of drip irrigation for one acre was Rs 1 lakh, of which CInI paid 50 per cent, while the rest was borne by the farmers, Kudu said.

Stating that 24 more farmers are now keen to try drip irrigation this year, Kudu said, "More farmers are encouraged after seeing 16 farmers becoming lakhpatis in our hamlet. These farmers are saving Rs 1 lakh a year after spending on crop inputs and other expenses." Similar success was seen in Gaduan and Nipania villages in Harichandanpur block.

Interestingly, women tribal farmers are taking the lead in all 68 villages where CInI is operating directly and indirectly through local NGOs.

"We focused on empowering one woman in each family as we realised they work the most, both at home and in farm fields. Once women are trained, they will bring change in their families," CInI spokesperson Ganesh Neelam said.

Since many of 68 villages did not have electricity, diesel and solar based systems were used to operate the drip for which partial funding was provided by CInI, he added.

"As a result, about 1,000 families out of 6,500 families in 68 villages of Harichandanpur block are earning minimum Rs 1,00,000 a year, becoming lakhpati kisans," Neelam said.

Earlier, the average income of these farmers was Rs 35,000-40,000 a year. In some places, the income was as meagre as Rs 15,000 a year, he added.

Sharing her success story, a woman farmer Binija Singh said, "We were mostly engaged as labour in farm fields. Men in the family used to decide what crop to grow. My husband made fun of me when I started getting actively involved in farming." She took the challenge and went for drip and mulching method in one-tenth of an acre land and earned Rs 40,000, proving to her husband that she too was a capable farmer.

"I have enough saving. I don't give my bank passbook to my husband. I travel 10 km to visit a bank," she said.

In neighbouring Nipania village, Sidhu Munda and his wife Parbhati Munda have not only gone for drip irrigation but also set up a plant nursery in a protected green-house after an exposure visit to an Indo-Israel unit in Karnal, Haryana.

spokesperson said, "Our aim is to ensure the tribal farmers are able to manage without our help. We plan to phase out from these villages in next two years." In some villages, farmers are still dependent on CInI for crop inputs and other linkages. Efforts are being made to make the tribal farmers strong so that they can carry forward the activities on their own, he added.

While many tribal farmers in 68 villages are emerging as 'lakhpati kisans', their grudge, however, is against the state government which has not only failed to provide pucca road and electricity but also not implemented welfare schemes in the hinterland.

"The electric poles have been installed but there is no electricity. We are told we will get electricity after the election. We are not going to vote this time," said a senior tribal farmer ahead of the state assembly and general polls.

**Source:** <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-odisha-tribal-farmers-becoming-lakhpatis-by-adopting-drip-irrigation-2722575>