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Sour to Success: The Inspiring Journey of a Progressive Lemon Grower (Mr. Bittu Chauhan)

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Farmer Details

Farmer Name: Bittu Chauhan

Age: 52

Village: Ghagwal

Tehsil: Mukerian

District: Hoshiarpur

State: Punjab

Background and Early Struggles

In the fertile belt of Hoshiarpur district, village Ghagwal under Mukerian tehsil is known for its agricultural activities. For many years, most farmers in this village preferred cultivating eucalyptus trees. The reason was simple eucalyptus required comparatively less care and provided a lump-sum return after four to five years. Gradually, most fields in the village were covered with rows of tall eucalyptus plantations. Among these farmers was one progressive cultivator Mr. Bittu Chauhan, who began questioning this traditional pattern. Although eucalyptus seemed safe, but it caused the continuous decline in the groundwater table, it tied up the land for several years and did not provide regular income. He wanted a farming system that could generate yearly returns and make better use of his land and resources. His curiosity and desire to improve his financial condition led him to search for alternatives.

The Turning Point

The major turning point in his life came in 2017 when he started watching agricultural success stories and horticulture guidance videos on YouTube. Through these videos, he learned about Kagazi (lime) lemon cultivation, high-density plantation, drip irrigation systems, and the increasing market demand for lemons throughout the year. He observed that lemons are used daily in households, hotels, juice shops, and food processing industries, which ensures consistent demand. After studying different orchard models and calculating the potential returns, he decided to convert his entire 4-acre land from eucalyptus plantation to a lemon orchard. Many neighbouring farmers discouraged him, saying horticulture requires more care and investment. However, he was confident in his decision and prepared himself for systematic orchard management.

Establishment of the Orchard

He planted Kagazi lemon at a spacing of 5 m × 5 m, accommodating approximately 640 plants in 4 acres. To ensure efficient water management, he installed a drip irrigation system. This not only saved water but also allowed precise nutrient application. Understanding the problem of stray animals in the region like boars and other wild animals, he installed solar fencing around the orchard. In addition, solar-powered lights were fixed along the boundary, making the farm secure even at night. By adopting renewable energy, he made his farm largely independent of conventional electricity. The initial investment was high, but he

considered it a long-term asset. During the first three years, he focused on plant establishment. He followed proper fertilization schedules, regular pruning, canopy management, and timely pest and disease control. Micronutrients were applied to avoid deficiencies, and weeds were controlled effectively. His disciplined approach ensured healthy plant growth.

Production and Yield

After the third year, the plants started giving initial yields. By the fifth year, the orchard reached full production stage. Each mature tree began yielding approximately 80–90 kg of lemons annually. With around 640 trees, the total annual production reached nearly 50 Ton of lemons. The steady yield surprised many farmers who earlier doubted his decision.



Figure 1: Lemon orchard

Social and Economic Impact

In the beginning the villagers were hesitant about horticulture crops. But when they observed traders visiting his farm and trucks being loaded with lemon crates several times a year, their perception began to change. The solar fencing and well-maintained orchard became a model for others. Gradually, some farmers started planting fruit crops on part of their land. A few adopted drip irrigation systems after seeing the water-saving benefits along with recharging the groundwater level. The concept of solar fencing also gained popularity in the village. His success not only improved his own economic condition but also motivated neighbouring farmers to think beyond conventional eucalyptus plantations. The village slowly began shifting towards crop diversification.

Conclusion

The journey of Mr. Bittu Chauhan from Ghagwal village shows that knowledge-based decision-making, willingness to adopt innovation and sheer perseverance can transform rural livelihoods. By shifting from a long-gestation forestry crop to a scientifically managed Kagazi lemon orchard, he created a sustainable and profitable farming model. His story highlights the importance of digital learning, modern irrigation techniques, renewable energy adoption, and market-oriented farming. Today, his 4-acre lemon orchard stands as an example of how vision, planning, and hard work can turn agricultural challenges into opportunities. This success story proves that diversification in horticulture can significantly enhance farm income and inspire rural transformation in Hoshiarpur district.



Figure 1 solar powered light



Figure 2 Mr. Bittu Chauhan