

Entrepreneurship by Women in Fruit Processing Sector

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The role played by women entrepreneurs in fruit processing sector is a vital aspect that facilitates rural development, promotes income earning, and ensures food security and nutrition in the society. In countries like India, where there is plenty of variety of fruits produced, such as mango, banana, guava, apple, and citrus, there is great opportunity for value addition through fruit processing. The role of women in fruit processing sector was always associated with food preservation activities performed at household levels in the past. Now this role has acquired a new dimension through entrepreneurial activities in which they convert raw perishable fruits into processed form by taking advantage of their traditional skills.

Opportunities in Fruit Processing Industry for Women

Fruit processing industry provides many possibilities to women entrepreneurs irrespective of scale of business. Among these opportunities include manufacture of products like jams, jellies, and marmalades that make use of sugar and pectin as preservatives for fruit pulp. Fruit juices and squashes are another possibility whereby fruits are converted into beverage having extended shelf life. Preparation of pickles and chutneys by women has become very common due to their great importance in Indian food culture. Furthermore, manufacturing of dehydrated and dried fruits like sun dried mango slices and banana chips is another possibility offering great scope for preservation and selling. Ready to eat/ready to serve items may also form part of fruit processing products catering to modern customers. The fruit processing industry is very well suited to women entrepreneurs for several reasons. Firstly, it requires relatively low or moderate level of capital to start up a business. Secondly, its manufacturing process relies heavily on locally available raw material thereby reducing transport cost for women. Working hours in this industry are also very flexible making it easier for women to do their domestic work along with the business. Lastly, there is ever lasting demand.



Importance of Women Entrepreneurship

Women entrepreneurship in the fruit processing industry plays a vital role in socio-economic development. It promotes economic empowerment by providing women with a source of

income and financial independence, thereby improving their decision-making power within households and communities. It also contributes to employment generation by creating job opportunities for other rural women, especially through group-based enterprises. The processing of surplus and perishable fruits helps in reducing post-harvest losses, which is a major challenge in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, it enhances nutritional security by increasing the availability of processed fruit products rich in vitamins and minerals. At a broader level, women entrepreneurship strengthens rural development by promoting self-reliance and boosting local economies.



Schemes of Government of India

The Government of India has taken many initiatives like schemes and programs for women empowerment in the food processing industry. Some of those schemes include the Pradhan Mantri Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) scheme, which intends to assist small businesses in the food processing industry through financial and non-financial measures such as training and capacity building. On the other hand, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) emphasizes organizing rural women in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with various financial and technical supports. Another important scheme for encouraging women entrepreneurship is the Startup India scheme. Stand Up India is yet another initiative that helps women in availing of loan facilities for setting up ventures from banks. Moreover, the KVIC also assists women entrepreneurs by imparting training and extending financial and marketing help. Through these schemes, women entrepreneurs get subsidies, skill development services, credit and marketing facilities.

Enterprise Types

The women fruit processors use different types of enterprises depending on the scale and resources that each of them has. The home-based enterprises are the small scale ones where women process products such as jams, pickles, and squashes using low-tech machines and sell the products locally. The self-help group (SHG) enterprises are where the collective efforts of women in processing and marketing the products make it possible to have access to more money and training. The small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are the more organized enterprises that have more advanced facilities in the processing unit. Products from these enterprises are distributed to supermarkets, institutional buyers, and even exported abroad.

Processing Technologies Adopted

There are many types of technologies used by the fruit processors to ensure that the products are safe, high quality, and have long shelf life. Thermal technology techniques include pasteurization and sterilization that destroy any harmful microorganisms and enzymes. Different types of drying or dehydration technologies include sun drying and solar drying where moisture is removed. Fermentation technology is used in preparing some of the beverages and pickles. The other technologies include freezing/cold storage to preserve the freshness and quality of fruits for long times.



Fruits that add Value

Fruit value addition greatly improves the market value and the longevity of fruits. For instance, mango is turned into pulp, pickle, and traditionally to make aam papad. Banana can be made into chips and powder and are highly valued in local and international markets. Apples can be turned into juices, cider, and dried fruits, while citrus fruits are made into squash and marmalades. Guava fruits are made into jellies and nectars for both taste and nutrition purposes. Besides, such value added products increase profits for entrepreneurs and reduce wastages.

Challenges Facing Women Entrepreneurship

There are many challenges facing women entrepreneurs in the process of adding values to fruits. The first challenge is the lack of technical knowledge on fruit processing. Moreover, financial constraints and the limited access to finances make it difficult for them to expand their businesses. Lack of good marketing skills makes it hard for them to compete in big markets. Lack of infrastructure including poor storage facility and processing plants makes things even difficult for them.

Promotion Strategies

In order to promote women entrepreneurship in the area of fruit processing, a number of strategies must be adopted. Skill building and training must take place to improve competence and management. Establishment of women cooperatives or SHGs would prove beneficial due to their collective strength and easy access to finance and resources. Access to microfinance and credit would prove extremely useful for setting up and expanding the business. E-marketing would allow them to expand their market base and increase sales. The involvement of PPPs could help achieve this goal.

Impact through Success Stories

There are many examples of successful women entrepreneurs who have made it big in the area of fruit processing in various parts of India. Many of the women-owned SHGs have been successful in establishing fruit-processing plants and creating products which can be sold across regions. This has helped them generate additional revenue for themselves and raise their living standards. This in turn creates employment opportunities for other women.

Future Prospects

Future prospects in the area of women entrepreneurship within the fruit processing industry look quite bright as a result of rising demand for processed and organic foods. Increased export possibilities create opportunities for expanding manufacturing processes and earning foreign currency. The use of more advanced techniques of processing and packaging increases the shelf-life of the products as well. Further integration with agricultural supply chains can make the process more efficient.

Conclusion

Women entrepreneurship in the fruit processing industry is a very promising avenue for achieving many positive effects on the local economies and helping reduce post-harvest loss. Women entrepreneurship can turn small-scale activities in fruit processing into economically sound business ventures through effective training and other support provided by both governmental and private entities.

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