

How a jackfruit plant is helping a farmer get rich

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Can the unique genetic characters of a plant be a source of income for a farmer? They can, if a model adopted by a government research organisation to popularise and propagate a red jackfruit variety is any indication.

A year ago, the Central Horticultural Experiment Station (CHES) at Hirehalli in Tumakuru district of Karnataka, under the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), had entered into a three-year agreement with a local farmer, Paramesha S, to produce plants by grafting them from a 35-year-old red jackfruit tree on his farm. Jackfruit from this plant is known for its col-



our, taste, size and phytochemical properties.

For every graft prepared and sold by IIHR from this plant, the farmer gets almost 75 per cent of the selling price. The jackfruit variety is sold in the name of the farmer: Siddu, short for Siddappa, Paramesha's father, who started growing this plant 35 years ago.

Speaking to *BusinessLine* over the phone from Tumakuru, Paramesha said that he would have got around ₹10,000 a year from the tree, had he just sold the fruit alone. Referring to his agreement with IIHR in September 2017, he said the research organisation has already credited around ₹1.5 lakh into his account after selling the grafts made from the mother plant on his farm.

The background

G Karunakaran, Principal Scientist and in-charge of the CHES, told *BusinessLine* that CHES had started a survey in 2014 to identify superior jackfruit genotypes in the tradi-

tional jackfruit-growing areas of southern Karnataka. After three years of intensive study of different varieties, CHES selected a red jackfruit variety from Paramesha's farm.

Following this, CHES, under the guidance of IIHR Director MR Dinesh, signed an agreement with Paramesha in September 2017 to produce the grafts of this particular red jackfruit variety for the next three years. Each graft is being sold at ₹150, and Paramesha gets ₹110 of this.

CHES has distributed around 2,000 grafts from this particular jackfruit plant, and another 3,000 plants are in the pipeline for distribution. "We have targeted more than 10,000 grafts for distribution," he said.

This red jackfruit, with copper red flakes, is around 3 kg as against some others that weigh more than 15 kg. It meets the requirement of a small family, as one can carry it easily. The copper red flakes are crispy and sweet compared to the yellow and white-coloured flakes.

"For the first time, a government organisation has come forward for an agreement to propagate a plant variety in the name of a farmer," he said.

Shree Padre, a jackfruit activist, termed this agreement as a pioneering effort. "This is a model for other farmer-friendly organisations to follow. The stakeholders concerned should watch and follow this model, as IIHR has proved that this is a worthwhile model," he said.

Another to follow

More Karunakaran said that CHES has inked an agreement with another farmer, Shankaraiah, this September to propagate another red variety named 'Shankara', the grafts of this plant are in the pipeline for release and may take some time.

He said that many farmers are now willing to conserve trees with unique genetic characters after seeing the outcome of IIHR's agreements with these farmers.