

IMPACT STORY

SECTOR - GINGER

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Rojina saves her ginger crop from disease



Rojina Khatiwada, 23 years of age, is a ginger farmer from Khatiwada Village in Padampokhari, Makwanpur – a close-knit community of about 40 households where most inhabitants are related to each other. Rojina has been involved in ginger farming since she was about 13 years old. Married at the age of 15, she now lives with her in-laws and has two school-going children. The extended family has about 2 bighas (1.35 hectares) of land, of which about 7 kattha (0.23 hectare) is used for ginger farming and the rest is used to farm maize, barley and wheat. The family's source of income is from ginger, their main cash crop, and a few livestock.

Rojina and her neighbors help each other during plantation and harvest seasons. Most men in the village work in urban areas as drivers, so it is usually the women who take care of planting and managing their ginger crops.

For the past few years, ginger farmers in the community have suffered huge losses due to a disease called rhizome rot – a fungal infection that spreads rot in the rhizome seed, causing the leaves to wilt and turn yellow, completely destroying the plant and often spreading to the entire crop. When Rojina and her neighbors sought help from the local agro-vet, they were told her that there was no cure for the disease and that the best they could do was discard the rotten plants and bear the loss.

Rojina's family lost about 10 quintals (1,000 kg) of ginger seeds due to rhizome rot last year alone, meaning the family has likely borne a loss of as much as 90,000 rupees¹ (about \$900) due to rotten ginger which they were not able to sell in the market. This is a significant loss for an agricultural family and does not account for the time and labour lost during ginger cultivation, or the opportunity cost of growing a different cash crop.

In March 2013, Rojina was one of the many who attended a demonstration on disease management in ginger that was organized by Crop Pro Tech (CPT) - a private company that sells agricultural inputs. Earlier that year, CPT received training from Samarth-NMDP, a DFID-funded market systems development programme working to stimulate pro-poor growth across a range of agricultural sectors.

¹ Based on a 3,000kg yield loss (from 1,000 kg of seed) assuming the average price of ginger received by farmers to be Rs.30 /kg in a given year

Following the training, CPT conducted farmer-level demonstrations along with local agro-vets, who had been trained on the benefits and use of disease management products by CPT. One of these demonstrations was held on a local farmer's plot and focused on explaining to Rojina and her neighbors about the causes, symptoms and management of rhizome rot, which is caused by fungal and bacterial infestations. They were also taught about pest control in ginger. Rojina learned about *Trichoderma* and *Bacteriamycin*, as well as the use of *Neem Cake* to deal with all of these problems. She bought these products and then went home and applied this new knowledge to her own crops.

When asked for her opinion on the products and information promoted by CPT and her agro-vet, Rojina said that she was very happy with the effect of the products on her ginger crop so far, although she has only recently completed her early harvest and is waiting to see the final effect after a few months. If this year goes well, Rojina plans to continue using these products in the future. She believes that if farmers are aware and careful in using the products from the early stages of land preparation and planting, the products will prove effective and well worth the small cost.

After attending the demonstrations, Rojina shared her experience with her sister-in-law, who has since been using the products and has personally seen the benefits. Her mother-in-law, on the other hand, who did not use the products, is now sorry she didn't. She has already started noticing the yellowing of some of her crops – the sure early sign that she will experience severe losses in the coming weeks and months. Rojina says that, although the process of disease management requires a lot of care and hard work, she is ready to do it if it saves her crops. As her local agro-vet now stocks disease management products, Rojina and her family will be able to go back year after year and access the kind of products they need to save their ginger crops from disease.

Samarth-NMDP is currently working with two agricultural input suppliers, building their ability to reach out to a network of agro-vet retailers to sell disease management products and provide embedded advice to ginger farmers in three districts in East, West and Central Nepal. If successful in this pilot year – when results are assessed after the end of the harvest season in early 2014 – these input suppliers, and other competing companies, are expected to scale-up their outreach to farmers across Nepal.

Crop Pro Tech (CPT) conducting a farmer level demonstration



About Samarth-NMDP

Samarth-NMDP is a rural market systems development programme that aims to reduce poverty in Nepal by increasing the income of 300,000 small-holder farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs. The programme follows Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) approach and aims to improve the underlying pro-poor performance of rural sectors, leading to opportunities for better access and improved growth for poor and disadvantaged people.

Samarth-NMDP's ginger disease management intervention is co-facilitated with Mercy Corps Nepal.

Samarth-NMDP is a DFID-funded programme managed in partnership with the Government of Nepal by a consortium comprising Adam Smith International, The Springfield Centre and Swisscontact. For more information on the programme, please visit www.samarth-nepal.com.