

INNOVATIVE MARKETING APPROACH DURING COVID LOCKDOWN: A SUCCESS STORY

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India is witnessing a transformation where in qualified youngsters are leaving cushiony jobs and started farming in rural areas by adopting suitable technologies. This is what happened with 29 years old Mr. Prashant Reddy S/o Ramesh reddy who hails from Batlahalli village of Chintamani taluk, Chikkaballapura district of Karnataka state.

After pursuing M. tech (Computer Science and Engineering) he joined a private firm at Bangalore and was getting good salary. Looking into the increasing demand for the organic fruits and vegetables in Bangalore, he decided to quit cushiony software job and start organic farming in his native village during 2019-20. He participated in the Skill Training for Rural Youth (STRY) programme on biofertilizers production organized by KVK, Chintamani. This training served as push factor and with the guidance of Scientists of KVK, Chintamani, he was successful in getting a good yield. But due to outbreak of COVID 19, he was unable to market his produce like all the farmers because of lockdown situation. He lost hopes and was in critical situation since it was the only source of income. After the discussion with KVK, Scientists, he was able to develop simple software for marketing of the produce and decided to sell the organically grown produce in apartments in Bangalore. Software link was shared in different ICT platforms like whatsapp, facebook, instagram, mails etc, to create an awareness about it. By clicking on the link, customers were able to get the information like importance of organic products, organic fruits and vegetables available, their price and approximate date of delivery. Based on the customer order he use to supply the organic produce to the customers by maintaining social distance and hygiene procedures.

Mr. Prashant is hard working and also smart working young farmer. Looking into increased demand from the customers he mobilized farmers growing organically from surrounding villages and started marketing in collective approach on regular basis. Due to mobilization of organic farmers, supply increased and further due to the perishability and bulkiness of produce, it was necessary to sell the produce in bulk quantity. KVK, Chintamani provided the marketing

linkages like Big Basket, Ninjacart, Spudnic farms, whole sale dealers and organic farmers associations to sell his produce. As a result it can be observed from Table 1 that the farmer was able to sell 4 tons of carrot, 1.08 tons of capsicum, 4 tons of beetroot, grapes (15tons), papaya (1 ton), tomato (0.5 ton), Onion (3 tons) while other farmers left the field un harvested . Further, because of direct selling to consumers, farmers realized good returns for their produce in pandemic situation also. A bird view of table 2 indicates that there was 52.83 per cent increased price realization in carrot, 66.66 per cent in beetroot, capsicum (56.25%), grapes (63.63%), papaya (50.00%), tomato (60.00%) and Onion (70.00%). Price spread was reduced to great extent and producers share in consumer rupee increased. This was win to win situation where farmers got the better price for their produce on one side and on other side consumers got the good quality fruits and vegetables at their door steps without moving out of their homes during the COVID situation.

Initially Mr. Prashant adopted mono cropping by just growing carrot and beetroot. Now after realizing the benefits of direct selling to consumers, he has adopted staggered sowing method in order to supply all vegetables on regular basis. Presently he is growing beetroot, carrot, tomato, green leafy vegetables, papaya, guava, custard apple, redgram, sweet corn, cabbage, minor millets etc. With the aim of integrated farming, he has started animal husbandry, poultry, bee keeping and rearing fish in farm pond.

Table 1. Quantity of produce marketed during pandemic situation

Sl. No.	Crop	Quantity
1	Carrot	4 tons
2.	Beetroot	4 tons
3.	Capsicum	1.08
4.	Grapes	15 tons
5.	Papaya	1 ton
6.	Tomato	0.5 ton
7.	Onion	3 tons

Table.2. Price realization during COVID 19 due to direct marketing

Sl. No.	Crop	Price in normal market	Selling price/kg	% increase in price realization due to direct selling/kg
1	Carrot	25	53	52.83
2.	Beetroot	15	45	66.66
3.	Capsicum	35	80	56.25
4.	Grapes	20	55	63.63
5.	Papaya	20	40	50.00
6.	Tomato	10	25	60.00
7.	Onion	15	50	70.00