



SMALL FARMS & RESILIENT FARMERS

*A Collection of Picture Stories of
Resilience During Pandemic Times*

SMALL FARMS-RESILIENT FARMERS

We bring to you handpicked stories of our smallholder farmers who demonstrated exemplary resilience to the increased vulnerabilities caused due to COVID-19 pandemic situations that adversely affected the people across the globe.

GROWING MY OWN FOOD

High food prices, hunger and severe malnutrition will soon be a reality post the Covid-19 pandemic if necessary measures are not taken. Additionally, a healthy diet becomes crucial during the viral pandemic, and for many in the rural areas, it was accessible only to those who grew different food crops and they were mostly the small holders. More food crops like vegetables can also increase seed availability and reduce reliance on external inputs. The crisis has highlighted that the development of local and diverse seed systems; production of local input and reduced external dependency; diverse and resilient agro-ecological systems are essential for sustaining a resilient community.

GROWING MY OWN FOOD

The Governments of different countries in South Asia like Bangladesh are now encouraging farmers to sustainably utilize land to produce food. SAFBIN too has always been supporting her farmers to produce and promote local nutritious food. All our farmers who grew their own food are less affected by the lockdown restrictions as they were not dependent on the markets to access food. SAFBIN Bangladesh had supported 360 smallholder farmers in Baraigram district with 208 kg seeds of 12 different types of vegetables. Now the farmers are producing and consuming from their own farm. One of our farmers is happy to show her produce. Her relief is evident from her smile as she is not dependent on going to the market during the pandemic.





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Our farmers in the remotest corners of Nawalparasi in Nepal, Sagar in India and Paba in Bangladesh display their vegetable and fruit production that met not just their food and nutrition needs but also ensured food availability for the local community while ensuring a source of income for these farmers, that helped them weather different phases of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. All our farmers in the programme are now promoting growing own vegetables and fruits as part of farm diversification.

LOCAL FOOD, NUTRITIOUS FOOD

Supplementing local as well as cultural nutrition especially when the food from outside is blocked due to the lockdowns is critical to nourish rural poor. With SAFBIN's support, farmers are now realising the nutritional benefits of local species. Many farmers have started sharing and promoting local species with each other in their farmer groups. This approach of farmer to farmer sharing of local species is helping them to be resilient to the pandemic situations. Here is a story from the Tharu Community of Nepal who are promoting local and traditional sources of food from their ecosystem, that has proven to be a rich source of nutrients that reduced the stress on the farmers accessing food during the pandemic crisis

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Keeping up with the traditional food habits of Tharu community of Nepal, smallholders are ensuring additional nutrition for their families from their local ecosystem. Local food like water spinach, called karmi saag, is an indigenous wetland flora. It has multiple benefits of health as well as a good source of income generation. As part of the SAFBIN Campaign "Bring Home a New Local species", few farmers planted this indigenous 'saag' in their villages and are now promoting them within their community. Farmers are now exchanging them with other farmers to promote the species.



While Climate change impact and now the pandemic present a further threat to food production, our farmers are looking within their ecosystem for nutrition and food. Farmers are going back to traditional food like snails which is an example of a great source of nutrition. Snails or ghonghi, is rich in protein and calcium and easily available in the local ecosystem. The farmers of the Tahru community in Nepal are happy with their harvest of snails from the paddy field this year. More farmers are now prioritising to keep them for household consumption while some are also able to sell the surplus in the local market.

LIVESTOCK: LOOKING BEYOND FIELD CROPS

Livestock help smallholder farmers not only in their subsistence but also improve the household income. Additionally, they fit well into smallholder farming system. They contribute in maintaining farm connections through the use of crop by-products, household wastes and locally grown vegetation, while contributing to soil health.

LIVESTOCK: LOOKING BEYOND FIELD CROPS

Knowing the importance of diversifying farms for building resilience, farmers are coming together to access livestock and small ruminants from the government schemes. 24 farmers received poultry package of five hens and one cock each from the livestock department in Khushab district. This not only adds diversity in their farms but also generates additional income and resilience at the household level to face risks and disasters.





Smallfarmers are on their way to doubling not just farm production but also different farm components. 31 Smallholder farmers in Paba sub-district double the number of small ruminants in their farms in six months! Caritas Bangladesh supported smallholders with one female sheep per farmer, while each farmer bought a male sheep as part of their own contribution. After six months, the total number of sheep have doubled to 124!

MARKETING IN THE TIME OF COVID

During COVID-19 crisis, road blocks and restrictions prevented many smallholder farmers from selling products or buying inputs, which resulted in a loss of income, loss of produce and it has potentially affected future cultivation seasons. SAFBIN has been supporting and working with the smallholders to come up localised solutions best suited to their context and convenience to sell their surplus and generate income in the crisis times.

MARKETING IN THE TIME OF COVID

Community marketing helps smallholder farmers to broaden their income opportunities in Bangladesh. Community marketing is supporting the smallholders to access local food for all, improve nutrition and increase their income while also creating safer space for the people as food is made available to all within the community itself.



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Small-farm-agri-food concept is widely promoted by our smallholders. A Farmer Producer Organisation(FPO)was formed comprising of more than 450 smallholders in Mandla district,India. With the help of this FPO, they took initiative and aggregated 41.4 quintals of their own farm produce like Cereals, Millets, Pulses and Oilseeds. The bulk produce were sold directly at the district market which fetched the smallholders an additional average income of 13%.

When the whole country is suffering the impact of Coronavirus and scarcity of essential items and resources, Bimla in her less than half-acre of land is cultivating 13 different types of fruits and vegetables. Since the lockdown, many small farm families are coming to her to buy fresh and organically grown vegetables on a daily basis and is earning INR 400 – INR 500 per day.



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