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INDIA

CASE STUDY

Enjoying Fruits of Harvest Year Round

Solar dryers increase farmers' food security and income off-season



Indian women trained through a USAID program prepare mango bars using a solar dryer unit.

Vijaya, a farmer from the Indian state of Haryana, said, "The solar dried products retain their colors and are very clean. Customers like our products."

Telling Our Story
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Challenge

Saroja, a woman farmer from Sadrana village in the north Indian state of Haryana, grows fruits and vegetables. During harvest, she was forced either to sell the excess produce at low prices or let it spoil. Other farmers in the region and in the neighboring country of Nepal faced the same problem.

Initiative

The All India Women's Conference, a local non-governmental organization, supplied the farmers with solar air dryers developed in Hyderabad, and USAID provided support for training on use of the solar dryers. The farmers with solar dryers could now preserve their surplus produce for leaner months and thus augment their income. Farmers were trained to use them preserve surplus fruits, vegetables and spices like

cardamom and cloves, and trainers learned how to teach the use of solar driers to other women in the region.

Results

Women have especially benefited from the project. Says Saroja, "The solar dryer is ideal for housewives. It is very quick, clean and ideal for income generation." Women's self-help groups in India are using the model dryer at three pilot areas – Kerala, Chennai and Delhi – to convert seasonal produce like arrowroot, pepper and mangoes into "value-added products". The dried products provide greater returns to farmers as they can now sell their surplus produce in off-season when market conditions provide better prices. In the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, with help from the government, solar dryers were provided to fifty self help groups at half the price on a trial basis. Many more women in India and Nepal have now shown interest in the project and have requested training and access to solar dryers.

Photo: USAID/India/Heather Sullivan