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Newsletter on Eco-labelling and Eco-friendly Products

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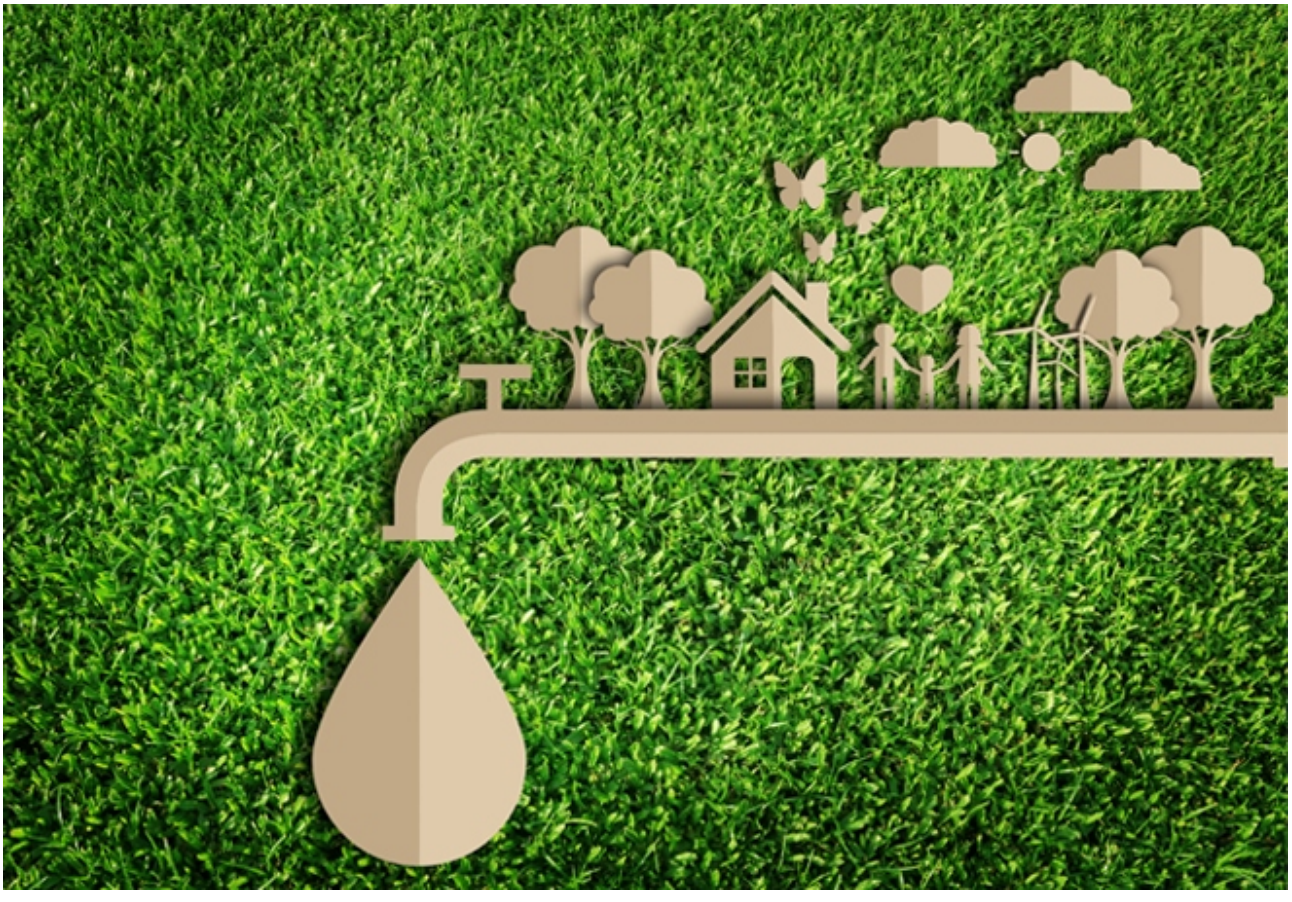
Green Entrepreneurship: An Emerging Field



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GREEN INSIGHTS
January-March 2019

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FOREWORD

The first attempt to define the green entrepreneur and describe his/her characteristics is in the 1990s. Robert Hall, an economist mentions that the term “green entrepreneurship” appeared for the first time in the book “The Green Entrepreneur: Business Opportunities That Can Save the Earth and Make You Money” by Gustav Berle in 1991. His definition is “Green entrepreneurship is taking responsibility to create the world we dream of.”

The International Labour Organisation has described Green Entrepreneurship from two perspectives related to the output (products and services) as well as the process (or production) of an economic activity. Entrepreneurs can enter into 'green' business sector, providing green and environmentally friendly products and services (e.g., waste management). Alternately, green entrepreneurs can provide their products or services through an environmentally friendly process or with the help of clean technologies (e.g., eco-tourism). Generally, green entrepreneurs consider both aspects in their business models, creating additional decent employment through the use of more environmentally friendly processes, while reducing the overall environmental impact as a result of people or companies using the final product or service.

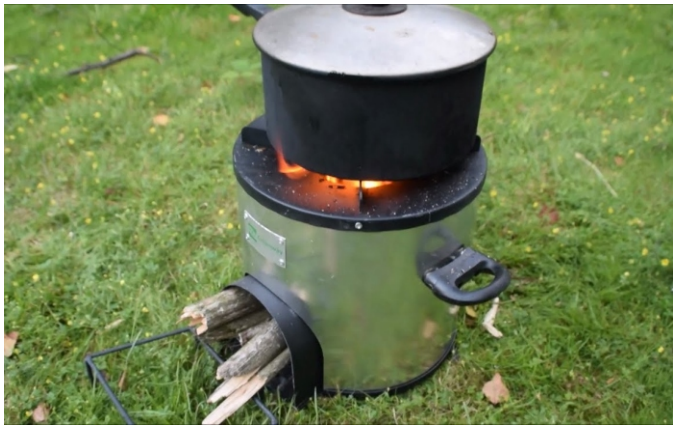
There are a number of green startups steadily increasing around the world in response to the environmental problems demanding immediate solutions. Green technologies pave the way to an eco-friendly and climate-neutral future. Many entrepreneurs offer green solutions to specific issues. Green entrepreneurship is gaining increasing visibility in the face of social awareness of corporate responsibility toward the environment, and the growing importance of ecological sustainability in strategic business development. Young entrepreneurs are entering markets with their different environmentally friendly innovative products and services.

This issue highlights the state-of-the-art developments and presents the contributions of scholars who are interested in green entrepreneur-ship. It details how Greenway Grameen Infra provides rural Indians groundbreaking solutions for clean cooking. It provides information on startups creating compelling solutions to protect the environment.

The Cookstove Start-Up

By Michael Gallant

Greenway Grameen Infra provides rural Indians groundbreaking solutions for clean cooking.



The traditional mud stove, or chulha, is an integral part of the daily life of millions of people in India, but it's also a dangerous one. The simple act of cooking with chulhas leads to pollution, deforestation, economic loss and over a million deaths per year, says Mumbai-based engineer and entrepreneur Ankit Mathur. Solving these problems is the core mission of his start-up company, Greenway Grameen Infra.

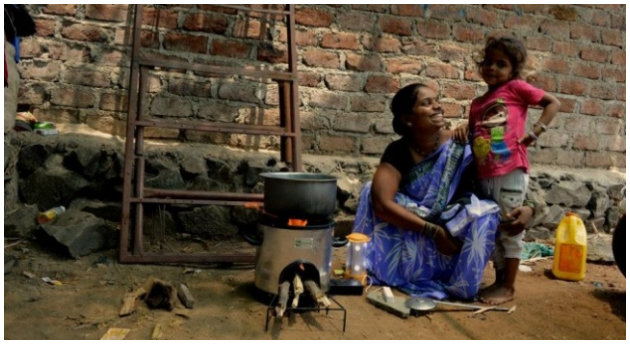
Co-founded in 2011 by Mathur and fellow engineer Neha Juneja, Greenway produces safer, healthier and more efficient cooking solutions for the rural families which lack access to clean energy. The company's products include the Greenway Smart Stove and Jumbo Stove, robust and portable appliances that still burn biomass fuels like wood or crop waste, but reduce fuel consumption by 65 percent and smoke by 70 percent. This helps minimize health risks, economic loss and environmental damage.

The first spark

Mathur and Juneja came up with the concept behind Greenway while working together as consultants for rural projects focused on the environment, like renewable energy and carbon credits. “One of the recurring issues that we saw was a complete lack of clean energy options for cooking,” says Mathur. It was a deficiency, he discovered, that could lead to an array of problems.

For instance, cooking with a chulha for an hour is equivalent to smoking 20 cigarettes, states the Greenway website, and can also cause eye and skin irritation. The inefficiencies of chulhas contribute to deforestation, as rural families must search for large amounts of burnable fuel; increased greenhouse emissions are a result of the cooking process itself. From an economic standpoint, gathering or purchasing fuel for inefficient cookstoves costs rural families effort and money that they cannot spare. The time spent laboriously gathering fuel also translates into less time for education and other productive activities, particularly for women and girls.

“We, as engineers, saw all of this as a big problem,” says Mathur, “but one that could be solved in an economic manner with a product intervention.”



Evolving design

Driven and inspired to make a difference, the Greenway team began designing its cookstoves in 2010. The creation of prototype models began the following year, as Mathur and Juneja simultaneously evolved their business operation from a consulting firm to one dedicated to product creation and distribution.

Although Greenway's products may look simple, they are meticulously engineered—the result of an intense research and development process. “We prototyped about 12 designs over a period of more than one year and took them to the field,” says Mathur. The Greenway team interacted with rural households across five states in India, trying to understand exactly how its new cookstoves would be used, how to make sure that rural families would, in fact, want to use them, in order to perfect their product for customer needs. The team also worked closely with sheet metal manufacturers to better understand what it would mean to mass produce any of their cook stove models.

“Initially, we worked with vendors to manufacture the products, but it was difficult to sustain the quality and desired cost for our products,” says Mathur. In 2014, the company opened its own factory and production of cookstoves began early the following year. Once Greenway's products were placed on sale, they gained quick and widespread popularity, selling thousands of units per month just half a year after product introduction. The company is now one of the largest cook stove makers in India.

Cooking success

Greenway's efforts have gained attention from media outlets around the world. The Business Today magazine named Juneja one of 2017's “most powerful women in business,” while Mathur received The Economic Times 40 Under Forty award in 2016. CNN covered Greenway in 2017, citing the company's impressive sales of over $9 million [over Rs. 58 crores] and its plans to sell solar-powered lamps and create affordable television antennae for rural use, among other innovations. Both these products are now available in the market.

Like many successful startups, Greenway turned to venture capital firms for investment, in order to develop its products and reach markets. In addition to funding from the nonprofit organization Acumen Fund and the venture capital firm Asha Impact, Greenway received a grant from the Millennium Alliance, a partnership between the governments of the United States and India which provides support to innovators. “Millennium Alliance helped us by facilitating a grant for design of the Power Stove, a thermo-electric product that produces electricity from a biomass-burning cookstove, while women cook on the stove,” describes Mathur. The product solves two problems at once for Greenway's rural customers, allowing them to cook cleanly while powering or charging other appliances.

For Mathur, Greenway's work has just started. The company plans to launch several new products this year, with more in the works in the coming years. Over the next decade, “our goal is to have a reach of over 10 million units sold, with at least 15 to 20 products that are specifically designed for the mass market,” says Mathur. “We hope to expand our operations from India to all of the developing world in the next 10 years.”

Source: SPAN, May/June 2018
https://span.state.gov/science-technology/greenway-grameen-infra/20180502

Eco Innovators

By Michael Gallant

Start-ups participating in the Nexus Incubator create compelling solutions to protect the environment.

The Nexus Incubator start-up hub at the American Center New Delhi, a collaboration with the IC2 Institute of The University of Texas at Austin, does more than support Indian entrepreneurs. It helps lay the groundwork for innovations that can benefit the environment in India, the United States and around the world.

Nexus start-ups work on a variety of environmental issues, including energy consumption and sustainable agriculture, water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Here are three of the many incubator-grown innovations that are making a positive impact.

Agpulse Organics, New Delhi

This start-up uses organic and low-impact botanical Ayurvedic ingredients to help farmers thrive, without hurting the environment. Their products include environment-friendly pesticides and supplements, neem manure and plant growth promoters.

Agpulse's herb-based pesticides, in particular, "help grow organic food without residues and toxicity, as the pesticides are organic and biodiversity-friendly," says Rajeev Ranjan, co-founder of Agpulse Organics.

"Healthy food and nutrition security are key factors in sustainable development goals, which are crucial for [preserving] flora, fauna, underground water, aquatics, livestock and human health," he continues. Ranjan expects that his company's innovations would help reduce the greenhouse gases created regularly due to the mass production of synthetic pesticides.

Ranjan first learned about the Nexus Incubator while attending an event at the American Center New Delhi. The results of the collaboration have been tremendous. Ranjan describes Agpulse as benefiting from the financial education, customized one-on-one mentorship, access to product showcases and free office space offered by the incubator.

"Agpulse has done a great job of combining traditional essences and herbs into natural, organic products that work well for a variety of farming purposes," says Erik Azulay, director of Nexus. "They have done testing and gathered data that have shown their products to be effective. Right now, they're talking to companies in Germany and Africa about partnerships, and have already sold several hundred liters of organic pesticides in India."

Rays Enserv, Punjab

Poisoning animals, clogging rivers and polluting oceans, plastic waste presents a formidable environmental challenge—one that Rays Enserv is working hard to solve.

"Rays Enserv takes end-of-life plastics—the plastics that can't be recycled anymore—and creates diesel fuel with them," says Azulay. Although the technology of turning discarded plastic into oil isn't really new, he continues, nobody has yet made it work on a scale that makes sense, both financially and ecologically. And that may be about to change.

"Rays Enserv is about to launch their first industrial plant here in India, which is very exciting," says Azulay. "They've found a steady, constant supply of suitable plastic industrial waste from the North, which could really have a huge environmental, social and economic impact."

Ashok Bijalwan, who co-founded Rays Enserv with his colleagues Yash Jain, Ashok Suyal, Sanjeev Sharma

and Ishan Jain, is proud of the impact his company is poised to make. He sees the technology helping lessen greenhouse gas emissions associated with dumping of plastic in landfills, reducing toxic gases created by burning plastic waste and creating a cleaner and greener alternative to standard fossil fuels. "A recent research paper by the Argonne National Lab [in Illinois] showed that synthetic fuel [like the diesel created by Rays Enserv] reduces greenhouse gas emissions by up to 14 percent, water consumption by up to 58 percent and traditional energy use by up to 96 percent when compared to fossil fuels," says Bijalwan.

He credits Nexus with making a huge contribution to his start-up's growth, helping the company prioritize, focus and understand the nuances of starting a new business. The program also helped "provide a window into the world of opportunities with potential investors, collaborators and partners in the U.S.," says Bijalwan.

"Rays Enserv has got some great traction so far. And when the commercial plant is up and running, that's when the rubber hits the road," says Azulay. "We're very excited to see what they do next."

Saral Usna, Jharkhand

Rice parboiling is a traditional practice followed in the eastern, central and southern parts of India. "Though the parboiling practice has immense advantages in terms of extra shelf life and nutrition-enriched food, it consumes lots of fuelwood in the post-harvest process and creates stress on the forests close to the villages," says Krishna Kant of Saral Usna.

This is precisely the challenge that Kant and his colleagues address with their technology: a new type of parboiler, made from reused steel barrels, which dramatically saves resources, time and energy.

"Saral Usna's rice parboiling technology reduces fuel wood consumption by 40 percent and it can be further reduced by the use of leaf litter," says Kant. "With 330 units introduced in the market so far, Saral Usna has saved 110 tons of fuelwood, which is equivalent to [over a hectare] of forest. With a modest target of 5,000 units per year, we can save [more than 140 hectares] of forests within a five-year period. The use of leaf litter collected from the nearby forests also reduces the risk of forest fire."

Kant points out that Saral Usna also protects rice grain from breakage during the parboiling process, reducing the amount of damaged rice by more than 50 percent. The company's 330 units have already saved about 12 tons of rice which would have otherwise been discarded as food waste, he says.

Saral Usna began as a pilot program under the Abhivyakti Foundation, a nonprofit organization founded by Kant, and focused on prototyping the parboiler technology on a limited scale. "Though we were sure about its effectiveness and potential, we had never thought about any enterprise to scale it up," he says. "The Nexus Incubator not only helped me realize the real potential of scaling up this technology for the 'bottom-of-the-pyramid' population, but also equipped me with the basic skills to work out my business plan and pitch up with ease."

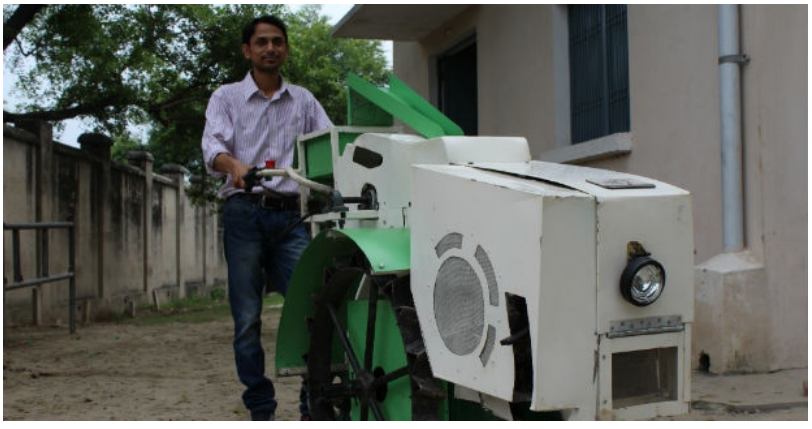
"Rural women love the Saral Usna product," says Azulay. "It saves them hours of time and labor, and lets them parboil their rice more efficiently. At the same time, it's a great technology for helping save wood and reduce deforestation."

Source: SPAN, January/February 2018
https://span.state.gov/science-technology/eco-innovators/20180105

Innovation on the Horizon

By Trevor Laurence Jockims

Delhi-based start-up Distinct Horizon has created a machine that reduces the use of fertilizer and increase crop production.



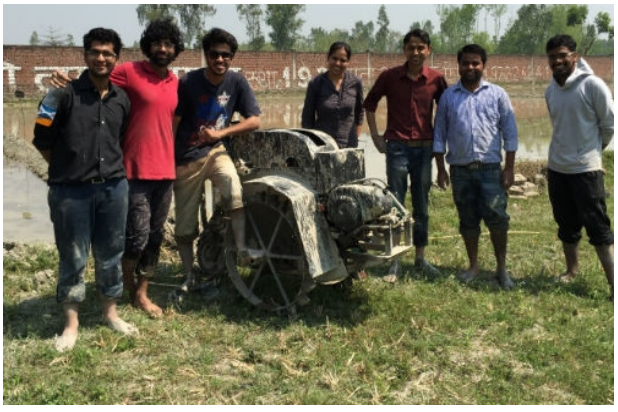
Many of us don't think about the use of fertilizers in farming when we shop for fruits, vegetables and other produces. But, the fact is that massive amounts of fertilizers are required to bring crops to a good harvest.

The most common fertilizer used worldwide is urea, a nitrogen-release fertilizer. The conventional application of urea is broadcasting it over the crops—distributing the fertilizer by hand or mechanically in a way that particles thrown in the air fall in an arc on the ground. This method, however, has many limitations and negative effects on the environment, the ultimate yield and the economics of agriculture. It is this issue that Distinct Horizon, a start-up based in New Delhi, aims to remedy.

The company advocates the application of compressed blocks, or briquettes, of prilled urea, instead of using the broadcasting method. This procedure, known as urea deep placement (UDP), involves packing the material tightly into small briquettes, which can then be placed directly into the ground. This allows more controlled and concentrated use of the fertilizer, less overall wastage, better crop yield and greatly reduced environmental impact.

Ayush Nigam, co-founder and chief executive officer of Distinct Horizon, explains that the application can now work even in difficult conditions. “A major challenge was making it work properly in deep-flooded paddy field conditions, while also accurately placing fertilizer briquettes to make it convenient for farmers to use this method,” he says. The company, thus, developed a mechanized UDP applicator. Operated by a single “driver,” who walks behind the machine and guides it along, the UDP applicator can help fertilize one hectare of land with just 1.5 man-days of labor. The operation is also not difficult. “It can be learned in 15 minutes,” says Nigam.

One of the chief problems with fertilizer use is its effect on water quality, due to nitrogen run-off. With



the use of briquettes, it has been shown that groundwater leeching and pollution can be nearly eliminated. The impact of greenhouse gases is reduced as well. According to Distinct Horizon's website, about 40 million tons of greenhouse emissions can be reduced annually across India by widespread adoption of UDP. An additional benefit is that pesticide use can be greatly diminished, or even eliminated, which would help increase the nutritional value of crops. Nigam explains this in terms of the strength of the crop produced. “In all the over 300 fields we have worked on, there has not been a single farmer who needed application of pesticides because of the strength the plants get due to fertilizer deep placement, which is a huge achievement,” he says.

Deployment of the new technology was planned carefully. “We did our initial trials with the help of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute and Tata Chemicals. After those scientific trials, we had trials with farmers in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh,” says Nigam. “It was possible by building trust among the farmers through continuous communication of technology and supporting them during the trials. Each time, we compared the results of our machine's application against manually-performed UDP and also against the conventional farmer practice. We used only a part of their land to deploy UDP, so that they are able to see the results for themselves.”

Following what Nigam terms a “pull strategy” to convince farmers, the benefits were quick and clear. “We are extremely proud that we were able to double the profits of the poorest of farmers through our service model. Further, from our in-depth interviews, we have noted that the increased agricultural earnings, in most cases, directly go toward bettering the education of farmers' children, as they are now able to afford better schools and tutors,” he says.

A key component to this growth was a 10-week pre-incubation program of the Nexus Incubator start-up hub at the American Center, New Delhi, a collaboration with the IC2 Institute of The University of Texas at Austin. “Our experience with the Nexus pre-incubation program was awesome,” says Nigam. “It is a very well-designed, holistic course, which helps entrepreneurs like myself brush up the rough edges and become well-rounded and ready to take on the multiple challenges that come our way almost daily in the start-up journey.” He adds that the mentoring sessions helped him evolve as an entrepreneur and take the right decisions. And the guidance has continued, Nigam says, with the Nexus team being “constantly resourceful by getting us relevant connections and sources of funds, even months after the program ended. The Nexus program has also helped us reformulate our strategy for the future and tune it more effectively toward customers' needs.

The start-up is growing steadily. “We have two machines in India. We have also sent one prototype to Bangladesh. In all, over 300 farmers have benefited through these machines so far,” says Nigam. “And, we already have demand from over 5,000 farmers for the fertilizer application service with our machines. We will soon be in a position to provide service to all of them and grow further from there.”

Source: SPAN, May/June 2018 https://span.state.gov/business/distinct-horizon/20180505

Greenhouse-In-A-Box

By Jason Chiang

Kheyti's modular and affordable greenhouses offer a chance for small-scale farmers in India to the weather-proof their produce.

Millions of small-scale farmers in India face an age-old problem: their crops and, thus, their livelihoods depend on the vagaries of nature. And climate change is increasing the risk factor manifolds.

A Hyderabad-based start-up, Kheyti, has found a weatherproof way to help small-scale farmers grow their crops and turn them into smart farmers. Kheyti, whose name means farming in Hindi, provides 2,500-square-foot, modular greenhouses to them at an affordable cost, bundled with end-to-end services like training, financing and market linkage. Dubbed "Greenhouse-in-a-Box," these can be used by farmers with small amounts of land—0.2 to 2 hectares—to grow faster-producing crops with greater protection from climate risk.

Kheyti has been co-founded by Saumya, an alumna of Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, in Illinois. She has won a number of accolades for her work at Kheyti and was a participant at the 2017 Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES), held in Hyderabad.

Excerpts from an interview.

How did the idea and team behind Kheyti come together?

All of us have been working on farmers' issues for a long time. We met in the inaugural cohort of Acumen India Fellows, a regional leadership program. The four of us connected over our passion for changing the lives of small farmers and our dissatisfaction that we weren't doing enough. We started Kheyti by resetting our understanding of the problem. We spoke to almost 1,000 farmers over six months and realized that most of them were struggling with income variability due to climate risk.

What led Kheyti to develop the Greenhouse-in-a-Box solution?

We heard the same stories many times—farmers worked hard all year long, but had their incomes wiped out due to excessive heat, unseasonal rain or a pest attack. Greenhouses have existed for decades and are known to reduce the impact of external environmental risks on crops. Greenhouses multiply yields up to seven times, using only 10 percent water as compared to open farming.

However, we soon realized greenhouses were very expensive for small farmers to invest in. That's when we decided to design an affordable greenhouse suited to small farmers' needs.

We also realized that technology alone wasn't enough. Small farmers face roadblocks at every step, which makes technology a failure for them. This is why we added services like financing, training, inputs and market linkages, so farmers can succeed in greenhouse farming. We are the only company giving small farmers a one-stop-shop to get into greenhouse farming in India.

How is the implementation of your solution going?

We are just finishing our proof of concept with 50 farmers in the state of Telangana and adding 100 more farmers in Andhra Pradesh this year. The pilot was quite successful. Our farmers are earning steady, dependable monthly incomes and protecting

themselves from environmental risks. Our biggest success metric was that 14 of our first 15 farmers wanted a second greenhouse from us.

What were your biggest takeaways from the 2017 Global Entrepreneurship Summit?
I was amazed with the scale of GES and its ability to attract people from over 140 countries to Hyderabad. As an entrepreneur, it was a delight to have so many funders, entrepreneurs and policymakers under one roof for three days. The "Womenpreneur" section was special for me, as it helped attendees appreciate the role women entrepreneurs play in building the start-up ecosystem.

For Kheyti, getting a photo-op with Prime Minister Narendra Modi was a big highlight. Following GES, we were invited to make a presentation to him on policies that will help double farmers' income.

Are there any emerging agriculture technologies that excite you?
There's definitely a lot of buzz around agriculture these days. There's always a temptation to include advanced technologies like hydroponics and sensors in our greenhouse, which could increase yields further and also reduce human error and manual labor needed in farming.

However, we have to recognize the huge change in behavior that farmers will have to undergo before adopting such technologies, considering even greenhouse farming is very new to them. With time, we hope to make these technologies more affordable and easy to use for all types of farmers.

Do you have any advice for people who are interested in getting involved in such grassroots solutions for their communities?
Our ability to listen to the voices of farmers has been our biggest strength. Some of the best feedback we have got on our model have come from them, and we are immensely proud to have created a product that is truly suited to the needs of the farmers we work with.

Apart from listening to the end-user, my advice to individuals and organizations wanting to get involved at the grassroots level is to start acting. We spend too much time in perfecting the solution and miss out on the learnings we get during implementation. Even if it's imperfect, roll out that pilot. You will be surprised at the depth of feedback you can get by putting yourself out there.

Source: SPAN, May/June 2018
https://span.state.gov/business/kheyti-greenhouse-in-a-box/20180503

From Scraps to Soil

By Michael Gallant

EcoScraps turns food waste into compost, helping gardens—and the environment—in the process.

For Daniel Blake, the inspiration to start a business came not from a charismatic mentor or a childhood dream, but rather from a plate of French toast.

Now the CEO of EcoScraps, a young company that transforms discarded food into gardening soil, Blake experienced his environmentally-related epiphany while studying at Brigham Young University in Utah. It was during a meal at an all-you-can-eat buffet that Blake began to notice just how many half-eaten servings ended up, tossed in trash cans—a large portion of his own breakfast included. Struck by the amount wasted, Blake quickly dove into research and discovered some intriguing—and troubling— facts. "Between farms, grocery stores, and leftovers at restaurants, 40 percent of all food we grow in the United States gets thrown away," he says. "Not only is that a huge amount of waste, it also creates environmental problems."

Methane emissions from rotting organic matter in landfills can count for up to 8 percent of the

greenhouse emissions that humans generate, says Blake. “To put that in perspective, all cars on the road in the United States produce about 12 percent of this country's greenhouse emissions,” he asserts. “So we're talking about a lot of pollution coming directly from food waste.”

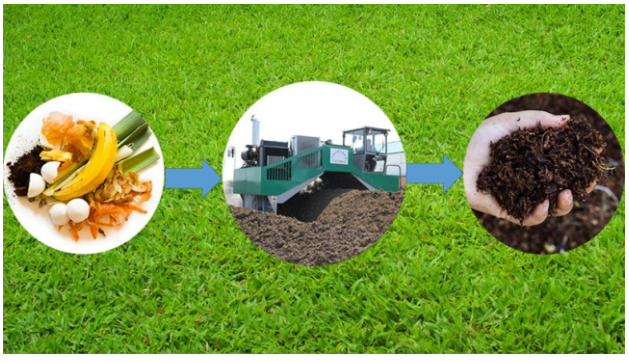
“It seemed like a big problem, but also a business opportunity,” continues the young entrepreneur, who grew up helping with his parents' backyard garden. With the help of friends, Blake began surreptitiously invading the dumpsters of local restaurants to procure different types of food waste. Blake and his associates then composted various blends and tested them for nutritional content in a soil lab. “Some of the composts were absolutely terrible and would kill plants,” he says. “But we also created a blend that came from fruit and vegetables. It was very high in nutrients—as rich as any chemical fertilizer you could buy. We started to take our compost to gardening stores and found that there was interest.” Riding the momentum of their initial success, the team officially founded EcoScraps in 2010.

Transforming waste

Now operating facilities in Arizona and Utah, EcoScraps gets its raw materials not from dumpster diving, but from grocery stores and wholesale produce providers. “Instead of dumping their food waste in a landfill, they bring it to our facilities,” says Blake. “We sort through everything, make sure there's no trash mixed in, and then grind it up to the consistency of a smoothie. It's a dirty business,” he adds, laughing.

The team mixes the resulting organic matter with sawdust shavings and forms large composting piles, which are then monitored for temperature, moisture and oxygen levels as the “smoothie” begins to decompose. On any given day, EcoScraps facilities can process between 20 and 50 tons of fruit and vegetable waste.

Once the composting process is complete, EcoScraps bags and resells the resulting compost—both through the company's online marketplace and often at the stores from which the food waste originated. “It only takes about three weeks for an apple to go from sitting on the shelf of a Costco to go



back to a shelf at that same Costco as EcoScraps compost,” Blake says.

Though the CEO readily admits that running a startup company is far from easy, he is thrilled with the reactions EcoScraps receives from gardeners and grocery stores. “Consumers love buying something that's organic, something that performs just as well as chemical-based soils, but doesn't cost anything more,” he says. “We're also able to save the grocery stores money on their waste fees, so everybody wins. Right now, we're just trying to expand as quickly as we can.”

Beyond the grocery store

EcoScraps' unique business model has positive environmental and economic effects for all involved. “The core of our business model is environmental sustainability,” says Blake. “The more sales we get, the more revenue we generate, and the more food waste we can compost and keep out of landfills.”

“People don't normally think of throwing stuff away as expensive, but a Costco can throw away as much as one ton of produce on a daily basis,” he continues. “The costs of shipping that to landfills can really add up.”

When it comes to reducing greenhouse gases, the results of EcoScraps' efforts are equally positive. “One bag of our finished compost is equivalent to taking one car off the road for a week,” says Blake. “I think it's great that we're able to save people money, develop a business, and cut down on greenhouse gas emissions, all at the same time.”

Source: SPAN, January/February 2012
https://span.state.gov/business/from-scraps-soil/20120102

GREENTREPRENEURSHIP
easier done than said

Source: *https://cesie.org/en/youth/greene-imprenditorialita-verde/*

The Environmental Information System acronymed as ENVIS was implemented by the Ministry of Environment & Forests by end of 6th Five Year Plan as a Plan Scheme for environmental information collection, collation, storage, retrieval and dissemination to policy planners, decision makers, scientists and environmentalists, researchers, academicians and other stakeholders.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has identified Consumer Education and Research Centre (CERC), Ahmedabad, as one of the Resource Partners to collect and disseminate information on "Environment Literacy - Eco-labelling and Eco-friendly Products". The main objective of this ENVIS Resource Partner is to disseminate information on Eco products, International, and National Eco labeling programmes.

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