



STORY OF KERUPARA FRUIT PROCESSING UNIT: MAXIMIZING HARVEST, BOOSTING FARMER PROSPERITY

Meghalaya is blessed with naturally fertile soil that supports a variety of fruits. However, in rural areas, nearly half these fruits go to waste due to low prices and lack of market access, leaving farmers with minimal earnings. This challenge led to a transformational initiative in the South West Garo Hills region of Kerupara, spearheaded by Mr. Salbison, who sought to add value to local produce through processing.

Setting up a Processing Unit

To address this issue, Mr. Salbison established a fruit processing unit in 2018. Initially, he managed the unit alone, focusing on increasing the marketability and value of locally grown fruits. His efforts helped farmers generate income rather than let their produce go to waste.

Journey from Individual Effort to Community Collaboration

At first, he was not interested in forming a group or leading a community, enjoying exhibitions and showcasing his products. However, he soon realized that working through the Integrated Village Cooperative Society (IVCS) initiated by MBMA's MLAMP Project would make selling products easier and create a stronger support system for farmers.

Formation of Kerupara IVCS

Determined to improve market opportunities for farmers, MBMA's MLAMP Project officially established Kerupara IVCS on September 24, 2019. The group started with 15 members, including 5 women, providing a platform for collective progress.

Impact on Local Villages

The IVCS covered four villages—Kerupara, Chopapara, Megapgre, and Santogre—benefiting 400 households with a population of around 700. As awareness grew, more farmers joined, eager to take advantage of better market opportunities and reduced fruit wastage.

Expansion and Community Growth

Following the Annual General Meeting (AGM), the society received a corpus fund that fueled further expansion. Recognizing the potential benefits, Mr. Salbison fully dedicated himself to the IVCS, shifting his focus from individual processing to community-driven efforts.

Strengthening Leadership and Infrastructure

Initially serving as President, with his brother-in-law as Secretary, he operated the IVCS from his home. As it grew, they participated in various schemes under MLAMP and other initiatives, enhancing their reach and impact. His personal processing unit was later converted into a society-owned unit, ensuring wider benefits for the community.





Government Support and Technological Advancement

Machines Used in IVCS Processing Unit

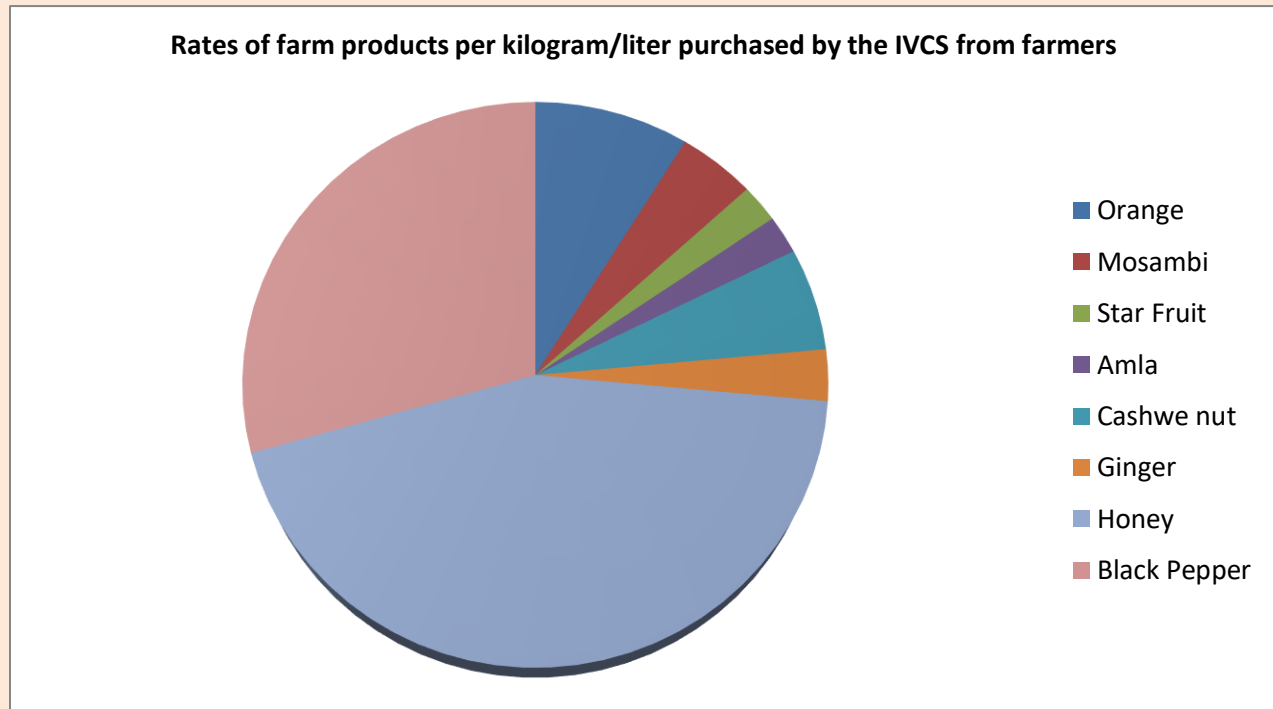
Machine Name	Funding Agency/Department	Year Received
Cashew Nut Processing Machine	MBMA, under MLAMP Project	2023
Juice Processing Machine	Horticulture Department, SWGH	2024
Dryer Machine	Horticulture Department, SWGH	2024
Grinder Machine	Horticulture Department, SWGH	2024
Taping Machine	Horticulture Department, SWGH	2024
Tetra Pack Machine	Horticulture Department, SWGH	2024

Recognizing his dedication and hard work, the South West Garo Hills Horticulture Department provided funding under the MIDC Scheme for the purchase of a Tetra Pak Machine, a crucial advancement in fruit processing and packaging.

Acquired for Rs. 65,000 from an entrepreneur in Shillong, the machine was sourced from Delhi and officially handed over to IVCS in December 2024. Previously, the unit operated manually, but with this technological upgrade and the acquisition of an FSSAI license, IVCS has significantly improved its production efficiency.

The IVCS produces a variety of items, including Mosambi Squash, Orange Squash, Star Fruit Squash, Amla Candy, Ginger Candy, Cashew Nuts, Black Pepper, Honey, and Banana Chips. By

processing these products, the IVCS is directly and indirectly supporting around 300 farmers in the Kerupara region.



Details of IVCS's Production and Profitability

Product	Seasonal quantity	Unit Volume (ml/gm)	Price per Unit (Rs)	Profit per Unit (Rs)	Total Profit per each item (Rs)	Overall profit (Rs)
Mosambi Squash	1000	700 ml	100	7	7000	51000
	2000	500 ml	50	5	10000	
	1000	300 ml	30	3	3000	
	3000	160 ml	10	2	6000	
	5000	100 ml	10	5	25000	
Orange Squash	1000	700 ml	100	7	7000	51000
	2000	500 ml	50	5	10000	
	1000	300 ml	30	3	3000	
	3000	160 ml	10	2	6000	
	5000	100 ml	10	5	25000	
Star Fruit Squash	1000	700 ml	100	7	7000	51000
	2000	500 ml	50	5	10000	
	1000	300 ml	30	3	3000	
	3000	160 ml	10	2	6000	

	5000	100 ml	10	5	25000	
Amla Candy	500	50 gm	20	15	7500	12500
	500	30 gm	17	10	5000	
Ginger Candy	500	50 gm	20	15	7500	12500
	500	30 gm	17	10	5000	
Cashew nut	1000	100 gm	120	20	20000	220000
	2000	200 gm	250	50	100,000	
	1000	400 gm	550	100	100,000	
Black Pepper	200	100 gm	100	40	8000	42000
	200	200 gm	200	50	10000	
	200	500 gm	500	120	24000	
Honey	600	200 ml	250	80	48000	98000
	1000	100 ml	120	50	50000	
Banana Chips	2000	35 gm	20	7	14000	34000
	2000	50gm	30	10	20000	
Grand Total						Rs. 470,000

After three days of packing, some packages tend to pop. However, they are used to make fruit wine because they are well-suited for that purpose. Sometimes, around 100 liters of product undergo this change due to the effects of citric acid.

They mainly sell their products at the Ampati market and other markets in South West Garo Hills, such as Garobadha, Betasingh, Zikzak, and Purakasia. Sometimes, they even sell outside the state and in the Northeast region through exhibitions. They are also preparing to open an outlet in Ampati market soon.



Engagement of Youth Workers in IVCS Processing Unit

The IVCS processing unit employs 10 youth workers, including 2 females, providing them with a monthly salary of Rs. 4,000. These workers were previously daily wage laborers but have now gained stable livelihood opportunities through the processing unit.

Empowering Female Members through Skill Development

The female members of the IVCS, who once worked as laborers, have now learned essential processing skills. This opportunity allows them to develop expertise in food processing, ensuring they have a sustainable source of income.



Challenges

1. **Lack of Storage Facilities:** IVCS currently operates seasonally as they do not have proper storage facilities to preserve the produce throughout the year. This limits their ability to maintain production consistently.
2. **Financial Constraints:** The working capital is insufficient, preventing them from covering a larger area and purchasing produce from more farmers. This limits their ability to scale operations and support the farming community effectively.

3. **Marketing Challenges:** Local products often struggle with low recognition and acceptance in the wider market. Many people look down on them, and their packaging does not meet Indian Standard Level requirements. Additionally, they lack digital branding to compete with modern products.
4. **Transportation Issues:** Access to the processing unit is challenging, as transportation must cross a river. The only available bridge is a hanging bridge, which two-wheelers cannot use, making transport especially difficult during the rainy season.

Future Plans

1. **Upgrading Packaging Standards:** IVCS aims to enhance its packaging quality to meet Indian Standard Level requirements, ensuring their products gain greater market acceptance.



2. **Expanding Employment Opportunities:** The society plans to engage more local workers, particularly youth and women, by providing employment in the processing unit, empowering the community with skill development and sustainable incomes.
3. **Digital Transformation:** IVCS is investing in digital training to improve branding, marketing, and overall visibility. They also plan to sell their products online, tapping into a larger consumer base beyond their local market.

4. **Advanced Machinery and Market Expansion:** IVCS intends to purchase a more advanced digitalized machine to boost production efficiency. They aim to expand their market reach beyond the North East, making their products available across India.

“As someone deeply involved in rural development, I have seen firsthand how much produce goes to waste, even though it has great potential for profit. To change this, I urge IVCS and other organizations to come together and establish food processing units so that no product is wasted and every item adds value. IVCS alone cannot scale up, but through collective efforts, we can achieve success.

Meghalaya produces high-quality goods, yet many people assume they come from Assam because buyers from Assam purchase them from us. There is strong demand, but financial constraints prevent us from supplying in bulk, as IVCS operates in lakhs, not crores. To address this challenge, we have taken the initiative to form an Apex Body to strengthen our efforts and improve our financial capacity." – Mr. Salbison

By addressing these challenges and implementing their future plans, IVCS is paving the way for economic growth, sustainability, and stronger market presence, ensuring that local farmers and workers benefit from their efforts.

