

PROSPECTS OF SERICULTURE BY-PRODUCTS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN ASSAM

Rekhmoni Gogoi¹, Sundar Barman², Monimala Saikia³, A. Hazarika⁴ & U. Hazarika⁵

¹Research Scholar, Department of Extension Education, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, India

²Assistant Professor, Department of Extension Education, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, India

³Assistant Professor, Department of Sericulture, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, India

⁴Research Scholar, Department of Extension Education, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, India

⁵Scientist, Central Silk Board, MSSO, Narayanpur, Lakhimpur, Assam, India

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ABSTRACT

Sericulture is an agro-based industry, which suits rural-based farmers, farm women, entrepreneurs, and artisans need less investment. India is the second largest producer of silk in the world, next to China. In reality, sericulture is an occupation for mostly small and marginal farmers as well as for women. Women constitute more than 60 per cent workforce in sericulture activity in Assam. The products of sericulture are cocoon, raw silk and ultimately the fabric. It involves lots of activities beginning with the cultivation of host plants to harvesting of leaves for feeding of silkworm and the rearing of silkworm from the egg to harvesting of cocoon and the reeling of cocoons to produce raw silk and processing it to produce the finished product. In each of the activities, a number of by-products, popularly called wastes are generated such as: unused leaves, dead, unhealthy & diseased larvae, larval litters & excreta, pupa, defective cocoon, silk waste and parts of host plants like mulberry fruits & stem, castor seed, tapioca tuber etc. Lots of value added products like spun silk, ghicha yarn, pupa, compost, craft items, medicines, cosmetics etc. can be prepared from these wastes. Effective utilization of these waste products make sericulture sector more attractive and remunerative as well as will help in doubling farmer's income. So, there is a large scope of development of entrepreneurship among rural women through utilization of sericulture by-products. The earlier concept of sericulture to produce only silk, now has changed into the functional sericulture of a new paradigm to relieve the patients as well as to increase the farmer's income dramatically.

KEYWORDS: *Sericulture, By-Product, Waste, Entrepreneurship Development, Income*