

For this agri-allied farmer, desi murgi came before eggs, and then came the big bucks

Courtesy: Anju Agnihotri Chhaba



It was a difficult life for Balbir Singh. The 42-year-old from Pathankot's Khalah village was making Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000 per month from his six-acre farm — the money, however, was not enough given the rising cost of living. Balbir calculated his expenses and found that he needed to make at least Rs 1 lakh per month. Though determined to improve his income, he was not in a position to invest much in any new venture. That was before he hit upon an agri-allied occupation, where he invested Rs 3,000 and is now earning Rs 1 lakh per month. The venture he invested in was establishing a 'desi murgi' [poultry farm](#), specializing in indigenous chicken, also known as country chicken. His primary aim was to sell the eggs, renowned for their exceptional flavour, superior nutritional value, high demand. The 'desi' eggs sell for around three times the price of the normal eggs. Back in 2018, Balbir started with a humble flock of 50 desi murgis, investing Rs 3,000 in his venture. His six acres of land became the foundation of his dream, where he set up an open shed for the poultry birds in an area of about 2,500 square feet. The beginning was modest, but Balbir had a vision. He believed in the potential of desi murgi and recognized the unique demand for its eggs and meat. Over the years, his dedication and careful management has paid off. He gradually increased the number of birds, and by 2023, his flock had grown to an impressive 650 birds, though a significant portion — around 40% — were roosters. This year, his target is to increase the number to 1,000 [poultry birds](#). "A desi murgi typically lays between 250 and

285 eggs per year. I sold around 400 eggs daily last year, with each egg priced at Rs 15—three times higher than the market price of the normal eggs. This resulted in daily sales of approximately Rs 6,000. There is high demand for these eggs from the end of September to March, spanning about seven months. Although April to August is the lean season in Punjab, some people also purchase them during the rainy season. With this much stock, one can easily generate sales worth Rs. 12-13 lakh in a season of over six months,” said Balbir Singh, adding that this year he plans to increase his flock to 1,000 birds. During the peak season, Balbir sold all the eggs laid by his hens. At the end of the season, he would sell 60% of the hens to traders in [Jammu](#) & Kashmir, where there is a high demand for desi murgi. The hens, aged between one to one-and-a-half years, were sold at Rs 180 to Rs 200 per kg. The remaining 40% of the older stock were kept to ensure a steady supply of chickens until the next season. “In April, I replenish my stock with new chicks from GADVASU in [Ludhiana](#). Each chick costs Rs 20. These chicks are nurtured and grow into productive hens by the time they reach five and a half to six months of age, ready to start laying eggs. This process of increasing the flock size continues as the new hens mature by the peak egg season, ensuring a smooth transition into the next egg season,” he explained, adding that summer is a quieter period. He uses this time to prepare for the next peak season by utilizing a mix of old stock and new arrivals to maintain and build the flock. “For selling eggs, I never go to the market as there is always advance booking. Most gym-goers prefer desi murgi eggs exclusively. In the beginning, I had to approach some people to sell the eggs, but now everyone knows that desi murgi eggs are available at my farm,” he said, adding that people are health-conscious and seek better options as long as they are pure. “The price is a testament to the superior quality of desi murgi eggs, which have a slightly brownish colour,” he noted. He usually sells roosters when they weigh more than one kilogram and hens when they are between one and one-and-a-half years old. Balbir’s business is not just about selling eggs — it is about understanding and catering to a niche market. The cost of feeding his 650 hens is a manageable Rs 300 per day. He feeds them maize, wheat, green grass, and other feed grown on his six acres of land. He has also set up a grinder at his farm to process these grains into two parts for feeding the hens. He gives all credit to the scientists in animal science for providing him with training. Balbir, who holds a diploma in Mechanical Engineering and works as an instructor at a private institute, values their guidance highly. Assistant Professor of Animal Science at Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Pathankot, Dr Surinder Singh, said that ‘desi murgi’

poultry farms are different from others because these hens are kept in the open rather than being caged. They do not consume the same type of feed; instead, about 50% of their diet comes from natural sources, including insects and green grass, which contribute to different flavonoids in their eggs and meat. They consume only about 100 grams of feed per day, and the daily feed cost is no more than Rs 1.50 to Rs 2 per hen. Dr Singh also suggested that farmers grow aquatic fodder, such as Ajola, as it is quite nutritious for overall development. He noted that this is a low-investment business with a high profit margin, potentially up to 90% or more. These country chickens are almost organic, which enhances the taste of their eggs and meat. He mentioned that they are training small and marginal farmers to manage such poultry farms to improve their incomes. KVK Pathankot Deputy Director Dr Narinderdeep Singh added that there is significant potential in this market. People have good purchasing power and are willing to spend on nutritious and pure food products.
