

'Rethink farming if you aren't earning Rs 3-4 lakh per acre': Punjab farmer who turned 2.5 acres into a goldmine

Courtesy: Anju Agnihotri Chhaba



"If a farmer cannot earn Rs 3-4 lakh profit per acre, he should either rethink his farming practices or leave this occupation." This is the philosophy that a sexagenarian farmer is following in the heart of rural Punjab, where traditional farming has been a way of life for generations. This farmer's journey has, however, shattered norms and set an inspiring example of innovation and profitability in just three years. Nachhatar Singh Brar, 62, a marginal farmer with just 2.5 acres in Sehna Khera village in Malout tehsil of Muktsar Sahib district three years ago made a bold decision to do away with the conventional wheat and cotton cultivation to explore the world of high-value cash crops. But that wasn't all — he went a step further by setting up his own brand/company to sell processed goods from his farm and other people's farms. From a paltry earning, he created a thriving business with global recognition. My entire family, especially my son, Gursewak Singh Brar, who works in the Punjab Police, supported me. After careful research and training, Nachhatar shifted his focus to growing crops, including turmeric, onion nursery, onions, and vegetables. In just three years, this decision transformed his income. For example, he grows turmeric on one acre from May to January, an onion nursery on 1.5 acres from October-mid to December, and then uses the same 1.5 acres for growing onions by adding half an acre, making it a total of 2 acres for the onion cultivation from January to May. He also uses intercropping techniques with onion to grow additional crops like tomatoes, cauliflower, and chilli, while the remaining

half-acre is dedicated to vegetables like ladyfingers. The result: A massive surge in profits compared to traditional wheat farming — but “hard work and proper know-how remain the key”. He also gives the credit for his entire training to the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Muktsar Sahib, and Dr Karamjit Sharma, Professor-cum-incharge of Goneana KVK, Muktsar Sahib, for all training programmes he received. “What makes my approach different is the expansion of processing and packaging of the crops I grow. I use lemons, which I grow on the sides of my field, as well as chillies and turmeric, to make pickles, turmeric powder instead selling these products in the raw form. I also sell onion nurseries, a 70-day crop (October-mid to December) for around Rs 9 lakh, yielding a profit of around Rs 3 lakh after covering expenses. Additionally, I sell high-quality produce like onions, worth Rs 4.5 lakh to Rs 5.5 lakh per acre, depending on the market rate, earning around Rs 3.5 lakh to Rs 4 lakh per acre. I also process chickpeas (kabuli channa) in different flavours, small and large pakoras (fritters), which are used in curd, vegetables, and Kadhi, a popular Punjabi kadhi-chawal dish. Moreover, I prepare healthy snacks by mixing millet, soybeans, maize, and other grains to encourage people to adopt healthier snacking habits. These packaged goods are sold under the brand name of ‘The Farmer Made’, which I launched last year, displaying the name of the brand on the map of Punjab on every packet.” The brand’s motto is “*Shudhata Sadhi Pehchan* (Purity is our Identity)” by providing pure produce directly from farmers, bypassing intermediaries,” said Nachhatar, adding that his wife Harmeet Kaur, son Gursewak and daughter-in-law Kiranjit Kaur support him in every bit. Gursewak said, “We began selling a range of organic products, including mustard oil, which we process through traditional methods like cold press, and turmeric, millet snacks, and various ready-to-eat mixes.” Their products are popular among customers in Canada, the US, the UK, and beyond, who appreciate the authentic, chemical-free, and high-quality products. Also, their products are available on Amazon. From just 2.5 acres, he not only generates between Rs 3 lakh and Rs 4 lakh per acre per crop, his processed food products provide a profit margin of around 15 per cent. But his success cannot only be measured by profitability, it also created employment opportunities for his community. As a marginal farmer, he employs 16 workers for 6-7 months a year, providing much-needed income and support to families in his village and creating a ripple effect of prosperity. Singh is an ardent advocate of changing the mindset from the traditional farming practices. “Till the time a farmer will not come out of wheat-paddy and not think like an entrepreneur, with a clear vision, he cannot earn good profits. Today large companies with no fields of their own are

sourcing raw materials from somewhere else and selling the product after processing. But farmers are transporting raw crops to mandis instead of selling them on their own," said Gursewak. "Our entire family, including my school-going children, are involved in our company's work and even we are employing others from this small land." "My ultimate goal is to expand my company to a prominent platform, showcasing the power and potential of the local farming businesses," said Nachhatar, urging his fellow farmers to adopt a similar mindset: "If you cannot earn Rs 3 to 4 lakh per acre, then it's time to rethink farming and do something else." The price of wheat and onions (in the wholesale market) is the same, but wheat yields only 20 quintals per acre, while onions yield 200 to 250 quintals — 10 times more per acre. As a result, the profit is also 10 times higher. Not just onions, many other crops offer similar high profits compared to wheat, cotton and paddy. So, who is stopping farmers from growing these? It's simply their mindset," Nachhatar added.
