From Part-Time Farmer with a Service Job to Thriving Commercial Vegetable Farmer: Binod Chaudhary's Journey Under the YUVA Project

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Binod Chaudhary, 36, from Ratgain in Tulsipur Sub-Metropolitan City, Ward 16, has redefined his livelihood through innovative farming techniques. A father of four, Binod transitioned from a stable service job to full-time agriculture, driven by a vision to improve his family's quality of life.

With 15 Katha (5,325 square meters) of farmland, his annual farming income initially stood at Rs. 350,000 (approximately $2,550), while his expenses reached Rs. 60,000 (around $437). Despite the modest earnings, Binod's commitment to farming led him to join the YUVA Project in 2023—a research-driven initiative focused on enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability.

Before his involvement with YUVA, Binod grappled with challenges such as fluctuating market prices and limited access to markets due to his farm's remote location. His belief in the revenue potential of vegetable farming, coupled with his understanding of the importance of timely harvesting and strategic crop selection, inspired him to seize the opportunity to turn his aspirations into reality.

Under the YUVA Project, Binod was allocated 2,500 square meters of research plot to evaluate the viability of five vegetable crops: bitter gourd, cucumber, long beans, tomato, and capsicum. The project provided him with crucial resources, including seeds, mulching materials, nylon threads, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) tools such as sticky traps, pheromone traps, and lures. Additionally, Binod underwent extensive training in agricultural practices. This training covered integrated soil management, seed management, crop rotation, irrigation, disease control, pesticide application, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Through the initiative, Binod was empowered to adopt sustainable farming techniques while assessing which crops could thrive in local conditions and deliver maximum profitability.

Among the tested crops, cucumber and long beans emerged as Binod's most successful ventures, each excelling for distinct reasons. On a 500-square-meter plot dedicated to the Beli cucumber variety, Binod harvested 3,150 kilograms, generating Rs. 101,171 (approximately $737) in revenue. This performance underscored the cucumber's potential as a high-value crop, with prices ranging between NPR 25 and 60 (about $0.18 to $0.44) per kilogram based on market demand.

Similarly, long beans demonstrated their reliability as a low-maintenance crop with consistent returns and minimal production costs per kilogram, further solidifying Binod's success as a commercial vegetable farmer under the YUVA Project.

Figure 1: Binod Chaudhary proudly displays his fresh cucumber harvest. (Photo by Bandana Adhikari)

Both cucumber and long beans required significantly less care compared to bitter gourd, tomato, and capsicum, which posed challenges in pest control, soil management, and irrigation. The adoption of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices streamlined Binod's efforts and reduced costs. These practices not only minimized pesticide use but also curbed pest severity early in the season, enhancing overall sustainability.

The benefits of these sustainable methods extended beyond the farm. With increased disposable income, Binod's family now enjoys an improved standard of living. His success has also inspired neighboring farmers to embrace IPM practices, highlighting the health and environmental advantages of reducing chemical usage. As a result, Binod has earned respect within his community, with fellow farmers seeking his advice and valuing his insights.

Looking to the future, Binod plans to expand the cultivation of cucumbers and long beans, emphasizing off-season harvests to capitalize on higher market prices. Additionally, he aims to incorporate more pest-resistant and low-maintenance crops during peak growing seasons to further reduce costs. By maintaining a market-oriented approach and continuously gathering information, Binod is determined to maximize his farm's profitability while continuing to set an example of sustainable farming in his community.

Figure 2: Binod Chaudhary and a fellow farmer prepare to transport their fresh harvest to the market on a motorbike. (Photo by Bandana Adhikari)

Reflecting on his journey, Binod expressed optimism about the future of vegetable farming. "I am hopeful about the prospects of vegetable farming and want to see if I can make a bigger income by dedicating every minute of my time to agriculture. That's why I decided to leave my old job," he shared.

Binod also acknowledged the contributions of the YUVA Project to his success. "Of course, we would want more assistance, but what the project has done for us so far regarding inputs, we are extremely grateful," he remarked. He urged other farmers to adopt Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices, emphasizing their dual benefits of cost savings and positive impacts on health and the environment.

Binod's success story highlights the transformative potential of targeted agricultural interventions. His journey demonstrates how access to essential resources, training, and sustainable practices can empower farmers to overcome challenges and achieve remarkable results. With growing confidence and unwavering determination, Binod exemplifies the power of innovation in agriculture to create sustainable livelihoods. His experience serves as a replicable model for farmers, showcasing how modern farming techniques can enhance income, improve community well-being, and inspire others to embrace sustainable agriculture.