



## Om Bio Fertilizers

### *Manufacturing Low-cost Bio-Fertilizers*

When it comes to agriculture, Ms. Preeti had an educational connect. With a Master's degree in Agricultural economics & having worked with Nagpur Doordarshan she was well versed with the problems ailing the Agri-ecosystem.

"I was always connected to the farmers in one way or the other. First it was my education and next it was my work. Given my educational background I was wrongly under the impression that I knew Agriculture but it was only after I started conducting Interviews pertaining to pertinent questions in the field that I actually realized the nuance of the profession. My teaching profession did give me knowledge but that knowledge only kept me at the bay of agriculture, it was post my work with Doordarshan on how to grow a particular crop, how to prevent crop loss, and the various queries from farmers that the experts cleared gave me a crystal clear understanding," says Ms. Preeti.

It was her shift to Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra post marriage that paved the way for what today comes to be known as Om-Bio fertilizers. Ms Preeti recounting her field stepping stone incident says, "Post my marriage I had to stop all my research work. I knew reading about cropping pattern was different than practically experiencing it. My in-laws had a large farm land and there were many farmers in and around the area. Paddy is the main crop that's cultivated by all and we also used to cultivate the same. This pushed me to gain more knowledge on this aspect.

Staying there brought me into proximity with the farmers and their problems. The farmers given my educational background often approached me with their problems seeking solutions. They would draw comparison from previous years of how they were making more money back then, how the pest levels were down and production was high. All of this pointed out a single factor: degrading soil health. Soil is no longer live today, there is a significant decline in the healthy microbe count & the soil continues to amass all the harmful chemicals coming in the form of pesticides/fertilizers. And these chemicals also enter the food-cycle.

Seeing the sorry state of affairs I decided to channelize my knowledge and years of learnings towards this cause."



## About the Startup

Founded in 2016, Om Bio-Fertilizers, a startup based out of Nagpur, Maharashtra, manufactures & markets Bio fertilizers to promote organic agriculture. Mrs. Priti Sanjay Sonkusare, the founder, holds a Master's degree in Agriculture and has prior business experience. She is also a certified organic farming Farm Advisor.

## Startup Product Details

Bio-fertilizers comes under the concept of organic farming.

They have manufactured 9 Types of Bio fertilizers some of them are Rhizobium, Azotobactor, and KMP & Azospirillum.



Explaining the working process of Om Bio fertilizers, Mrs Priti says, “Our soil is full of live microorganism which supplies the soil with essential nutrients that helps in plant growth. The usage of chemical fertilizers during the crop growing process slips in the chemical in the soil and it harms the microorganism and thus the growth cycle of plants. Our approach is to supply organic inputs to soil which enhances the presence of these microorganisms.”

Explaining the difference between chemical & bio fertilizers she says,” Chemical fertilizers are made using chemical and is supplied to the soil externally, with which the chemical enter the produce and the food cycle. But bioferliizer contain live microorganisms isolated from healthy soil which farmers supply to the soil in a prescribed format.

## Extraction Process

“We extract live microorganisms from soil and then they are multiplied in our lab, and then we supply the same to farmers in a prescribed format.

For instance the soil in which pulses are grown have high concentration of Rhizobium bacteria. We isolate live microbes from such kind of rich soil. We also procure cultures of microbes from Organic Farming Centres in the country and multiply them.

At 121 degrees we sterilize water in our dictation unit and then we add Agar-Agar solution to it, then again at 121 degrees we sterilize it and add the microbial culture to it. This culture gets multiplied in test tube and then tested further. Out of this we prepare Bio-fertilizers.

If the farmers needs fertilizers for seed treatment then we give it to them in powder form.

The fertilizers can be used for any kind of crop, nursery plant, vegetables, horticultural plant plus they can be supplied at any stage of plant growth. They can even be used for ornamental plants.

In powder treatment process the seeds are treated with powder before sowing so that the healthy microbes enter the soil through seeds and multiply further in the soil. The process involves soaking seeds in salt water, whatever bad/rotten seeds are there, they come to the top. Post this the good quality seeds are washed and dried in shade before adding powder to them. For 1 Kg of Seed which will sown in an acre of land around 250gms of Powder is used,” the founder explains.



## Marketing Strategy & Farmer Connect

Talking about the Marketing Strategy, the founder says, “Knowledge of Bio-fertilizers & awareness regarding the same is there only among the limited group of large scale farmers, the place I stay in Gadchiroli district is a tribal dominated area, it’s not an industrial area. Farmers here still function on old rudimentary ways.

Ever since I started in the year 2016, I have been going around giving demos and explaining the importance of bio fertilizers and yes it is definitely helping in them becoming more aware.

We demonstrated the impact of Bio-fertilizers on the cultivation process by working on our farm lands. It’s more like an indirect benefit, the carbon content in the soil is increasing and the plants are no longer as vulnerable as they used to be for a pest infestation, a major observation by farmers. Apart from reaching out to farmers we are also approaching State Agriculture Department, KVKs as a way to gain inroads into the farming community.”

## Areas of Operation

They are presently operational out of Maharashtra & intend to scale their operations all over the country and start an export business soon. To date, they have supported 1200 farmers. They have generated revenue of ₹15 Lakhs.

They are into training and skilling woman farmers in organic farming and extension work along with hiring them. To date they have employed five women farmers.

## Challenges

Gaining Farmer’s trust was the most difficult part. Over decades of farming, it’s now etched in farmer’s heads that giving urea helps crop so it’s difficult to reverse that conditioning. As opposed to chemical fertilizers where you get to see small changes within weeks like plants gives more hues of green, Bio-fertilizers takes time to show its effect.

## Association & Key take aways from MANAGE

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**“I learnt a lot from the training program, though I was completely involved in Agri-field but honestly I had no idea on various crucial business aspects like: how to market one’s product, how to maintain product quality, how to compare or posit our product with our competitors etc. MANAGE was the platform where we learnt how to be different from our competitors, how to stand out. I mean Bio fertilizers are not a new thing so how do we stand out? MANAGE instilled the being different aspect in our heads and that’s what got us thinking. We wanted to be different and so now instead of securing cultures of microbes from other companies OM BIOFERTILIZERS isolate cultures from healthy soil directly”.**

- Ms. Priti





## Vision as an Entrepreneur

The Start-up's vision is to slowly bring a shift in the present farming ways.

"We are fully aware that we can't entirely put a full stop to the usage of chemicals by farmers but we by pushing for the usage of Bio-fertilizers we can at least reduce the proportion of chemical application, this will bring down the residue effect in plant, then one can maintain soil health.

Famers consider bio-fertilizers equivalent to Allopathy, they say the crop condition improves but it does not weed out the disease it works slowly, once the plants gets strong, attack of pest is less," add in Ms. Priti.



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