

## **Women become torch bearers of natural farming**

**Leena Sharma**

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Leena Sharma from Panjianu village in Karsog development block of Mandi district has taken up the task of creating awareness on natural farming in the area while leading a group of 20 women farmers. She is doing natural farming on 5 bigha land and is motivating other women to shift to this non-chemical farming.

She set an example by growing peas, potato, coriander, garlic, methi (fenugreek) and wheat with low-cost natural farming and is currently training the women associated with her in Panjianu 'Krishi Samuh'. Her target is to make the entire village switch to chemical-free natural farming.

“The farmers had been using minimum chemicals in our area. So many of them got associated easily with natural farming in no time. All the women in our Krishi Samuh' do natural farming collectively and we are also trying to motivate other farmers of the village. So far, we have associated 100 farmers with natural farming. Many farmers call us to learn this method now,” she said.

Members of the 'Krishi Samuh', Shanta Sharma, Meena Sharma, Shanta Devi, Kamli Devi, Satya Devi, Teji Sharma, Sarla Devi and Tara Sharma reveal that all of them are doing natural farming on land measuring 70 bigha. Most of the women farmers have grown pea, potato, wheat, cauliflower, gram and garlic in their fields.

They all use the dung and urine of 'desi' cow to make natural inputs. They prepare inputs collectively and help each other on the farm. "We make Jeevamrit, Ghanjeevamrit and other natural inputs turn-wise in every member's house," they said.

After successfully experimenting with natural farming on a part of the land, Teji Sharma, a member of this group is now cultivating apples. She has planted apple rootstocks in one bigha land and is growing onion, garlic and pea in the adjacent field. "My family members are quite positive about natural farming and they have encouraged me to go ahead with this 'chemical- free' farming,” she said.

Another member of the Krishi Samuh, Kamla Sharma said, "We are extremely happy since we have adopted natural farming. Farmers Of our village have shed the use Of synthetic chemicals and are encouraging other farmers of the region to adopt this eco-friendly technique."

In June 2019, Leena Sharma shared her experience With the Vice-chairman Of Niti Aayog, Sh. Rajiv Kumar about this farming in a function organised at Raj Bhawan, Shimla. This has been the proudest moment for Leena and her farming group, she recalls.

**Quote:**

Earlier we did not have a 'desi' cow in the village. My husband. who is a teacher in a school situated at a distance used to collect urine and dung of 'desi' cow from elsewhere and bring it every weekend. Initially, we used to make natural inputs with that.

**-Leena Sharma**