"Make more moves and less announcements"
MBA grad now a farmer, sells organic fruits

WITH Sankranti round the corner, an MBA graduate, who has turned a farmer, is offering baskets full of organic, homegrown fruits to corporate offices.

Usharani Vinay, the founder of Skyo Farms, has worked in several IT companies. During the pandemic, however, she found her love for farming. She impulsively bought a piece of land in her village, Yelagalaravdi in Kunigal taluk, and started farming. "We had moved back to our village during the pandemic, when we came across a piece of land for sale. I bought it and started farming," she told TNIE.

An assortment of fruits sold by Skyo Farms, run by Usharani Vinay

The farm has been running for a year-and-a-half now, with Usharani growing around 15 varieties of fruits, including guavas, papayas, bananas and mangoes. As part of integrated farming, she also rears sheep. Recently, she also added a pond full of tilapia. She uses the recirculating aquaculture system (RAS) for fish farming, where the same water is filtered and recycled to reduce water consumption. She recycles the waste from sheep and tilapia as fertilizer in her farm.

In light of the festive season, she has taken to selling an assortment of her produce to corporate offices and apartments. Each basket costs around Rs 500 and has 2 kg of bananas and papayas each, a kg of guava and mosambi, two coconuts and sugarcane. She also promotes weekend farming, where people from the city can visit her farm to harvest and tend to their own crops on a 600 sq ft patch of land. "We’ve had people ordering from us all over the country. We are currently only focusing on corporate offices and apartments, because it’s easier in terms of delivery and other logistics," she said.

The farm spans 3.16 acres with Usharani also growing sandalwood, drumstick, horsegram and corn, among other horticultural crops, of which she uses some to tend to her sheep. "It’s definitely a drastic change, because it was an unexpected decision, but it’s quite addicting because every day there’s something new and curious that’s pulling us towards farming," she says.

Mango exports expected to surge after 2-year gap

New Delhi: After a gap of two years, the export of mangoes and by-products is expected to see a spurt after India and the US agreed to simplify the rules, Apepa, the agency responsible for the export of food products, has said.

While the mango season is nearly four months away, export of pomegranates is expected to commence soon and shipments from India can move through the year as there are three crops in the country, Apepa chairman M Angamuthu told TOI.

On Saturday, the government announced that it had agreed on a deal with the US to allow the import of American cherries, Alfalfa hay in return for Indian mangoes and pomegranate exports. What the new rules mean is that the US and India can follow joint protocol on irradiation, which can be certified by US inspectors at their port, or they can accept Indian certification too and visit some of the facilities.

Angamuthu said that the Apepa expects a significant jump in mango exports. Exports of mango (including by-products) to the US were estimated at close to Rs 100 crore two years ago. Angamuthu said that in addition to alphonso, kesar and some of the varieties from the South, Apepa will seek to push langda, Dussehri, Jardalu and himsagar.