

Solar Dryers Support Women's Enterprise Development

Winrock International

Improving Lives and Livelihoods Worldwide



Solar dryers reduce produce losses for farmers in Nepal and India.

Rural farmers in Nepal and India face the continual problem of produce spoilage and poor market conditions. During harvest, produce is available in abundance. Farmers are forced to either sell at low prices or let their produce spoil. In the off-season produce is less available and priced more competitively.

The Center for Rural Technology (CRT), Nepal and the All India Women's Conference, India (AIWC) were approached by rural women interested in preserving their surplus vegetables and fruits during the harvest season for consumption and sale during the off-season.

Supported by USAID's South Asia Regional Initiative/Energy Small Grants program, CRT and AIWC developed a

solar dryer model, keeping in mind the local produce and the need for quality, hygienic end-products. Training for users and trainers was conducted. Group members were trained on using the solar dryer for preservation of surplus foods, and stakeholder representatives were instructed on how to teach other farmers about using solar dryers.

In Nepal, CRT implemented the project in the districts of Dhankuta and Palpa. Thirty dryers were purchased by individuals and women's groups. In Palpa, women used the dryer mainly to ease their off-season vegetable shortage. In Dhankuta, community women dried about 30 different fruits and vegetables, and packaged, labeled, and started selling the dried goods in the market, earning income from their produce.

Women's self-help groups in India are using the model dryer at the local AIWC office to convert seasonal produce including arrowroot and pepper into "value-added products" that are sold in the market. The dried products provide greater returns to growers in the off-season, when market conditions provide for better prices.

In addition to developing the technology and providing the necessary training on how to use the dryers, CRT and AIWC provided needed support to the groups to link their products to the market. In India, additional marketing support was provided through government channels.

Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.