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Solar Dryers Provide Food Security  
& Develop Entrepreneurship

# Solar Dryers Provide Food Security and Develop Entrepreneurship

Rural farmers in Nepal and India face the continual problem of produce spoilage and poor market conditions for their product. During the harvest season, produce is available in abundance. Farmers are forced to either sell at low prices due to excess product in the market 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 in Nepal and India interested in preserving their surplus vegetables and fruits during the harvest season for consumption and sale during the off-season.

With the support of USAID's South Asia Regional Initiative/Energy Small Grants program, CRT and AIWC developed a solar dryer model, keeping in mind the local produce available and the need for quality, hygienic end-products. Two modules of

training, one for users and another for trainers, were conducted. Women's group members were provided training on how to best use the solar dryer for preservation of surplus food materials, and stakeholder representatives were instructed on how to teach other women & men farmers in the region 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 cooperative groups that received training through the project. In Palpa, women used the dryer mainly to ease their vegetable shortage during off-season. In Dhankuta, community women dried about 30 different types of fruits and vegetables. They packaged, labeled and started selling the dried goods in the market, earning income from produce that would have otherwise spoiled.

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 packaged, labeled and sold in the market. The dried products provide greater returns to growers who were previously unable to sell their produce 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.

**Environment:** Forestry, Energy  
& Ecosystem Services:  
Clean Energy

**Country:**  
Nepal

**Funding:**  
US Agency for  
International Development

Many more women in both Nepal and India have shown interest in the project and requested both training and access to solar dryers.

Through this project, women have been able to address the twin problems of vegetable shortages during the off-season and means of self-employment and income generation.

The Project was supported by USAID's SARI\Energy Small Grants Program and implemented from December 15, 2004 to December 31, 2005. The project was jointly implemented by CRT Nepal and AIWC India.



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