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Asha – a money spinner in Anantapur

About 70-80% of groundnut production in India is used for edible oil and about 20-30% is used for other purposes. Most of the Indian groundnut cultivars have small and medium-sized kernels. The groundnut for export is hand-picked selection (HPS) of premium kernels from the produce of varieties with medium-sized kernels.

At ICRISAT, a significant amount of time and resources are spent in developing improved germplasm with large-sized kernels and traits of local adaptation. Variety ICGV 86564, named ASHA (which means 'hope' in Hindi) by ICRISAT, is a big success in the Philippines.

ASHA, a high-yielding, large kernel groundnut variety for table use, has an average 100-seed weight of 90 g with 22% protein content 51% oil content, O (Oleic fatty acid)/L (Linoleic fatty acid) ratio of 1.9, polyunsaturated to saturated fatty acid ratio of 1.2 and Iodine value of 91. The higher the O/L ratio and the lesser the Iodine value, the more stable and longer is the shelf life of groundnut products. The variety gives better kernel grade profile in the post-rainy season (*rabi* and summer seasons). Under good management, it can yield up to 5 t ha⁻¹.

When Mr Surendranath Reddy of Tarimala Village, Singanamala Mandal of Anantapur district heard of Asha, he collected the seed from ICRISAT on 3 January 2006 and planted them on a 0.2-hectare plot.



A surprised but happy Mr Surendranatha Reddy with ASHA plants full of pods.

After land preparation in his sandy loam field (ideal for groundnut), he applied 150 kg castor cake powder ha⁻¹, 125 kg single super phosphate ha⁻¹, 80 kg murate of potash ha⁻¹ and 15 kg urea ha⁻¹ as a basal fertilizer dose. The seeds were treated with 25 mL Confidor (insecticide) before

planting them on 5 January 2006. The crop was harvested on 18 May 2006 (135 days after sowing). The pod yield of 1040 kg (5.2 t ha⁻¹) with large kernel size surprised Mr Reddy, who invested Rs 9,400.00 on this project. He then hand-picked 100 kg jumbo kernels (20-25 seed count ounce⁻¹) from his produce and sold them at a premium price of Rs 100/ kg⁻¹. Farmers from the neighboring villages are willing to pay Rs 75.00 kg⁻¹ for the seed (smaller than Jumbo size). Realizing the demand, Reddy confidently bought 600 kg Breeder seed from ICRISAT for seed multiplication in the 2006 rainy season. True to its name, Asha brought hope to a smallholder farmer.

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