



Dr. Partha Ranjan Das Gupta is an agronomist and seed scientist. Born in 1940 in Kolkata, he was educated at Banaras Hindu University and in Saskatchewan, Canada. His professional career has spanned over 50 years. After a decade as a university lecturer in Kalyani, Das Gupta moved to industry. Initially an executive in his home city at India's oldest private seed company, he later relocated to Mumbai and Pune for a leading global agribusiness. There he established and led its Indian Seeds R&D organisation. After an international role at the same company, he became associated in 2004 with the non-profit Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture. Das Gupta was the first Director of its Indian operations and remained its Principal Advisor until 2014. Under his guidance, the Foundation developed initiatives in different zones of the country, all designed to help smallholders raise their yields and income. This book recounts the valuable experience from the first four projects. He remains Advisor Emeritus to the Foundation.

The author has spoken on agriculture and its development at numerous national and international fora. His many publications include papers and book chapters, most recently in 'Transforming Indian Agriculture – India 2040: Productivity, markets and institutions', published by Sage in 2012. The present book is his first complete work. Dr. Das Gupta lives with his wife and a younger sister in Kolkata.



A majority of farms in India are of the size of 1 – 2 hectares. From this small farm, the family will have to earn enough to be able to meet their food, health, and educational needs. Prof Partha Das Gupta has shown through concrete examples how agriculture can become the pathway for the economic prosperity of small farmers... .It is a kind of book based on the field achievements and experiences that is badly needed today. The Government of India has announced that within five years farmers will be enabled to double their income. If this is to be realised, the examples cited by Prof Das Gupta are very relevant."

Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, Founder Chairman, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation Ex-Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha)

"The success of Indian agriculture depends heavily on smallholders. These are the farmers with whom we work, across the sub-continent, as well as in other Asian countries and Africa... .As this book ably shows, small farmers can take big steps forward. They can significantly raise their yields, even on miniscule holdings. They can earn good incomes, even in sophisticated markets, often for the first time in their family history... .It has been an honour and pleasure to work with my friend Dr. Das Gupta, at the Syngenta Foundation. I can think of no other author better placed to tell a rich and detailed personal story of agricultural development and growth in India... "

Dr. Marco Ferroni, Executive Director, Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture



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Commercial Agriculture by Indian Smallholders

Das Gupta

COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE BY INDIAN SMALLHOLDERS

From Farm Prospects to Firm Realities



PARTHA R. DAS GUPTA

Indian farms continue to shrink in size. More than two-thirds of holdings now measure less than a hectare. With such small and fragmented units, only 40% of farmers can live off agricultural income alone. The Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture aims to increase smallholders' income opportunities. In 2004, the Foundation started a pilot project in Chandrapur, Maharashtra. Staff and partners of the Foundation introduced technology and techniques to increase productivity. Full-fledged initiatives followed there and in other areas. Since each setting differed, the Foundation adapted its approach accordingly. Rising yields prompted more farmers to apply technology such as quality seeds, and to change their soil and crop management. Growing high-value vegetables enabled them to earn good cash income. There were also challenges. Profits suffered from fluctuating prices over which the farmers had no control. The Foundation responded by helping them form producer groups for better market access, and with options for growing non-perishable high-value commodities. These and other interventions, often unconventional, were aimed at strengthening livelihood security. It was a continuous journey, personally witnessed, shaped and documented by the author. He is uniquely placed to look back and analyse the factors responsible