

A sustainable ecosystem for **grape production**



Case Study // The **India Grape Initiative**



What was *the market situation*?

India's grape export market is growing, as the country gains a reputation as a cost-effective alternative to established grape-producing countries such as South Africa or Chile. An estimated 280,000 tons of grapes were exported in 2021/22, with the EU the highest-volume destination. There are around 150 exporters in India who handle grapes, ranging from large exporting companies to smallholder collectives. The highest-producing region is Maharashtra, where Nashik is known as India's grape capital. In this region, there are as many as 50,000 farmers who grow grapes: mainly smallholders with just 1–3 ha of land.



What were *the challenges*?

Grape-growing smallholders have faced rapidly increasing challenges in recent years. Firstly, climate change is driving more volatile weather events, particularly out-of-season rainfall, which can exacerbate problems with downy mildew and bunch rot at flowering stage. Secondly, European retailers' certification and transparency requirements continue to increase, and in particular their ambition is to see less and less chemical residue in products. When farmers are spraying more to combat season-long outbreaks of fungal diseases and pests, this is doubly difficult to achieve. Finally, COVID-19 has caused supply chain disruption and led to an increase in freight costs – and these costs are not forecast to come down until 2024 at least.

What was *the solution*?

The entire value chain is working together on sustainable solutions for Indian grape production. In a project designed by Greenyard Fresh and the Food Chain Partnership, dedicated teams are running grower training, designing new residue-compliant spraying programs, implementing digital passports for traceability, and undertaking other sustainability initiatives – all with a view to making grape production more precise, increasing return on investment for smallholder farmers and developing a sustainable ecosystem for grape production. Run by dedicated project officers in Maharashtra, the project engages smallholders with the BayG.A.P. service program, using the 'five Ps' model for capacity-building: Production (agronomic advice and integrated plant protection), Protection (use of personal protective equipment and new processes to minimize exposure), Passport (traceability tools), Post-Harvest Management, and ongoing Program Monitoring to ensure long-term compliance. Farmers initially participate in a group training program, taking place either virtually or face-to-face. The aim of this training is not just to advise on the most effective crop protection products and technical guidelines, but also to effect a mindset change, growing farmers' awareness of constantly-changing Maximum Residue Levels and the need for a 'constant improvement' approach to quality and safety. The training is followed with one-to-one field visits from project officers, who can advise on practical implementation and assist with the use of traceability tools, such as smartphone apps (Digital Passport) that track crop protection inputs. At the same time, wider sustainability initiatives are being implemented – such as separate training for farmers and exporters on safe handling of pesticides and a farm plastic waste management campaign including the establishment of local collection hubs for farm plastic waste.

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“With full control of our “field to fork strategy”, together with our farmers, exporters, logistics and retailer partners, our aim is to ensure we have the most efficient and solid supply chain out of India, ensuring a safe, consistent and innovative supply to our final consumers.”

// German Ponce
(Greenyard–Fresh Solutions)



What did *we achieve*?

The project started in 2011–12 with three exporters on board. A decade later, it has grown massively, and 24 exporters are now associated with the partnership. Some 1,500 smallholders are now being supported by the project, accounting for nearly 10% of India's total grape exports to the EU. These farmers are now better equipped to handle pest and disease challenges, to meet European buyers' quality standards and certification norms, and to actively identify more ways to farm precisely and achieve even better results. Word is spreading fast about this scalable project, and the partners are already planning how to reach the remaining 90% of production and support every smallholder within an integrated value chain.



“With a partnership approach, the small farmer can play an important role in the international market. He is now on a level playing field with big farmers from South Africa or any other part of the world. That is the biggest success: as Indian farmers, despite our challenges, we can still become professional farmers, enter the global market, and participate in an efficient ecosystem that benefits us and our land.”

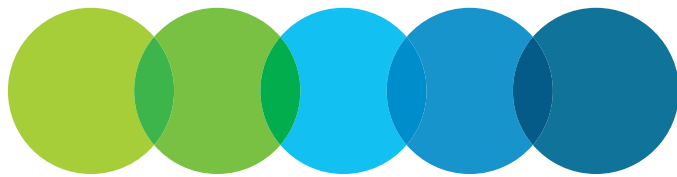
// Vilas Shinde, MD, Sahyadri Farms (India's largest fruit and vegetable farmer collective)

“When it comes to the Food Chain Partnership, Bayer is always there to guide the farmers through the BayG.A.P. service program regarding the certification standards that buyers specify. Bayer's advisors help us understand and implement the specifications of each supermarket, which can vary from retailer to retailer. With their help, we can feel confident that we are supplying the high-spec fruits they need, instead of stressing about it.”

// Sudhir Tarale, Director – Fresh and Fair Exports LLP-Nashik (grape exporter)

About Food Chain Partnership

Consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of the need for healthy nutrition. Food Chain Partnerships help to supply consumers with high-quality fresh produce, which forms the basis of a healthy diet. But such partnerships can only succeed if they involve every player in the food chain – from the farmer and processor to the exporter or importer and retailer. The Crop Science Division of Bayer has the global experience and cutting-edge expertise to create a successful partnership at every level.



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