

Empowering Change through Millets:

The Transformative Journey of Premika Tete from Corn to Ragi Cultivation

In the quiet village of **Burodihi**, under **Telitleimal Gram Panchayat** in **Kuchinda Block, Sambalpur District**, lives Mrs. **Premika Tete**, a determined woman farmer whose journey from traditional corn farming to climate-resilient millet cultivation has inspired many in her community.

Premika lives with her husband, in-laws, and three sons. Her family's livelihood depends entirely on agriculture, and for many years, she primarily cultivated corn. However, despite her hard work, she struggled with low returns and lack of proper market support for her produce. Local traders would offer prices well below market value, leaving little room for financial growth or stability.



Everything began to change with the intervention of the **Odisha Shree Anna Abhiyan**, implemented locally by **Social Action for Rural Community (SARC), Kuchinda**. With the support and regular guidance from the SARC field team, Premika was introduced to the benefits of millet cultivation—especially **ragi (finger millet)**—as a sustainable and profitable alternative.

In **Kharif 2023**, utilizing just **one acre of upland rain fed land**, Premika took a bold step and began cultivating ragi using the **Line Transplanting (LT) method**. She carefully adopted improved agronomic practices—such as proper land and nursery bed preparation, scientific line spacing, timely weeding, and the use of organic bio-inputs like **Farm Yard Manure (FYM), Handikhata**, and **Jiwamruta**. Despite the climatic challenges, including excessive rainfall just after transplanting in one season and insufficient rainfall in another, her commitment and proper management paid off. Her ragi crop showed stronger tillering, a clear sign of healthier plants and better yields.

A key advantage that empowered Premika further was access to a **government-supported procurement system** for millets. Unlike corn, which she had to sell at low prices to local traders, her millet produce was sold at **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** at the nearby **Mandi** point—ensuring a fair price and timely payments right at her doorstep.

Today, Premika's successful switch to millet farming has not only improved her family's economic stability but also inspired many neighboring farmers to consider ragi cultivation. Her story stands as a beacon of how grassroots agricultural initiatives—like the **Odisha Shree Anna Abhiyan** and **ATMA**—can uplift rural livelihoods, promote sustainable farming, and bring about community-wide transformation.

Premika Tete's journey is more than just a success story—it is a testament to the power of knowledge, resilience, and the right kind of institutional support in changing the face of agriculture in Odisha.