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## **ANTHROPOLOGY SNIPPET-421**



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## Grass turns greener for tribal farmers, migrants the silage way



A silage making unit was set up at Sikerguda village under Chanher panchayat with technical guidance and field support of AFC India Ltd.

BHAWANIPATNA: For tribal farmers - and more importantly migrant labourers of Kalahandi - the grass foliage on farm fields or fallow lands never seemed to have possess a greener and more economic prospect until recently when a farmer producer group started using it for silage production.

Involving farmers from around 27 villages including 19 migrants in search of work, silage production unit set by the group only last year has started raking in profit, thereby enabling farmers to earn more. Silage is fodder made from green foliage crops which is preserved by fermentation and fed to cattle, sheep and other such ruminants.

Formed in 2016, Bamunikhol Farmer Producer Company Ltd (BFPC) is one of 33 such enterprises in Kalahandi district with 518 registered members, most of whom are tribals. The group was primarily engaged in selling pulses, oilseeds, vegetables and minor forest produce through which farmers earned just enough to survive. But with the idea of silage production mooted last year by AFC India Ltd, a sister organisation of NABARD, farmers' hope for a better life are now looking upwards.

A silage making unit was set up at Sikerguda village under Chancher panchayat with technical guidance and field support of AFC India Ltd. NABARD provided ₹4.5 lakh under Farm Sector Promotion Fund (FSPF) to set up machinery. The business against investment of ₹12.12 lakh also made a profit of ₹2.6 lakh in a year.

The registered farmers who had grown silage oriented crop to give away crop foliage and residues for silage making along with the 19 migrant youths at the unit, are now getting the money in their accounts. Thirty members of BFPC participated in the venture on trial basis and around 212 MT silage was produced from maize crops grown across 30 acres. These were subsequently provided to dairy farmers across districts.

Maize for silage usually takes 2.5 months and is more lucrative. Mania Majhi, a farmer from Dhanarabhata village, agreed to grow maize for silage on 1 acre and spent ₹14,000 for it. He gave away 16 tonne crop residue at ₹2000 per tonne which earned him a profit of ₹21,000. Encouraged by the profit, Mania has increased his silage oriented crop area to 2 acre this year. Likewise, Laxman Majhi from Dhanarabhata village who earned ₹50,000 profit from 40 tonne crop residue on 2 acre land and is now planning to grow maize for silage on 4 acres.

Programme manager of AFC Ltd Krushna Chandra Mishra said silage marketing was proposed to augment farmers' income and BFPC was ready to accept the idea. Looking at the demand and profit last year, maize crop is being grown in 100 acres involving 72 farmers with a target to sell 1,000 MT silage.