

## Fins to Fortune: The Inspiring Rise of Santhi Babu, a Trailblazing Female Fish Farmer

In the quaint village of Tiruvenkaranai lived Ms. Santhi Babu, a homemaker with a vision. Her family included her husband, a hardworking mason, and their ten-year-old son, led a life marked by financial challenges. Despite the relentless efforts of her husband, who earned a modest income of ₹10,000 from construction sites, the family found it difficult to meet their basic needs. Santhi, a woman of determination and resilience, aspired to contribute to her family's income and ensure a brighter future for her son.

With the establishment of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in her village, a commendable initiative by Asian Paints Ltd. and National Agro Foundation. Recognizing the opportunity, Santhi joined one of these groups, embarking on a journey towards financial empowerment and self-reliance. With the guidance and support of the NAF, she secured a small loan and, combining it with her husband's savings of ₹30,000, ventured into fish rearing in the village lake near to her house.

Under the expert advice of the National Agro Foundation, Santhi and her husband, Rajesh, began the meticulous process of fish farming. They stocked the lake with a variety of fish and dedicated themselves to learning and implementing best practices in fish rearing. Santhi took the lead in managing the day-to-day aspects of the venture, from maintaining optimal water quality to ensuring the fish were well-nourished and disease-free. Her husband, in addition to his job, contributed during evenings and holidays, helping to maintain the lake and support the wellbeing of their aquatic charges. The initial months were fraught with challenges, yet her perseverance and the couple's combined efforts gradually bore fruit. Within eight months, they were able to harvest their first batch of fish, weighing approximately 1.5 quintals. The quality of their produce was exceptional, earning them a reputation and a ready market within the local community.

The success of her venture stands as a testament to the power of determination, hard work, and the support of community-focused initiatives. Today, Santhi and her family enjoy a steady source of income, offering them a sense of security and the promise of a brighter future.

