



A COMPANY FOR PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT WHERE THEIR SPICES COME FROM

“Working with farmers growing organic cardamom, cinnamon, cloves - slowly knowing that every ingredient in my morning chai in California, comes from a spectacular array of farmers across India? That’s the feeling of warmth and community I’m aspiring towards,” reflects Sana Javeri Kadri, whose name now graces Forbes 30 Under 30 lists and countless interviews. Unlike the typical tech founders and crypto enthusiasts who dominate such recognition, Sana’s claim to fame is refreshingly earthy: turmeric and the revolutionary spice company she built from a deeply personal memory.

Her entrepreneurial journey began not with a sophisticated business plan, but with homesickness and disappointment. Growing up in Mumbai, Sana remembered the vibrant, aromatic turmeric that flavored her childhood meals. When she moved to California, the bright yellow powder available in supermarkets was a pale imitation—lacking both the intense color and complex aroma she cherished. This profound disconnect between authentic Indian spices and their diluted overseas counterparts sparked the idea for Diaspora Co., a company named to reflect her mission of bringing the real taste of home to those who miss it, regardless of where they live.

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Determined to source authentic spices, Sana returned to India, but her initial farm visits proved challenging and disappointing. This led her to the ICAR-Indian Institute of Spices Research in Kozhikode, where she discovered a treasure trove of knowledge about spice varieties and quality standards. At IISR, she learned about Pragati turmeric, a specially developed variety with exceptionally high curcumin content, cultivated by small farmers in Andhra Pradesh who were seeking fairer compensation than traditional commodity markets offered. In August 2017, armed with just \$3,000 from her tax refund, Sana shipped her first batch of 700 pounds of Pragati turmeric to California. The product sold out almost immediately, validating her belief that consumers craved authentic, high-quality spices. However, Diaspora Co. was never intended to be merely another trendy direct-to-consumer brand. From its inception, the company's mission centered on revolutionizing the spice trade by eliminating exploitative middlemen and ensuring farmers received fair compensation—typically three to six times more than prevailing market rates.



The impact has been transformative. Starting with that single variety sourced from idealistic farmer Prabhu Kasaraneni, Diaspora has expanded to offer over thirty single-origin spices, each traceable to specific farms or farmer groups. All processing and packaging occurs in India, intentionally reversing the typical pattern of exporting raw materials and importing processed products. This approach not only preserves quality but also ensures that value-added activities benefit Indian communities. Seven years after launch, Diaspora Co. has paid over \$2.5 million directly to farmers, sources from 140 farms supporting 3,500 workers, and offers thirty different spices. Sana's journey from homesick memories to building a million-dollar enterprise demonstrates how personal passion, combined with fair trade principles and respect for traditional agriculture, can create meaningful change for farmers while satisfying global consumers seeking authentic flavors.

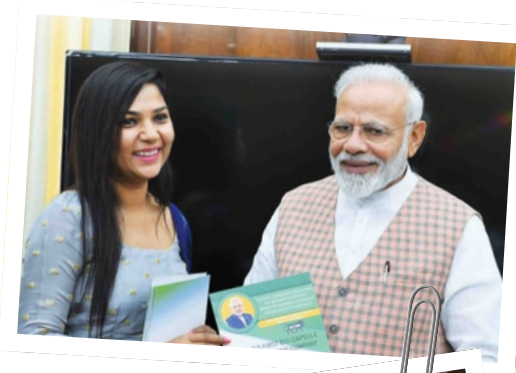


ROOTED IN SCIENCE, GROWN WITH GRIT: THE STORY OF KODAGU AGRITEC



"People thought I was crazy," laughs Dr. Chaitra Narayan. "Why would someone with a PhD and a UGC- NET qualification want to start a business instead of teaching at a top university?" But she had other plans—plans rooted deep in the red soil of Coorg and the smiles of struggling farmers. Back in 2015, in the sleepy town of Kushalnagar, Kodagu Agritec (then spelled "Codagu Agritec") was born. With just two products—Trichocap and Powercap—and a dream, Dr. Chaitra stepped into uncharted territory. "I had no business background. I didn't even know how to balance a ledger!" she recalls. What she *did* have was determination, a love for science, and a heart that beat for farmers. To kickstart her venture, she pledged all her gold to get a bank loan. "Yes, everything. Earrings, bangles, even my chain," she grins. "And a few hand loans from friends and family too."

Her inspiration came during her PhD, where she studied the anti-HIV properties of medicinal plants in the Western Ghats. Talking to farmers, I saw how dependent the farmers had become on chemical fertilizers. I knew I had to do something." That "something" came in the form of biocapsules—a revolutionary, eco-friendly farming solution developed by ICAR-IISR.





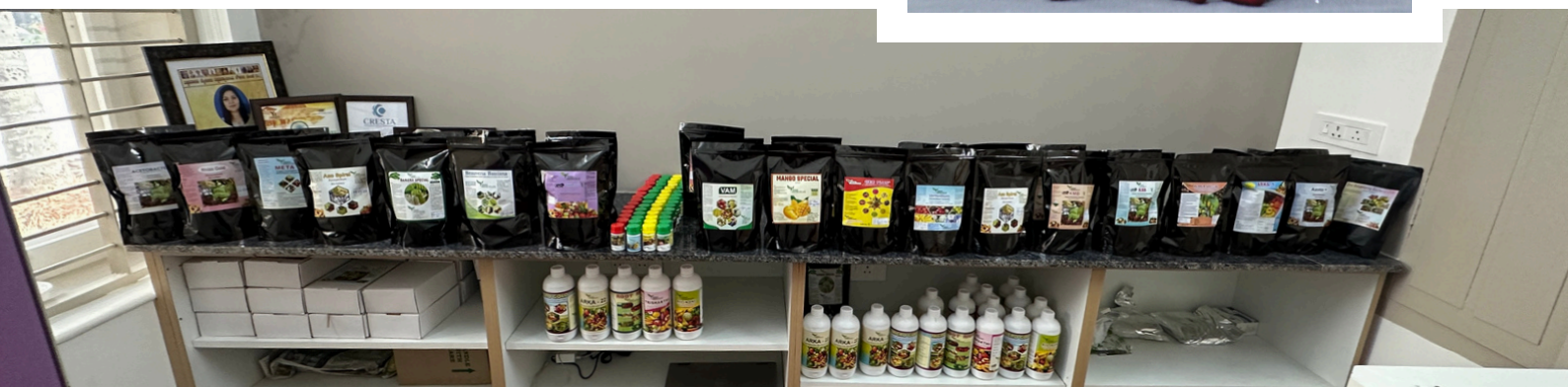
Thanks to the mentorship of Dr. Anand Raj, former Director of ICAR-IISR and unwavering support from scientists of ICAR-IISR, she secured a license to manufacture biocapsules. “They treated me like one of their own,” she says with gratitude. “Their love and guidance built the foundation for what Kodagu Agritec is today.” Fast forward 10 years, Kodagu Agritec is now a well-established firm based out of Mysore, offering over 40 eco-friendly agri-products to farmers across India. From two districts to pan-India, from local farmers to international markets like Vietnam and New Zealand—this journey has been as exciting as it was fulfilling.

The icing on the cake? “I got to present my startup to the then President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovindji, in 2018,” says Dr. Chaitra. “Little me, from Kushalnagar, at Rashtrapati Bhavan. That moment—unreal!”

Today, Kodagu Agritec supports over 50 people through direct and indirect employment and is still growing. “Hard work, patience, and a little madness—that’s all it takes,” she smiles. And just like that, a scientist became a changemaker.

Awards and Accomplishments

1. Karnataka State Agri – Entrepreneur Award, 2022 by Government of Karnataka
2. Selected by Rashtrapathi Bhavan, New Delhi for the Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 2018.
3. Selected for presentation before the Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on Biocapsule Technology which is a Make in India Initiative.
4. “Karnataka Inspiring Woman Award – 2025” by Press Club of Bangalore, Karnataka.





MISTY HIGHLANDS, RESILIENT SPIRIT: PREMA GANESH'S GREEN LEGACY

In the misty highlands of Kodagu, Karnataka, where coffee and pepper vines flourish under the watchful shade of silver oaks, a quiet yet powerful revolution is underway. At its heart is Mrs. Prema Ganesh, a progressive farmer from Maragodu village, who has redefined the role of women in agriculture with grit, vision and scientific acumen.

A graduate of Teresian College, Mysore, Mrs. Ganesh assumed responsibility for her family's 10-hectare plantation of coffee, black pepper, cardamom and arecanut over twenty years ago. The initial years were fraught with declining productivity, pest infestations and market uncertainty, challenges that almost rendered the enterprise unviable.

The turning point came when she attended a seminar on spice cultivation organized by ICAR-IISR, Regional Station, Appangala. Inspired by the scientific insights, she invited IISR experts to her farm.

Their assessment revealed key constraints—overcrowded planting, poor basin management and spike shedding in black pepper. Acting on their recommendations, she undertook a comprehensive overhaul: optimizing plant spacing, adopting organic manures and micronutrients, introducing basin irrigation, regulating shade through pruning and practicing precise pest and disease management using Bordeaux mixture and copper-based fungicides. Her unwavering adherence to these scientific practices paid off. Today, she harvests 10–12 tonnes of black pepper annually, earning a net profit of approximately ₹3.5 lakhs per acre, at testament to the potential of informed, sustainable agriculture. A champion of eco-friendly practices and innovations, Mrs. Ganesh constructed rainwater harvesting pits that also serve as composting units for farm residues. She enriches soil fertility using 20 loads of composted coffee husk mixed with cow dung and Trichoderma, drastically cutting input costs.

A well-laid underground irrigation system ensures year-round water availability, while the development of internal motorable roads has eased the physical burden on plantation workers.

Her estate is home to high-performing cultivars such as IISR Thevam, Arka Coorg Excel and Panniyur-1. With a meticulous, hands-on approach to every aspect of farm management, she embodies the modern face of Indian agriculture- innovative, sustainable and inclusive.

Recognized for her exemplary work, Mrs. Ganesh has received accolades from ICAR institutes, state departments and planter associations. Most recently, she was honored with the prestigious State-Level Krishi Pandith Award for 2023-24. Mrs. Prema Ganesh's journey is a compelling narrative of transformation where knowledge met perseverance and tradition embraced technology. Her story underscores the vital role of empowered women in reshaping Indian agriculture and stands as an inspiring blueprint for sustainable rural development.

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FROM KITCHEN TRIALS TO TURMERIC TRIUMPH: THE RISE OF 'HOME TO HOME'

Amid the uncertainties of the 2020 lockdown, when most were confined to routines of survival, Geetha Saleesh from Thrissur was quietly crafting a revolution, one spoonful of turmeric at a time. What began as a modest culinary experiment evolved into 'Geetha's Home to Home', a flourishing enterprise rooted in the transformative potential of turmeric.

Her flagship product, Curcumeal, a health-boosting superfood supplement, was the result of two years of research into turmeric value addition. Through this journey, Geetha discovered the incredible benefits of high-curcumin turmeric varieties, especially IISR Prathibha, developed by ICAR-IISR. This led her to secure a license for large-scale cultivation in July 2022, planting the seeds for a sustainable turmeric value chain. Leveraging strong mentorship from the institute and with her own persistent efforts, she improved her product offering, making it an attractive choice in the crowded nutraceutical market. She also started cultivation of the variety IISR Pratibha, starting with 10 acres across Thrissur and Pathanamthitta.



Geetha's Home to Home works closely with 305 farmers, including 150 women, and collaborates with Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)

Today, Geetha's Home to Home works closely with more than 300 farmers, including 150 women, and collaborates with Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) to ensure consistency and quality. The team also offers regular training, both online and offline to farmers, creating a strong foundation for sustainable growth. Within a year, the brand's products had reached major retail chains and found shelves in states including Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Delhi, and Jammu & Kashmir. The venture now employs 30 people in production and marketing and continues to grow in a robust manner. Geetha's inspiring journey has garnered national attention and a string of prestigious accolades, The Women's Manifesto Award 2022, Prajahitha International

Award 2022, Lions Club New Voices Excellence Award 2022, Manorama News Pentharam Award 2023, to name a few. Additionally, her flagship product Curcumeal was selected for the PACE Programme under the RKVY-RAFTAAR Agri-Business Incubation scheme, cementing its credibility as a high-potential startup. Geetha's efforts were nationally recognized when she was selected to exhibit her products at the 95th ICAR Foundation Day & Technology Day in July 2023. From a home-based idea to a national value chain model, Geetha's Home to Home has shown that passion, backed by science and community, can truly turn a humble root into gold.



Fig. Mrs. Geetha Saleesh receiving Kairali TV Phoenix award 2022 for her entrepreneurial activities

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ECONOMICS SCHOLAR CULTIVATES ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS IN AGRI-BUSINESS



At just 21, Helen T. Nabeel has mastered the rare art of balancing rigorous academic pursuits with the dynamic world of agripreneurship. A postgraduate Economics student at John Mathai Centre, University of Calicut, Helen defies conventional trajectories by steering a flourishing agricultural enterprise - Zingiber Agrotec - while pursuing her higher studies.

Helen's agrarian journey germinated in 2021, the year she turned 18, inspired by her father, Mr. Abdul Nabeel P., a seasoned ginger cultivator from Meppayur. Fueled by an innate passion for farming and backed by generational wisdom, Helen secured a seed cultivation license for the high-yielding IISR Mahima ginger variety from the ICAR-Indian Institute of Spices Research. With 100 kilograms of certified planting material, Zingiber Agrotec took root.

Ambitious from the outset, Helen complemented the initial stock with an additional 1000 kilograms of IISR Mahima seed rhizomes sourced from authentic suppliers. Her inaugural harvest - an impressive 15 tonnes - became the cornerstone for a structured seed value chain model. In 2022, she engaged 15 contract farmers for seed multiplication, thus ensuring a scalable and sustainable supply pipeline.

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What began as a modest endeavour has now blossomed into a robust enterprise. Zingiber Agrotec currently caters to seed ginger demands across 14 Indian states, including key pockets in the North East. The venture has diversified, venturing into tuber crop production in collaboration with the ICAR-Central Tuber Crops Research Institute, Trivandrum and has also embarked on cinnamon cultivation through a dedicated nursery in Meppayur.

Operating on a hybrid business model, Helen runs the enterprise remotely from Bengaluru, aided by real-time camera surveillance, periodic site visits and a lean but effective team comprising a full-time manager and two staff members. On-ground operations, including planting and harvesting, are executed through strategic contract labor.

Despite her academic commitments, Helen's enterprise has handled transactions exceeding ₹5 crore, a testament to her meticulous planning, entrepreneurial foresight and exceptional time management.

In an era where young minds often seek direction, Helen T. Nabeel stands as an exemplar of self-driven success - harmonizing intellect with innovation and proving that age is no bar when vision is clear and roots run deep.





FROM CITY DREAMS TO SPICE SUCCESS: THE ANITHA NANDA STORY

Like countless urban dwellers, Anitha Nanda harbored dreams beyond the city's bustling streets. Her heart belonged to Kodagu's misty hills, where childhood vacations to her native place left an indelible impression. Those visits to Coorg's lush coffee plantations weren't mere escapes—they planted seeds of a lifelong passion that would transform her from city resident into one of the region's most accomplished agricultural entrepreneurs. The rolling hills adorned with coffee plants and the intoxicating aroma of ripening cherries created lasting memories. What began as innocent childhood fascination gradually evolved into a deep calling that shaped her future. Marriage presented the golden opportunity she awaited—a chance to permanently return to Coorg's enchanting landscape and pursue her agricultural dreams.

For 37 years, Anitha has been intimately involved in every aspect of her Somwarpet plantation, transforming from novice to master through hands-on experience and unwavering dedication. Initially, her venture centered on the traditional combination of coffee and black pepper, with intercropping systems allowing pepper vines to climb coffee plants in efficient symbiosis.

However, 2013 brought a devastating wake-up call. Wilt disease swept through her plantation, destroying 3,000 to 4,000 pepper vines. This catastrophic loss became a profound learning experience highlighting the critical importance of scientific methods in modern agriculture. Rather than viewing disaster as defeat, Anitha chose to see it as an opportunity for transformation.

Determined to rebuild on stronger foundations, she partnered with ICAR-Indian Institute of Spices Research Regional Station at Appangala. This marked her formal education in scientific agriculture through regular training sessions, extensive interactions with agricultural scientists, and frequent research station visits that revolutionized her cultivation approach.

Armed with scientific knowledge, Anitha introduced disease-resistant pepper varieties including IISR Thevam, IISR Shakti, and IISR Girimunda. She adopted IISR Pepper Special, a scientifically formulated nutrient mix that dramatically improved plant health and productivity. Results were immediate—plants exhibited enhanced vigor, better disease resistance, and significantly increased yields.

Recognizing her success's broader impact, Anitha expanded operations to include a nursery specializing in improved varieties, providing high-quality plants to fellow farmers. Her plantation now serves as a model of scientific intercropping, demonstrating how traditional wisdom enhances through modern innovation.

Never content with achievements, Anitha ventured into beekeeping with eleven Cerana bee colonies, understanding the symbiotic relationship between bees and coffee. The gentle buzzing throughout her plantation symbolizes her complete transformation from city dreamer to agricultural innovator.

In 2020, ICAR-IISR recognized her outstanding contributions with the Best Spice Farmer Award, validating her approach and positioning her as inspiration for farmers combining traditional knowledge with modern scientific methods.



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