

# Agriculture not always a dead end: Here are young, successful farmers who made the cut

In 2014, 61% of farmers, especially youth, surveyed by academic institution Lokniti, said they would like to quit if they had a choice. The National Sample Survey's 59th round on the Situation Assessment Survey of Farmers, 2003, had revealed that only 60% of Indian farmer households wanted to remain in agriculture. But the profession need not be a dead-end, as these examples show.

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**Zia Haq**

Hindustan Times, Majuli

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Rural women trained by Kabya Jyoti Bora (below) walk home with wild water hyacinth stalks, which serve as a cost-free raw material for their woven products such as flower vases and office folders in Assam's Kamrup district.(HT Photo)

Kabya Jyoti Bora, a 47-year-old veterinarian, started farming hyacinths in 2013, after training under the Agri-Clinics and Agri-Business Centres scheme from the **Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals** in Guwahati in 2010.

Bora then formed an association called ALPED or the Association for Livelihood Promotion and Entrepreneurship Development. With technical and financial support from the state-run North-Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited, Bora now trains disadvantaged women to make a variety of products from hyacinths.

The technology is utterly simple: the stems of hyacinths are sun-dried and flattened through portable iron press.

The hay-coloured dehydrated stalks become strong to be woven into virtually anything. Thermocol blocks are used as moulds. They can even be used in handlooms. Before taking his project to Majuli, Bora trained 100 low-caste rural women in Kamrup district in the art of making bags, office folders and files from water hyacinth.

In Majuli, the rural artisans now sell their products to foreign tourists and at local fairs. “Most of the 135 women like me make Rs 3,000 a month,” Baruah says.

Bora, the agriprenuer, says Rs 3,000 is “like Rs 30,000” for poor households in this island. “They have basic needs, you see.”

Bora is now in talks with Majuli’s district administration that could transform hyacinth farming and products made from it into a cottage industry.

“The additional deputy commissioner says his office will source all their stationary needs from these women,” Bora says.

Addressing farmers this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had called for turning agricultural waste into wealth.

Assam's water hyacinth farms are just that.

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