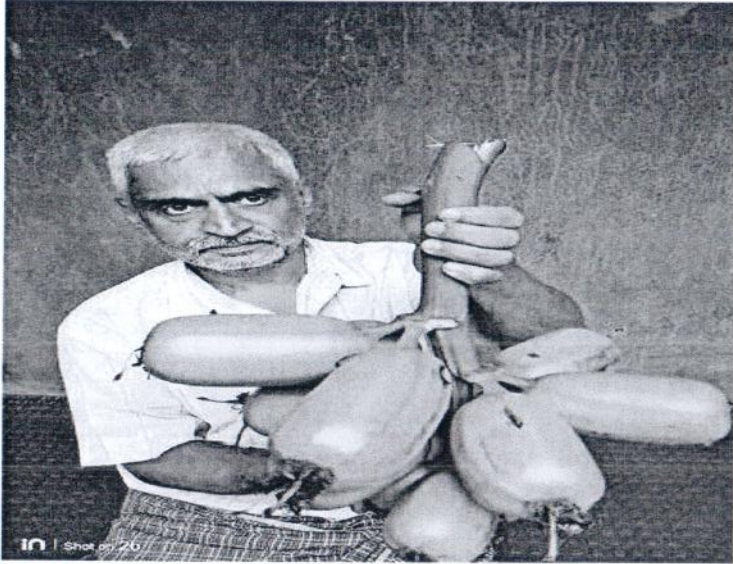


'Best horticulture farmer' is 53-yr-old from Shivamogga

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Bengaluru: A 53-year-old farmer from Hosahalli village near Jog Falls in Shivamogga district, who took up integrated farming, has not only made a profit of Rs 18 lakh a year but also won the Dr MH Marigowda state-level 'best horticulture farmer' award.

HO Rajendra, a BCom graduate, will be honoured on the first day of Krishi Mela on Friday. Rajendra, selected for the award by the varsity, has adopted an integrated farming system and grows multiple crops from exotic fruits to local vegetables, spices, and flowers. He is also a beekeeper.

Rajendra said he grows rambutan, passion fruit, dragon fruit, fig, lychee, chakkota, mango, chikoo, sweet potato, beans, pumpkin, rose, hibiscus, anthurium and lotus, coffee, vanilla, kokum, cashew, coconut, clove and other crops. Rajendra told TOI he came to know about dragon and other exotic fruits a few years ago and bought saplings from local agents who import them.

He added he was not only depending on the local market to sell his produce but was also effectively using social media for marketing. He takes orders on social media and supplies his produce directly to customers. Apart from this, he has also tied up with local homestays, which send their guests over for farm visits.

"I charge Rs 200 per visitor and at least 30 people come to my farm every week. The visitors also purchase my farm products. We're preparing Kokum juice and jams and selling them to our farm visitors," said Rajendra.

He clarified that he collects fees from tourists only; farmers are allowed to visit his farm and gather information about crops free of cost.

UAS Bengaluru selected BR Manjunath from Beediganahalli village of Devanahalli taluk for the HD Deve Gowda state-level 'best farmer' award, BP Vasu from Ramanagara for the Can Bank state-level 'best farmer' award, AV Rathnamma from Srinivasapura taluk for Can Bank state-level 'best woman farmer' award, and BG Manje Gowda from Hassan district for the Dr R Dwarakinath 'best farmer' award. TNN