

Investing!! in *Timbaktu Organic*

Introduction

The smallholder farmer of Anantapur district today is in an extreme distress situation, brought about by the practice of continuous groundnut mono-cropping and use of agro-chemicals. A number of farmer suicides have been reported in the last decade. In this context, The Timbaktu Collective, a voluntary organisation founded in 1990, and now working in 119 villages of Anantapur district, and Adisakthi Mutually-aided Thrift cooperative society, a community-based organisation owned by 3200 rural women based in 43 villages of Chennekothapalli block, initiated a project Timbaktu Organic, in 2005.

This venture will work towards enhancing the income of dry land smallholder farmers of Anantapur district and in the long term, improve their livelihood security through sustainable agriculture methods. The main project activities include – crop diversification through millets and pulses, promotion of organic methods of farming and marketing of the farmer's organic produce in rural and urban areas.

After initial success through a pilot in 2005-06, Timbaktu Organic now seeks investment for up-scaling this effort to cover 100% of the participating organic farmers and 100% of the variety and quantity of produce grown by them.

Why should you invest??

Timbaktu Organic is interested in raising investment for this effort, through loans at 5% interest p.a., from individuals and firms, who believe in supporting a venture that has a triple bottom-line:

Ecologically sustainable

- improves the health of the environment by reducing pollution through use of toxic chemicals

Socially conscious

- increases income of the marginalised smallholder farmer community by better prices through marketing support, lowers input costs and improves yield through organic methods and crop diversification
- improves health of the farmer by reducing his/her use of toxic chemicals and increasing intake of organic food at the household level

Financially viable

- works on a 'returns' basis, and is looking to up-scale on the basis of an investment model rather than depend solely on grants

How will your investment be used?

Timbaktu Organic is supported by multiple sources for its different project activities. Your socially

responsible and green investment will be used specifically for the marketing activity – to set up physical infrastructure for adding value to the farm produce by storage and processing machinery, and for working capital to organise procurement, processing, packing, selling and marketing.

How do you know this venture will work?

- Timbaktu Organic piloted organic production successfully with 27 *dalit* farmers of Venkatampalli village last season (2005). Farmers reduced their input costs and achieved better prices for their produce with no significant difference in yield over chemicals-based farming.
- Organic farming has been taken up in 8 villages with 360 farmers this season (2006), many farmers have put in all their land under organic beyond the targeted 3 acres, because of the possibility of reduced input costs and better crop performance.
- Two cycles from procurement to marketing of the organic produce has been completed, with valuable insights gained in marketing and post-production operations of agri-commodities, which will be useful for managing scaled up operations in the coming years.
- Over a total sales turnover of Rs. 603701.75, from Mar 2005 – Sep 2006, Adisakthi Dharani, the marketing wing of Adisakthi MATCS, reported a net profit of 8.66%, after giving an extra margin of 15% on the groundnut and redgram, and 35% on the millet purchased from the organic farmers. *Sales turnover was limited by organic production available and is not indicative of potential.*
- Rs. 15,769/- was paid as interest to the 19 friends of Timbaktu (who have so far invested in the venture) on the total loans of Rs. 6.49 lakhs received till 31 March, 2006.
- There are a number of issues that we need to work on, but based on our last 2 years of work on organic farming and marketing, and on our 15 years of work with rural women and natural resource management, our hunch is that we are on the right track and getting there!!

Details of how to invest

A total of Rs. 24 lakhs needs to be raised for operations in 2006-07.

Please download the complete proposal from www.timbaktu.org (main section is 7 pages only), which contains detailed information, references, photos and numbers on all the points mentioned above. Please send your Chq/DD (min. amount of Rs. 10000), in favour of “Adisakthi Dharani”, payable at Anantapur, along with a copy of the letter (on the last page of the proposal) to the following address:

Adisakthi Dharani, C/o Timbaktu Collective, Chennekothapalli village – 515 101, Anantapur district;
Ph: 0091-94401 39381, 0091-8559-240149, 240335; Email: organic@timbaktu.org

For any further queries or comments, please call or email Ashis, who coordinates the marketing work. Looking forward to your support...

Bablu & Mary (for the Timbaktu Organic team)