

# A Study of Women Entrepreneurs Engaged in Mushroom Cultivation in Puducherry

Abirami. N<sup>1\*</sup> and R. Asokan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Government Arts College (Autonomous), Salem, Tamil Nadu

\*Corresponding Author Email: [abiramijkm11@gmail.com](mailto:abiramijkm11@gmail.com)

## Abstract

*This study examines the practice, challenges, and socio-economic impact of mushroom cultivation among women entrepreneurs in Puducherry. Using a mixed-methods approach (comprising a survey of women growers, key informant interviews, and field observations), the research examines production levels, income generation, skill gaps, access to inputs, and market linkages. Findings indicate that mushroom cultivation offers a viable income source for women, with production and revenue positively associated with farming experience and training. Key constraints are market access, storage, capital, and input availability. The paper concludes with recommendations for targeted training, improved access to credit, and enhanced market linkages to scale women-led mushroom enterprises.*

## Introduction

Mushroom cultivation is a promising agri-enterprise characterized by low land requirements, short production cycles, and relatively high returns. In Puducherry, small-scale and household-level mushroom production has grown as women—often balancing household tasks—adopt it as a complementary livelihood activity. Understanding the production patterns, constraints, and opportunities for these women entrepreneurs can inform extension programs, microfinance products, and local market development to strengthen rural livelihoods and women's economic empowerment.

## Objectives

- To profile women entrepreneurs engaged in mushroom cultivation in Puducherry (age, education, farm size, experience).

- To analyze production, income levels, and the relationship between experience/training and performance.
- To identify major challenges faced in inputs, production, storage, and marketing.
- To provide practical recommendations to improve productivity and market linkages for women mushroom growers.

## Methodology

The study followed a mixed-methods cross-sectional design, involving quantitative and qualitative components. Steps included selecting participants, collecting data, and analyzing both survey and interview results.

Purposive sampling was used to select women mushroom entrepreneurs from different rural blocks in Puducherry, ensuring representation of various backgrounds.

**Data collection** included a structured survey capturing demographics, farm size, years of experience, production (kg/month), revenue (Rs/month), training status, and perceived challenges; semi-structured interviews with extension officers and selected growers; and field observations of production units.

## Sample Data

The following table is a sample, synthetic dataset for 12 women entrepreneurs engaged in mushroom cultivation in Puducherry. Replace with real survey data for final analysis.

ID	Age	Education	Experience_years	Farm_size_sqft	Monthly_production_kg	Monthly_revenue_Rs	Training received	Major_challenge
W01	29	Graduate	2	150	120	24000	Yes	Marketing
W02	34	Higher Secondary	4	200	200	40000	Yes	Inputs availability
W03	41	Graduate	6	300	320	64000	No	Storage
W04	36	Diploma	3	180	150	30000	Yes	Market linkages
W05	27	Graduate	1	100	80	16000	No	Capital
W06	45	Higher Secondary	8	400	480	96000	Yes	Labor
W07	32	Graduate	5	250	260	52000	Yes	Quality control
W08	38	Undergraduate	7	350	360	72000	No	Storage

W09	30	Diploma	2	140	110	22000	Yes	Marketing
W10	50	Graduate	10	500	600	120000	Yes	Capital
W11	28	Higher Secondary	1	90	70	14000	No	Inputs availability
W12	39	Graduate	4	220	210	42000	Yes	Market linkages

## Charts

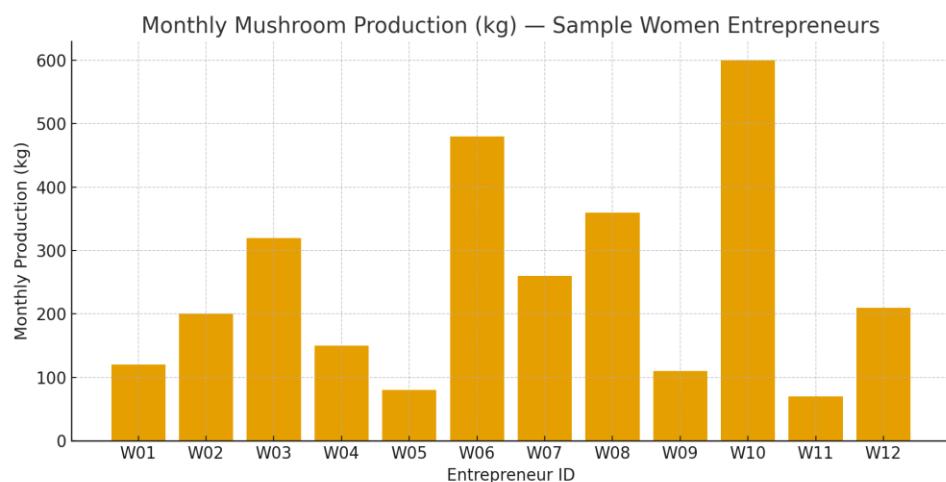


Figure 1: Monthly Mushroom Production (kg) — Sample Women Entrepreneurs

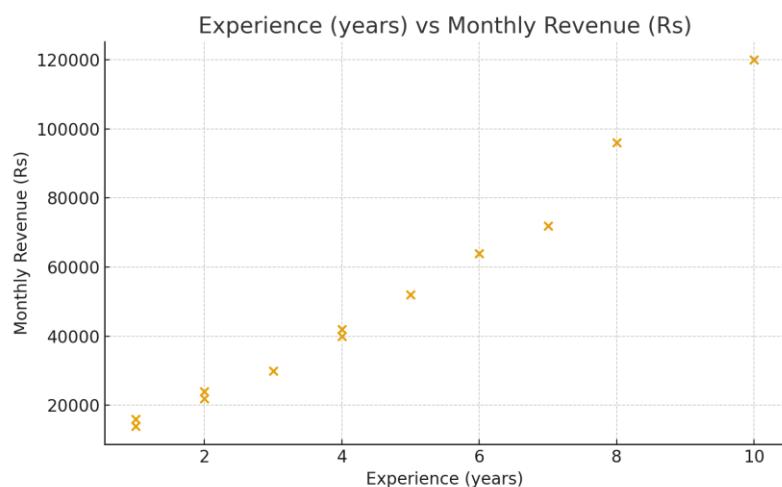


Figure 2: Experience (years) vs Monthly Revenue in rupees

## Analysis

Descriptive summary (sample):

- Average monthly production (sample): 246.7 kg
- Average monthly revenue (sample): Rs 49333.33
- Observed positive association between experience and revenue; trained growers tended to have higher production on average.

## Findings

Mushroom cultivation is a feasible micro-enterprise for women in Puducherry and can yield meaningful monthly income when scaled appropriately. Training and experience are important determinants of higher yields and revenues. Critical barriers include lack of stable market linkages, inadequate storage leading to post-harvest losses, and limited access to affordable working capital. Women with larger farm areas or who pooled resources (cooperatives/SHGs) tend to achieve better economies of scale.

## Recommendations

1. Organize targeted practical training programs (spawn handling, substrate preparation, disease control, postharvest handling).
2. Promote women-led producer groups or cooperatives to strengthen bargaining power and aggregate produce for larger buyers.
3. Facilitate microcredit lines or input-loan schemes tailored for small mushroom units.
4. Develop cold-storage or community-level aggregation points to reduce spoilage and stabilize prices.
5. Link producers with local hotels, restaurants, and retail outlets and explore local branding.

## Conclusion

Mushroom cultivation presents a pragmatic pathway for income generation among women entrepreneurs in Puducherry. With targeted training, improved access to inputs and finance, and strengthened market linkages, women-led mushroom enterprises can scale and contribute significantly to household incomes and local employment. Further research using larger,

representative samples and season-wise production data will refine these findings and policy actions.

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