

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

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## 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

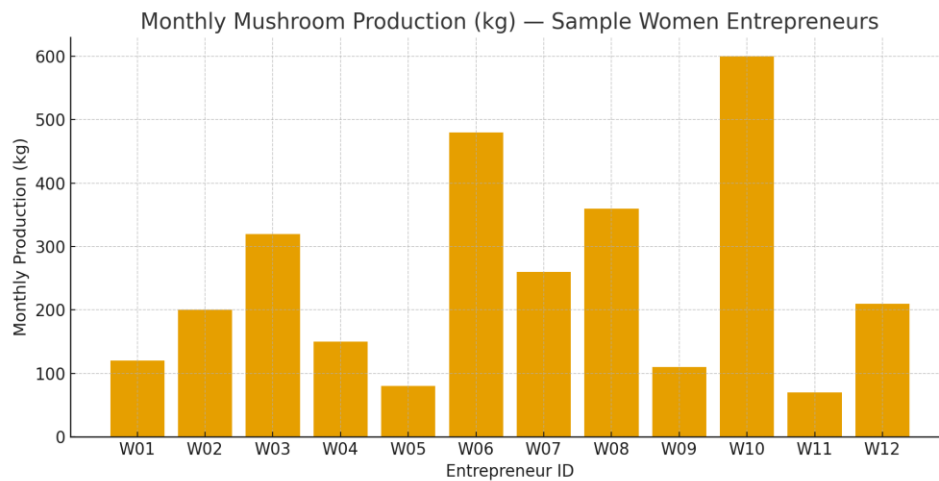


Figure 1: **Monthly Mushroom Production (kg) — Sample Women Entrepreneurs**

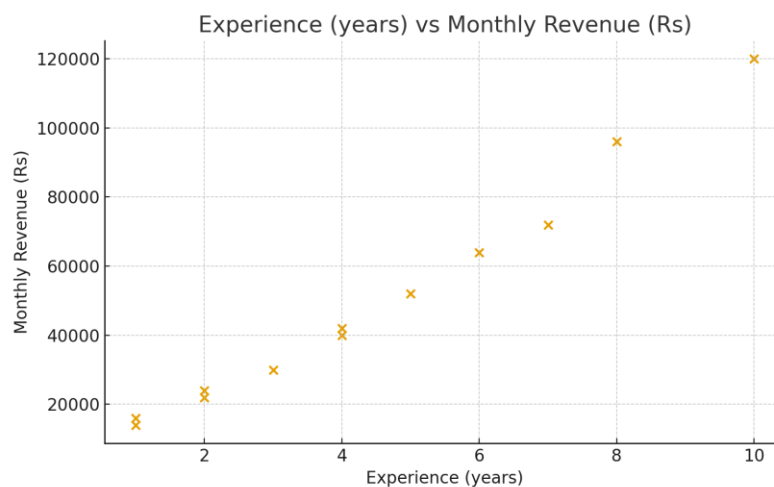


Figure 2: **Experience (years) vs Monthly Revenue in rupees**



## **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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