

# Unveiling Assam's Fungal Fortune: A case study of Mushroom Agripreneur in Assam

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## ABSTRACT

This case study explores the unique journey of a student entrepreneur engaged in mushroom cultivation while pursuing studies at an agricultural university. It sheds light on the scarcity of online data and the challenges in obtaining contact details for mushroom entrepreneurs. The narrative ties into the larger context of ARYA (Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture), emphasizing the importance of showcasing such entrepreneurial endeavors to inspire and engage the youth in agricultural pursuits.

## INTRODUCTION

**M**ushroom isn't just a place; it's an entire landscape of opportunities waiting to be explored. Picture it as this vast garden where seeds of innovation are sprouting. Here, you don't just find chances; you create them. In mushroom entrepreneurship, mushrooms are grown, processed, and sold for a variety of reasons. For rural and urban communities alike,

mushrooms provide nutritional, therapeutic, and economic benefits (Shirur *et al.*, 2015). India has been commercializing mushroom cultivation in recent decades. Traditionally, this mushroom has been grown in the hills since it grows best at low temperatures; however, modern cultivation technology now makes it possible to cultivate it in controlled conditions throughout the year and seasonally

under controlled conditions by using environmental modifications (Kumar *et al.*, 2013).

**Perceptual change of the people of Assam towards Mushroom**

People in Assam in general were very sceptical about the idea of consuming mushrooms as they were exposed to various news depicting the adverse effects of mushroom consumption. They read articles in the newspapers that conveyed news such as people suffering from food poisoning and even death after consuming toxic mushrooms. In rural areas, mushrooms weren't commonly perceived as edible, largely because of limited information on proper cultivation methods. There's a misconception that all mushrooms are harmful, even though many varieties are not only safe to eat but also nutritious, cost-effective, and relatively simple to cultivate.

The last decade saw a rise in the awareness level of mushrooms and the common perception that mushroom consumption can be lethal is slowly fading away. Thanks to the efforts of KVKs and Extension workers and even students going to RAWE programmes in various rural areas of Assam and demonstrating and informing people about the benefits of cultivating mushrooms. During our 5 months of RAWE programme, we talked with many members of our assigned villages and gained knowledge about the previous and renewed perceptions among them. While demonstrating the cultivation practices to be followed, we saw a couple of families already engaged in the said practice and we gained insights from them too.

Through this manuscript, we are going to explore the entrepreneurial opportunities of mushroom in the state of Assam falling geographically in the North Eastern region of India by specifically focussing on a budding

first-generation Entrepreneur belonging to the state of Assam, Mr. Jyotirmoy Borgohain.

**Profile analysis of case under investigation**

**Table 1: Profile of the subject under the case study**

State	Assam
District	Golaghat
Block	Sarupathar
Village	No. 1 Padumoni
Case study subject	Mr. Jyotirmoy Borgohain
Latitude and Longitude	26°12'35.9" N, 93°51'23.8" E
Education	Pursuing M.Sc. in Agricultural Economics
Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY)	10/09/1998
Present age	25
Present occupation	Entrepreneur/ Student
Mushroom house established	2023
Area of the 2 mushroom houses combined	360sq. feet
Average production per day during harvest season	12-14 kg/day
Employment provided (for day-to-day operations)	1 Man
Employment provided (for preparation of mushroom bags)	2-3 Women (Subject to availability of work)

Mr. Jyotirmoy Borgohain is a B.Sc. (Agri) graduate who is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Agricultural Economics & Farm Management at Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat. He graduated in the year 2022 collecting a plethora of experiences while being the Cultural Secretary and then the

General Secretary of Sarat Chandra Sinha College of Agriculture, Dhubri, Assam. Mr. Borgohain being a multi-instrumentalist and a vocalist has contributed quite significantly to the cultural sector during his graduation days and to add to the list of his feats, he was selected as a volunteer from Assam to participate in the Republic Day Parade Camp in New Delhi as part of the National Service Scheme (NSS), marking a significant achievement in his commendable journey. He hails from No. 1 Padumoni gaon (26°12'35.9" N, 93°51'23.8" E) belonging to Golaghat district of Assam, where farming is seen as a major occupation among the residents of his village. Mr. Borgohain is very hopeful about his future endeavours as mushroom cultivation can be seen as a growing entrepreneurial opportunity in the state of Assam.



**Fig 1: Mr. Jyotirmoy Borgohain being felicitated in SCS CoA, AAU after winning the State Level NSS Award.**

### Why Mushroom?

Mr. Borgohain in his 2nd year of graduation learnt some theory about mushroom cultivation and it was not until the Experiential Learning Programme (ELP) in his final year that he gained some practical experience in this field. Later he began to research the market opportunities and found out that there was a lot of potential in the market, especially

because of the low input cost and higher demands in the markets. Immediately he tried cultivating mushrooms on a trial basis in some 20 bags to check their viability and since then he was determined to start something big in this field.



**Fig 2: Mushroom bags in the mushroom cultivation house**

### Way Forward

In 2023, he was ready and he started his endeavour by procuring spawns from 3 different places namely, Jorhat (Assam), West Bengal, and some from his home district Sarupathar. He has a construction within his residential campus with a capacity of 350 bags and he is already supplying his products in bulk to major markets of Dimapur (Nagaland). He sells his products in both the wholesale and retail markets of Jorhat and Sarupathar, but achieving bulk sales hasn't been feasible in these two markets yet. The primary challenge faced in these markets has been the low demand, prompting him to address this issue by packaging his mushrooms in 250-gram packets priced at 50 rupees. This strategy has proven successful and gained traction in the market. He has assigned a person to take care of the daily tasks and maintenance of the mushroom houses, as well as handle product harvesting when he's not available. Additionally, when there's extra work, he hires a daily wage worker to help out as needed. This ensures the smooth running of the

mushroom cultivation without him having to be there every day. In the production of spawn bags, he has contacts with a few unemployed women from his locality. Given that mushroom bags require replacement after every three harvests, this serves not only as a means of business but also as a source of employment for these women. Their involvement in the process is not just a business transaction; it's a mutually beneficial arrangement, presenting them with valuable employment opportunities. In this manner, he contributes not only to the efficiency of his mushroom farming enterprise but also to the empowerment and livelihood sustainability of these women in his village.



**Fig 3: Women helping in the preparation of mushroom bags**

## CONCLUSION

In the heart of Assam's evolving entrepreneurial landscape, Jyotirmoy Borgohain's journey stands as evidence of the transformative power of seizing opportunity. Borgohain's market analysis and hands-on approach have not only propelled his mushroom enterprise into Nagaland's markets but also empowered local women through employment opportunities. His story mirrors the shift in Assam's perception of mushrooms, thanks to concerted efforts by various institutions. His success not only reflects a thriving business but also highlights the latent entrepreneurial potential in Assam.

Borgohain's journey serves as an inspiring light, showcasing how innovation and dedication can turn the simplest of ideas into a thriving enterprise, enriching communities along the way.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Last but not least, we want to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Borgohain for his cooperation and mostly for going out of his shell to serve the community of Assamese people. Through this manuscript, we want to wish him luck and prosperity for his future ventures, and may his dedication to entrepreneurship in Assam be a beacon of inspiration, lighting the path for future innovators.

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