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ARKEMA AND ITS PARTNERS PUBLISH YEAR 9 IMPACTS FOR PRAGATI, THE WORLD'S FIRST SUSTAINABLE CASTOR BEAN PROGRAM

Pragati, the world's first sustainable castor bean program, completed 9 years in operation during the 2024-2025 season. Over 10,000 farmers are now certified by the program, with individual farmers yield witnessing a substantial growth. Over 12,000 hectares of generally semi-arid land are now repeatedly farmed according to the SuCESS sustainability code.

Arkema, BASF, Jayant Agro-Organics and implementation partner Solidaridad launched the Pragati project in May 2016. Across three phases, the project has laid the foundation of sustainable castor production, promoted good, sustainable cultivation and sourcing practices, and ensured the participation of women in the castor supply chain.

- More than 10,000 castor farmers have been trained, audited, and certified.
- Over 140,000 tons of certified castor seeds have been cumulatively cultivated since the beginning of the project.
- Year 9 yield is 32% higher than the government estimates for the entire state.
- Over 12,000 hectares have been farmed in accordance with the SuCESS code, (see www.castorsuccess.org)
- 30% reduction in on-farm water use recorded compared to conventional cultivation, through adoption of efficient irrigation practices.
- More than 10,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) kits have been distributed to castor farmers to promote safe working conditions. All project farmers are now equipped with these kits.
- More than 150 medical camps have been organized in all project villages, benefitting thousands of farmers, farm workers, and their family members.
- This year, more than 450 capacity-building training sessions were held with farmers.
- Over 500 lead farmers have been trained to strengthen peer-to-peer learning.

Female involvement and empowerment

Women's participation remains a core pillar of the project. In the 2024-25 season, over 1,150 women farmers were trained under the initiative, with focused interventions on good agricultural practices and financial planning, strengthening women's role in farm management, economic resilience, and community leadership. Through structured training, exposure visits, and access to information on government welfare schemes, Pragati continues to support women farmers as active decision-makers within the castor value chain, and their households.

"Farming is my only means to support my family," says Patel Sharmistha Jagnish Ben, a farmer from Mehsana district, Gujarat. "Through the Pragati program, I learned sustainable farming practices that improved my soil health and increased my yields, while also reducing my dependence on expensive chemical inputs. The training gave me confidence, not only to manage my farm better but also to make financial decisions for my family. Today, I support my children's education and help other women farmers in my village adopt safe and sustainable farming practices. Pragati has truly helped me move towards self-reliance and progress."

The Project Starting Point

The project was driven by a baseline survey in 2016 of more than 1,000 castor farmers in Gujarat, India, where most of the world's castor supply originates. The baseline study highlighted that farmers see castor as a highly remunerative and profitable crop – easy to grow, and easy to sell.

The goal of the project has been to enable sustainable castor crop production by:

- Using good agricultural practices to increase yield and farmer income
- Efficiently using water resources and maintaining soil fertility
- Driving adoption of good waste management practices
- Enabling better health and safety practices and respecting human rights

A real benefit for the Farmers, validated by the ThinkThrough Consulting (TTC) Impact Study

According to the impact study commissioned by the Sustainable Castor Association (custodian of the SuCESS code) and conducted by TTC ([TTC – ThinkThrough Consultancy](#)) in 2023, the reduced costs and higher yields led to a 30% higher income from castor for certified farmers compared to a sample of non-certified farms in the same area.

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