

Cultivating resilient livelihoods and protecting the environment through regenerative mint farming

In our Insights series, TRANSFORM shares successes and learnings from our projects to:

- Help the SME and entrepreneur community gain knowledge and learn from our projects
- Showcase to funders what can be achieved through impact-led initiatives

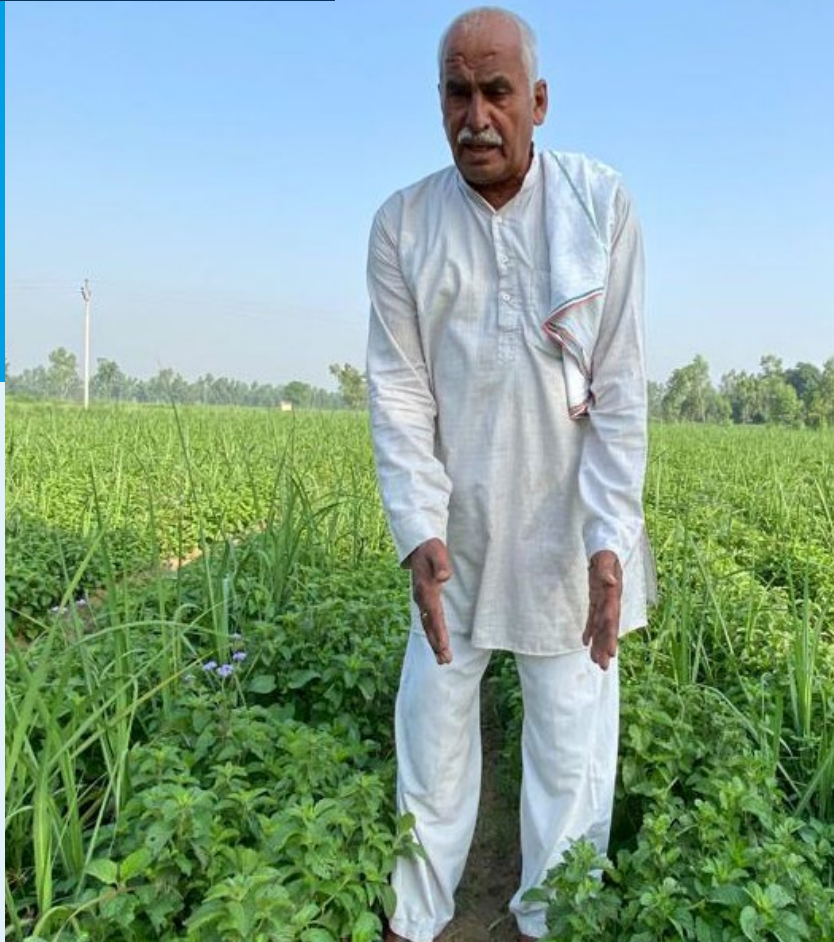
PROJECT AT A GLANCE:

EMPOWERING SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN INDIA THROUGH REGENERATIVE MINT PRACTICES

The **Mint with Purpose** project is a collaboration between fragrance and flavour company DSM-Firmenich and TRANSFORM that trains and supports smallholder farmers in Uttar Pradesh, India, to adopt regenerative mint farming practices. Through hands-on training, practical demonstrations and peer-led champion networks, the project has helped farmers boost yields, restore soil health and build more climate-resilient livelihoods.

THE CHALLENGE

Smallholder farmers in Uttar Pradesh face mounting challenges. Climate change and over-farming have caused soil degradation, declining groundwater levels and shrinking biodiversity, making cultivation increasingly difficult. These pressures are compounded by social issues such as land fragmentation and limited access to social benefits, which particularly constrain women farmers. The mint supply chain is further weakened by the dominance of middlemen, limiting farmers' control over their incomes and market access. Many farmers have lost confidence in mint as a viable crop.



Find out more

Collaboration is key to scaling impact enterprises. Learn more about the successful programmes that other enterprises and funders have delivered together. [Read more stories here.](#)

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THE INNOVATION

The Mint with Purpose project takes a holistic approach to revitalising mint farming. Farmers are trained in regenerative practices, replenishing soil with nutrients by growing mint alongside other crops to boost biodiversity and manage pests. Central to the project's innovation is the Champion Farmer model, where selected farmers act as trusted leaders to demonstrate and share best practices. This peer-to-peer approach helps ensure that practices are not only introduced but are also widely adopted and adapted to local needs.

Beyond farming, the project has empowered households to better understand their basic rights and prioritise long-term family planning through the Gender Action Learning System (GALS). DSM-Firmenich has facilitated workshops and peer-led sessions where farmers – particularly women – use visual tools to set personal and family goals, map out actions, and reflect on household roles and financial priorities. The initiative also trains farmers to better understand social schemes in India, helping them navigate state welfare such as education, pensions, subsidies and healthcare. Through these sessions, farmers strengthen their financial planning, strengthen household decision-making and advocate for their children's access to education and welfare.

THE IMPACT

The project has helped restore confidence in mint as a sustainable and profitable crop. Farmers reported a 27% increase in average mint oil yield per acre. Over 1,200 of participating households have successfully accessed social safety net schemes like subsidised food grains and free school meal programme, unlocking benefits that were previously out of reach. Through GALS, more than 220 people have been trained, with many women and families reporting greater empowerment and increased investment in children's education and nutrition.

By addressing challenges holistically and empowering farmers as community leaders, the project supports not just mint growers but also their family members in building resilient livelihoods.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The project has successfully integrated some of its mint into major consumer goods supply chains such as toothpaste production. It sets a precedent for scaling regenerative mint across the broader, global value chain.

The next phase will focus on deepening these supply chain linkages and supporting farmers to capture greater value from their crops. Firmenich aims to further strengthen the Champion Farmer network, expanding the reach of regenerative practices to even more local farmers.



INSIGHTS:

UNLOCKING THE COMMERCIAL VALUE OF REGENERATIVE CROPS AND TAPPING INTO GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS

1. ALWAYS START WITH LOCAL NEEDS

Adapt technology and practices to the local context.

The project introduced early mint technology to farmers – a package of practices including early planting, improved mint varieties, and ridge and furrow cultivation – to optimise yield and reduce resource use. Introducing these new practices required careful adaptation to local realities. Training was tailored to the needs and resources of smallholder farmers, ensuring that innovations were practical and accessible. This context-driven approach increased adoption and sustained impact.

2. BUILD TRUST THROUGH LOCAL VOICES

Work with local champions to demonstrate the value of regenerative farming.

Building farmers' confidence in regenerative agriculture required more than technical training. It demanded visible wins and trusted local leadership. By demonstrating the benefits through pilot plots, the project enabled farmers to see tangible improvements in yield compared to those that did not adopt regenerative practices. Local farmers who successfully embraced these methods early on were selected as Champion Farmers, serving as mentors and advocates within their communities. This approach built local leadership and encouraged wider adoption, creating a peer-to-peer network for ongoing learning and support.



3. ADDRESS SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BARRIERS HOLISTICALLY

Help farmers gain better understanding and access to social support.

Challenges faced by farmers are not limited to crop yield but deeply intertwined with social and economic factors. By helping smallholder farmers better understand their rights and improving access to social support, the project has enhanced their overall wellbeing and resilience. This holistic approach has enabled farmers to focus on long-term improvements for both their farms and households.

4. INTEGRATE INTO GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS

Unlock commercial value of regenerative crops by integrating with global supply chains.

Enterprises can unlock commercial value by integrating regenerative crops into global supply chains. The project's success is in bringing back farmers' faith in mint farming and produce volume matching global demand - demonstrates the importance of building supply capacity, ensuring traceability, and meeting quality standards.

Enterprises should focus on developing farmer networks, investing in training, and collaborating with partners to open up market access and scale impact.



TRANSFORM is an impact accelerator that unites corporates, donors, investors and academics to support visionary enterprises across Africa and Asia. Together, we test and scale new market-based solutions that build inclusive, sustainable economies, empower marginalised communities, and drive climate-resilient growth.

Combining grant funding, business insight and research, TRANSFORM is advancing the development of innovative business models to help solve global challenges. It was established in 2015 and is led by Unilever, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and EY.