

Status of Mushroom Spawn in India

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Abstract

For the successful cultivation of any plant species one of the most important requirement is the need of that plant species. What we call a seed in higher plants is a microscopic spore in Mushrooms which cannot be used for cultivation of that species because those spores germinate only when very specific 'particularly sterile, conditions are provided. The vegetative mycelium instead offers a greater scope for propagation of Mushrooms. But this mycelium cannot be mixed into the substratum and needs to be carried on a proper carrier which will not only provide nutrition to the growing Mushroom mycelium but also help in its proper distribution in the substratum. Thus seed of a Mushroom species is its vegetative mycelium grown on a suitable substrate. This seed is popularly known as SPAWN. Technically SPAWN is pure culture of mycelium growing on a solid substrate such as cereal grain, compost or any other agaric residue.

Keywords: Mushroom, Mycelium, Spawn

STATUS OF MUSHROOM SPAWN IN INDIA

Spawn production in India is directly related to Mushroom business i.e. Mushroom production and its marketing networking, either fresh or process one. In India 90% of Mushroom production which is about 1.5m tones comes from unorganized sector i.e. small to average farmers who are entirely dependent on spawn laboratories run by Government, semi Government (Mainly Agricultural Universities and Research Institutions), voluntary and private organizations for their spawn requirement.

Big units in the organized sector with advance climate control technology having a mushroom production target of 200 tonnes or more per year have their own spawn laboratories.

Commercial spawn production is a delicate work. It needs utmost care to avoid any contamination and therefore involves sophisticated technology and modern scientific infrastructure. Beside these appropriate timings during all the steps of spawn production is another factor which has to be kept in mind with utmost care. Ultimately ultra hygienic conditions in the entire premises play a significant role to maintain the quality of spawn.

Earlier up to 1980 95% of the spawn production was entirely in the hands of Government and Government controlled institutions. They had their monopoly for spawn production due to availability of technical staff, specific technology and scientific infrastructure. Balance 5% of spawn production was coming from private people who were known to its production technology but lack modern infrastructure. Mushroom growers used to take spawn from these Government laboratories, how far these were located was irrelevant to them. Distance of Government run laboratories from farmers as well as their cumbersome paper work were the major reasons that were limiting the growth level of mushroom as well as spawn production.

During 1981 private spawn laboratories made their presence initially in the vicinity of Government organizations with the help of their staff. They started providing comparatively good services to Mushroom growers in the form of home service, credit facilities, 24 hrs. delivery and not much paper work. Later they started making visits to their farms to provide technical help during the cropping season.

Due to all above factors private entrepreneur were able to take spawn business from the hands of Government. This leads to the emergence of big intrepeneurs who could supply huge quantities of spawn at the door step of farmers even at a quite far distance. Later Government agencies also started recognizing their product with reference to quality and rates.

Now 90% the spawn production ies in the hands of private laboratories. They constitute well organized units and can meet the overgrowing demand of famrers all over the country. They make well use of Road, Rail of Air transport to deliver their spawn in less than 36 hrs. even in remote villages. Some of the pviate laboratories are recognized by Government agencies during Mushroom season for supply of supply of spawn. To quote the example one private laboratory M/s BHARAT MUSHROOMS supplied over 136000 spawn bottles of 300gm. Each in 1994-95, and list of its customers include Department of Science and Technology, Government of India; University of Delhi; University of Delhi, Delhi; Department of Horticulture, Haryana; AGRA University, AGRA; HINDALCO; Dhampur sugar mills; Triveni Agro; Indian phytological society, Patna; and M/s Colnel's Buttons.

Due to emerging competition in this trade private entrepreneurs try their best to provide excellent services to Mushroom growers in the form of quality spawn and

later visiting their farms. They apprised them appropriate discoveries, innovations, latest techniques in their fields to achieve the targets of yield and quality. They provide free services to check their compost, casing soil and water that resulted in giving an impetus to farmers to run toward private laboratories.

Still spawn industry whether private or Government lacks to R&D in the laboratories. Need of the hour is to discover some new strains which could suit best to Indian climatic conditions. Even though yield may be low but they should be able to tolerate temperature climate of India.

Government is continuously in touch with Mushroom growers. Apart from providing all help to growers it is quite keen for availability of quality spawn to them from private entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is providing financial help in the form of soft loans from commercial banks to set up a spawn laboratories and recognized them for supply of spawn.

As mentioned earlier spawn industry is directly related to Mushroom production and Mushroom marketing. It just forms a part of complex net work of Mushroom trade. In developing and over populated country like India where the problem of malnutrition is quite obvious, people are consuming minimum quantity of protein in the world, acute unemployment and protein hunger is quite common, Mushroom cultivation and its efficient marketing may act as turning point to overcome the problem of protein malnutrition. This will further give a boost to spawn Industry. Assistance given by Government, semi government or voluntary organizations to Mushroom farming units either in the form of financial or technical help would again uplift the spawn Industry although indirectly. As per latest phase of liberalization for food processing industries by Government India, Mushroom cultivation and its processing industries will be benefitted, ultimately bringing a cheer to spawn Industry.

Since Mushroom cultivation is still in its infancy in India, there exists a large scope therefore for private entrepreneurs to enter into this industry of spawn productions to cater to the demands of small growers.

