



Growing rice-straw mushrooms

Rice-straw mushrooms are easy and cheap to produce and need very little land. They are nutritious food, and fetch a good price in the market. They can be produced wherever rice straw is readily available. Mushroom production is an ideal business for small-scale farmers, landless people, and women.

Advantages

- Provides employment, income and food.
- The decomposed rice straw produced as a by-product makes good organic fertilizer.

Limitations

- Mushrooms cannot be produced if no rice straw is available, or if all the straw is used for cattle feed.
- A regular supply of spawn is needed.

What you will need

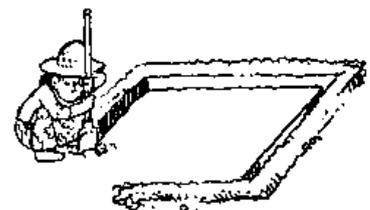
- Enough straw to make 35 bundles, 10 inches in diameter.
- 3 packages of spawn (1 package = 1 g). You can buy this from spawn producers.
- 2 gallons of water.
- 1/2 basket of cow dung.

These inputs will produce 2 – 3 *visses* of mushrooms.

What to do

Preparation

1. Make 35 bundles of rice straw, each about 10 inches in diameter and 3 feet long. Tie each bundle neatly with some straw.
2. Thoroughly soak the straw bundles with water for 3–5 hours.
3. Dig a small, narrow drainage ditch around where you want to build the straw pile, about 3.5 feet x 3.5 feet.



Making the pile

4. Lay down 5 soaked rice straw bundles side-by-side as the first layer of the pile.



5. Sprinkle a little water on the bundles if needed.



6. Tread on the straw bundles lightly to make a level surface.



7. Sprinkle a little spawn at 4-inch intervals around the edges of the pile, about 4 inches in from the edge of the pile. Use about a betel-nut-size amount of spawn in each place.



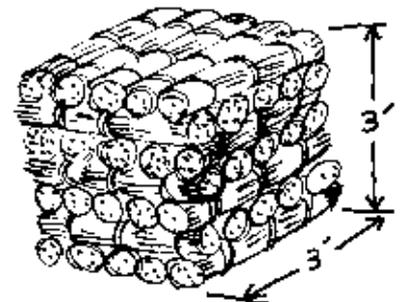
8. Spread a little well-decomposed farmyard manure over the pile (about 1 kg per layer).



9. Lay down another 5 straw bundles on top of the first layer in a criss-cross pattern. Sprinkle with water, tread lightly on the pile, then add spawn and manure.



10. Repeat step 8 for several more layers. You will end up with a pile about 3 feet wide, 3 feet long, and 3 feet high, consisting of about 6–7 layers.



11. Cover the whole pile with grass, straw or palm leaves to protect it from direct sunlight.



Maintenance and harvesting

12. Water the pile from time to time to keep it moist.
13. Under favourable conditions, you can harvest the first mushrooms after about 10 days. You can harvest continuously for 2–3 weeks.
14. After the mushrooms are finished, use straw as organic manure.

Do's and don'ts

- Do keep the pile warm (the optimum temperature is 40–45°) and moist (100% relative humidity) at all times. Add water if it becomes too dry.
- Don't use any pesticide or insecticide.