

No comfy office, this IIM-B graduate is an 'aam' admi

Sruthy Susan Ullas | TNN

Bangalore: He will pass out of one of the most sought-after B-schools of the country. While 332 of his friends will get into those cushy jobs, he will work closer to Mother earth — working with farmers and help them produce export-quality fruits and vegetables and finally export them.

Ashutosh Sawant, a PGP second year student, has started a firm which looks at exporting frozen fruits like alphonso mangoes, frozen strawberry, pomegranate arils, frozen vegetables and cauliflower florets.

“The main reason why our products could not be exported was because we used farming methods that were unacceptable in other countries — like using banned pesticides. I will work closely with farmers, help them with best practices and finally export the produce,” Ashutosh said.

Ashutosh has already started his pilot projects. Back at his hometown in Kadegoan, Karad taluk, Maharashtra, he has entered into a contract with the owner of a 150-acre mango grove. “I helped the farmers with the technical knowhow like drip irrigation and use of chemicals. They do not have access to such knowledge. I consulted with the Central Food Technological Research Institute. The first produce



BACK TO ROOTS: Ashutosh Sawant

is almost ready,” he said.

The total value addition to fruits and vegetables in India is less — around 4% — compared to global standards of 45%-50%, he points out. “I have seen my uncle sell pomegranates for Rs 8 a kilo when I buy for Rs 60 here in Bangalore. We produce 80% of world’s pomegranates and export just 2%. Lots of them are being wasted, this provides an opportunity to process them,” he says.

Once the produce is there, he will look at marketing it to retail chains in other continents. The processing involves cleaning them from chemicals, cutting them according to the specifications of the client and packing in refrigerated containers.