

# Gated farming societies

**THINK OF** a premium gated residential society in your locality and then replace the concrete houses and roads with lush green farmlands. So, you have the safety and convenience of a gated community and the joy of owning a green farm," says Srinath Setty, who, along with two others, runs agricultural asset firm Hosachiguru in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

The trio decided to develop gated farmland societies outside the city some six years ago after they spotted a unique trend: children of most farmers want to come to the cities and city dwellers dream of going back to nature. The problem is that city dwellers tend to buy land or a house from the organised market. Since such a market does not exist in rural areas, they settle for housing projects that are hours away from the city, explains Setty.

So Hosachiguru cherry picks farmland outside the city based on key parameters, such as soil health, land title, water availability and connectivity. Next, it fences the land and develops a farm road access. Finally, land parcels ranging from 0.1 to 0.5 hectare (ha) are sold. The new landowners can then select the seasonal crops and trees they wish to cultivate on the plot and leave the rest to the company at a

An agritech startup in Bengaluru is helping city dwellers own and manage farms for long-term wealth benefits

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nominal fee of ₹1,500 per 0.5 ha. A typical farmland has timber trees in 80 per cent area. Owners can choose to either split the remaining 20 per cent between a seasonal vegetable garden and a built-up area or dedicate the entire space to the garden.

"We are saving the green outskirts of Bengaluru from turning into ghost cities," says Setty. The company currently has eight such projects in Bengaluru, spread over 400 ha, which is nearly five times the area of Lal Bagh, the largest botanical garden in the city. It plans to expand to 2,000 ha in next five years. "The number of queries we get every day has increased 10 times since the outbreak of COVID-19," Setty says.

The company has pumped in a lot of technology to attract city dwellers. Every farm owner is given a mobile app that provides real-time feed of their farms, along with key information on the trees that are being grown, their expected yield, annual carbon sequestration and the farm's water footprint. The projects also have amenities such as muddy puddle, petting farms with horses and ponies, cattle farms and bird aviaries. It also has environment education

centres at the projects where the owners can undertake short-term courses on plant cultivation and farming.

(L-R) Ashok, Srinath Setty and Sriram Chittur founded Hosachiguru in 2014

