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PROCEEDINGS OF

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIVOLTINE COCOON PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY

NOVEMBER 19, 2025

Organized by
Department of Entomology
SRM College of Agricultural Sciences
SRM Institute of Science and Technology
Baburayanpettai, Chengalpattu Dist. - 603 201

SRM COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

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Tamil Nadu

November 2025

Citation

Proceedings of National Conference on Bivoltine Cocoon Production Technology held at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Baburayanpettai, Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu, India on 19th November, 2025.

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ISBN NUMBER
978-93-90357-65-9

DOI:http://dx.doi.org/10.22573/spg.025.epro/S/041

Published By,

Skyfox Publishing Group

Skyfox Press

#1789, Medical College Road

Thanjavur-613004

Tamil Nadu, India.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are thanking SRM Institute of Science and Technology for providing funding support for organizing this **National Conference on Bivoltine Cocoon Production Technology** on November 19, 2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Vendhar Nagar, Baburayanpettai, Acharapakkam Campus.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIVOLTINE COCOON PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY

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"தொட்டனைத் தூறும் மணற்கேணி மாந்தர்க்கு
கற்றனைத் தூறும் அறிவு."

"As water rises with the height of the tank it fills, so knowledge expands with learning."

It gives me immense pride and pleasure to extend my warm greetings to all the participants, delegates, researchers, and organizing members of the *National Conference on Bivoltine Cocoon Production Technology – 2025*, hosted by the Department of Entomology, SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayanpettai.

This conference represents a commendable initiative to promote knowledge sharing and scientific advancement in the field of sericulture — a sector that significantly contributes to rural economy, employment generation, and sustainable agriculture. The focus on bivoltine cocoon production is particularly timely, as it aligns with national priorities to enhance silk productivity, quality, and technological innovation for global competitiveness.

At SRM Institute of Science and Technology, we take pride in fostering a vibrant academic ecosystem that encourages interdisciplinary research, innovation, and industry collaboration. The Department of Entomology, through this national conference, exemplifies our institutional mission to connect education and research with real-world applications that benefit farmers, entrepreneurs, and society at large.

I commend the efforts of the organizing committee for their dedication in bringing together experts, students, and stakeholders on a common platform for scientific dialogue and collaboration. I am confident that this conference will lead to new insights, partnerships, and pathways that strengthen India's sericulture sector.

My best wishes for the grand success of the conference and for fruitful deliberations among all participants.

Dr. M. Jawaharlal
Dean
SRM College of Agricultural Sciences

PROCEEDINGS OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIVOLTINE COCOON PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY,2025: INDEX OF ABSTRACTS & FULL LENGTH PAPERS

SUSTAINABLE SERICULTURE TECHNOLOGIES FOR HIGHER COCOON PRODUCTIVITY

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Silk is the most elegant textile in the world with unparalleled grandeur, natural sheen, and inherent affinity for dyes, high absorbance, light weight, soft touch and high durability and known as the *"Queen of Textiles"* the world over. The process of producing silk with silkworm rearing, called as sericulture is popular in rural India. Sericulture provides employment opportunity for more than 9.70 million people in India through on-farm and off-farm activities. Sericulture comprises two major sectors *viz.,* cultivation of mulberry, the host plant for feeding silkworm and rearing of silkworm to produce the silk. The sericulture sustainable technologies that need to be adopted for obtaining higher cocoon and silk yield are elaborated in this in chapter.

I. MULBERRY CULTIVATION

Mulberry (*Morus* spp.) belongs to the family Moraceae. The characteristic feature of this family is the presence of idioblasts. Mulberry is a deep rooted perennial plant with highly branching root and shoot systems with primary, secondary and tertiary branches. Normally it grows into a tree, but in cultivation, it is raised as a middling or bush by pruning.

Important mulberry varieties

MR2 (Mildew Resistant2)

It is known for its fast growth, medium branching habit, and ability to thrive under both irrigated and semi-irrigated conditions. It features dark green, glossy, thick leaves with short internodes. MR2 is a semi-irrigated variety, meaning it can be grown in areas with limited water resources. The variety also performs well even under reduced fertilizer and irrigation, making it a good choice for farmers with resource constraints. Yield is 30-35 MT/ha/yr.

V1 (Victory1)

It is characterized by erect branches, grayish stem color, and large, ovate, succulent leaves with a smooth, glossy surface. It is known for high rooting ability, fast growth, and high yield. It is most popular among the sericulture farmers. Yield is 60 MT/ha/yr.

G4

It is characterized by open-type bushes, fast growth, high branching, and good root development.

It exhibits increased sprouting and survival rates compared to other varieties like V1, and shows superiority in resisting pests. G4 is also suitable for late-age rearing and may be preferred by farmers. Yield is 60 MT/ha/yr.

S36

It is a high-yielding mulberry variety characterized by short internodes, a semi-erect growth habit, and medium branching. Its stems are greyish-pink, and leaves are unlobed, cordate, glossy, pale-green, and have a smooth surface. The leaves have high succulence and nutritive quality. Hence, it is highly suitable for chawki rearing. It has moderate rooting ability. Yield is 40-45 MT/ha/yr.

G2

It is characterized by large, entire, cordate leaves that are smooth and glossy, dark green with a slightly wavy margin. It has erect branches, high moisture content and high sprouting and rooting abilities. G2 is suitable for rearing chawki worms, yielding 36-38 Mt/ha/year of chawki leaves.

II. NURSERY TECHNIQUES

1. Preparation of nursery bed

The land must be ploughed with tractor drawn mould board plough at least two times and the raised beds of convenient size need to be formed. The well-decomposed farm yard manure must be applied at the rate of 20 MT/ac.

2. Selection of planting materials

Mulberry cuttings are selected from well-established garden of 8 - 12 months old. Only full grown thick main stems free from pest and disease damages having a diameter of 10-12 mm are chosen for preparation of cuttings. The cutting should be of 15-20 cm with 3-4 active buds and should have 45° slanting cut at the bottom end. Care should be taken to make a sharp cut at both the ends of cuttings without splitting the bark.

3. Pre-treatment of cuttings

One kilogram of *Azospirillum* is mixed in 40 liters of water. The bottom ends of the cuttings are kept or 15-30 minutes in it before planting. *Azospirillum* is applied for inducement of early rooting.

4. Application of VAM

Vesicular Arbuscular Mycorrhiza (VAM) is applied at 100 g/m² of nursery area for solubilizing the phosphorus in the soil, making it more accessible to plants.

5. Nursery planting

The cuttings should be planted in slanting position at an angle of 45^{o} with the spacing of 15x10 cm. Exposure of one active bud in each cutting is to be ensured. A nursery bed of size 3.0 m x 1.0 m can accommodate 150 cuttings.

6. Irrigation and Weeding

Irrigation is one of the most important inputs in the nursery technique. The beds are to be irrigated once in 4-6 days depending on the soil texture and weather conditions.

7. Fertilizer application

Chemical fertilizer must be applied in the nursery when saplings attain 20-25 cm height in about 55-60 days after planting, preferably after the second round of weeding. Following this, 500 g of ammonium sulphate or 250 g of urea can be applied per bed, followed by light irrigation.

8. Uprooting

After 4 months of planting, the saplings will attain about 90-120 cm height and are ready for transplantation in the main field. Uproot the sapling carefully without damaging the bark of main roots.

III. MULBERRY GARDEN ESTABLISHMENT

1. Main field preparation

- Bring the soil to fine tilth by repeated ploughing and harrowing.
- Use mould board plough first followed by country plough/cultivator and rotavator.
- If hard pan is present, use chisel plough at 0.5 m distance in perpendicular direction.

2. Organic manure

- Apply FYM @ 20 t/ha for the irrigated crop and 10 t/ha for rainfed crop during last ploughing.
- Apply FYM or compost 1.25 kg/pit in case of pit system of planting.

3. Planting methods

a) Row system : Form ridges and furrows at 60 x 60 or 90 x 90 cm for irrigated crop and 90 x 90 cm for rainfed crop.

b) Paired row system: Plant the cuttings/saplings at a spacing of 60 x 90 x 150 cm (2x3x5 ft). Raise intercrops in the wider inter row space (amenable for mechanization also).

c) Pit system : After field preparation, make pits of 45 x 45 x 45 cm size at 90 x 90 cm spacing. Prepare the pits at least one month in advance.

d) Kolar system : Similar to the row system except that the distance between the plants is very much less. Spacing between row is 30 - 45 cm and the distance between plants is 10 -15 cm.

4. Planting of saplings

- Avoid planting during winter and summer months.
- Plant the well rooted and sprouted saplings at a depth of 15-20 cm
- Earth up and level the area around the saplings
- Gap fill during monsoon months.

5. Fertilizer application

The chemical fertilizers are applied in 5 split doses in a year after each leaf harvest and pruning. The recommended dose of fertilizer is 350 : 140 : 140 kg NPK/ha/yr @ 70 : 28 : 28 kg NPK/ha/crop. It is recommended to apply the first dose of chemical fertilizers three months after planting.

6. Weed management

- As post-emergence application, use Paraquat (Grammoxone) @ 2-3 lit/ha.
- Spray Glyphosate @ 7 ml + 2,4-D at 5 mg/lit of spray fluid as post-emergence application. A total of 600 litres of spray fluid is required/ha.
- Apply the weedicide immediately after pruning or within 2-3 days after pruning
- Use the hood during weedicide application to avoid the drift effect on mulberry

7. Pruning methods

Pruning is the methodical removal of certain branches of a mulberry plant with the object of giving the trees convenient shape and size. It is as important as fertilizing for ensuring good yield of quality leaves. Removal of the branches will not devitalize the plant but, on the other hand, rejuvenate it as the available energy is directed to fewer branches and fresh young shoots sprout from the axillary buds.

i. Bottom pruning

The branches are cut to the base leaving a stump of 10-30 cm above the ground. This type of pruning is done once in a year.

ii. Middle pruning

The branches are cut around mid-height at about 60-70 cm.

iii. Top pruning

The branches are cut to the top confining to the softwood portion.

iv. Kolar system

The branches are cut to the ground level, every time wherein the pruning and harvesting are done together. This type of severe pruning requires heavy fertilization and irrigation.

8. Leaf harvest methods

It is preferable to harvest the leaves during morning hours. There are two methods of harvesting of mulberry leaves.

i) Leaf picking

Leaves are picked individually from the main stem with petioles. At the same time terminal buds are nipped off so that lateral shoots develop rapidly, and sufficient leaves are available for the next crop. Leaf picking starts 10 weeks after bottom pruning and subsequent pickings can be done at intervals of about 7 to 8 weeks.

ii) Shoot harvest

This method of harvest consists of cutting the branches by bottom pruning and feeding the entire shoot to the late-age larvae. Shoots are harvested at intervals of 7-8 weeks and thus 5-6 harvests are made in a year. As shoots are cut to the ground level, the shoots sprouting reach uniform maturing by the next harvest.

9. Preservation of leaves / shoots

Preserving mulberry leaves primarily involves maintaining moisture and creating a cool, humid environment to prevent wilting and decay. Harvesting of Leaves in the early morning during cooler hours is recommended as they retain more moisture. The major problem during storage is water loss and deterioration of the nutritive value by the breakdown of carbohydrates and proteins. The rate at which this occurs can be reduced by storing the leaves below 20^0C and over 90% relative humidity. Mulberry leaves for young worms may be stored in baskets but those for grown-up worms require storage in larger wooden / iron / bamboo leaf chambers covered on all sides with a wet gunny cloth.

IV. PESTS OF MULBERRY AND MANAGEMENT

Mulberry being rich in nutritional status, affected a wide array of insect pests, which bring a drastic reduction in leaf yield besides impairing the quality of leaves. The key insect pests infesting the mulberry has been elaborated with management practices.

1. Pink mealybug

Damage symptoms

- Malformation of the apical shoots, retarded growth, wrinkling and curling of the affected leaves, become dark green in colour.
- Leaves become pale yellow on severe infestation.
- Affected portions become brittle.
- Symptoms are collectively called as Tukra (Bushy top) disease

Management

- Cutting the affected shoots and burning
- Spraying Fish Oil Rosin Soap (FORS) @ 40 g/l or Neem oil @ 3 % or NSKE @ 5 % (Waiting period: 15 days)
- Releasing *Cryptolaemus montrouzieri* @ 750 beetles/ha and *Scymnus coccivora* @ 1000 beetles/ha.

2. Spiralling whitefly

Damage symptoms

- Adults and nymphs congregate on the lower surface of leaves
- Desap the leaves, resulting in yellowish speckling on leaves
- Leaves crinkle and curl and sooty mould appears
- Infestation spreads from the bottom leaves to the top.
- Eggs are laid on lower leaves with irregularly spiralling deposits of waxy white flocculence.

Management

- Collection and destruction of leaves with egg masses, nymphs and adults
- Setting up light traps or yellow sticky traps
- Spraying Fish Oil Rosin Soap @ 40 g/l or or Neem oil @ 3 % or NSKE @ 5 %.

3. Thrips

Damage symptoms

- In early stage of infestation streaks are observed on leaves.
- In advanced stages, the leaves become yellowish brown on maturity.

Management

- Spraying of Neem oil @ 3 % or NSKE @ 5 %.

4. Leaf webber

Damage symptoms

- Cause damage by folding the leaves and by webbing the tender shoots.
- Larvae web the leaves together and feed from inside on soft tissues, and skeletonize them.
- Grown up caterpillars feed voraciously on tender leaves.
- Apical tips are preferred for feeding, resulting in stunting.

Management

- Mechanical clipping and burning of affected shoots
- Release of egg parasitoid, *Trichogramma chilonis* @ 5cc / ha.
- Release of pupal parasitoid, *Tetrastichus howardi*@ 50,000 / ha.
- Spraying of of Neem oil @ 3 % or NSKE @ 5 %.

5. Termite

Damage symptoms

- Termites form an earthen sheath on the stem and feed on the bark and kill the plant.
- Drying of plants and reduction in leaf yield.
- Mulching with dry twigs favours the population builds up in endemic areas.
- More damage is seen in red loam and sandy soil.

Management

- Location and destruction of termite colonies by removing queen termite
- Treatment of mounds with 50 ml chlorpyriphos 20 EC.
- Swabbing or drenching of established plants at the base with 50 ml chlorpyriphos 20 EC.

V. DISEASES OF MULBERRY NAD MANAGEMENT

1. Leaf spot

- Brownish circular or irregular leaf spots in the initial stage, enlarge, coalesce and form shot holes in later stage
- Severely affected leaves become yellowish and fall off prematurely

Management

- Spraying carbendazim @ 500-625 g/ha

2. Powdery mildew

- Initially, white powdery patches on lower surface of leaves are seen which later cover the entire leaf surface.
- Later turn black to brown in colour.
- Infected leaves turn yellow and fall off.
- High humidity (>70%) and low temperature (24-26^{o}C) favour outbreak of the disease.

Management

- Providing wider spacing
- Growing resistant varieties like MR1 and MR2
- Spraying carbendazim @ 500-625 g/ha
- Releasing yellow lady bird beetles, *Illeis cincta*, since they feed on the mildew fungus.

3. Leaf rust

- Presence of small, irregular reddish to rusty brown spot on older leaves on lower surface.
- Leaves become yellowish and wither off prematurely.

Management

- Providing wider spacing
- Spraying carbendazim @ 500-625 g/ha

4. Root rot

- Sudden wilting, withering of leaves appearing in isolated patches in garden
- Yellowing and drooping of the leaves, which subsequently dropped off
- Affected plants fail to sprout after pruning and dry up completely
- Affected plants can be pulled out easily
- Rotting of primary and secondary roots and decay of root bark
- Rotten tissues of stem and the root contained large number of black sclerotia
- Presence of brown lesions on the stem at ground level with shredded bark

Management

- Uprooting and burning of severely affected / dead plants
- Soil drenching of affected plants and surroundings with 0.1 % carbendazim / 0.2 % COC
- Application of oil cake @ 2 t/ha/yr and Zinc sulphate @ 10 kg/ha in 2 split doses
- Application of biocontrol agents *viz., Trichoderma asperillum* and *Bacillus subtilis* along with FYM (1:1:50) @ 100 g/ plant after incubation for 10 – 15 days.

5. Stem canker

- Failure of cuttings to sprout.
- Sudden withering and death of sprouts.
- Discolouration and drying of stems and buds above the soil.
- Rotting and peeling of bark on stem below the soil surface.
- Black mycelial threads seen below infected bark and black eruptions on the bark of the infected stem portion.

Management

- Pre-treatment of cuttings with carbendazim @ 4g/l for a period of 12 h.
- After pruning, the cut surfaces of the stems should be dressed with a spray/smear of carbendazim @ 4g/l.

SILKWORM REARING

Rearing house

A model rearing house is a rat – proof building with a ledge all around to prevent rats from entering the building. The building has a verandah all around and glass windows and doors to provide good ventilation and light. The ceiling of the rearing house is generally made of wood; if made of concrete or tiles, a false ceiling must be constructed. Ventilators must be installed to ensure free circulation of air.

The rearing house is partitioned into four convenient rooms in one of which, by maintaining high temperature and humidity, the young age silkworms are reared. The rooms are provided with an adequate number of windows and doors to ensure good ventilation for rearing older silkworms.

The rearing houses should be located in such a manner as to maintain as far as possible ideal temperature and humidity conditions inside the rearing rooms. In temperature and sub-tropical regions, they should be constructed in a North-South direction so that maximum sunlight and heat is available to warm up the rearing rooms adequately. In tropical regions, however, the building should be sited East-West so that too hot, direct sunlight is avoided and cooler room temperatures maintained.

In some rearing houses, roof and side walls are made of plastic sheets or tarpaulins which prevent direct drought of cold air from outside entering the sheds. This type of shed is usually used for shoot rearing or floor rearing.

Disinfection technique

Disinfection in sericulture is a crucial process to prevent silkworm diseases by killing pathogens in the rearing house and equipment. Key methods include using chemical disinfectants like bleaching powder, formalin, and slaked lime for cleaning the rearing house and equipment before and after rearing. The rearing house and rearing appliances have to be disinfected with the following disinfectants

i) 2.5 % Sanitech (Chlorine dioxide) + 0.5 % slaked lime

Five hundred millilitre of chloride dioxide is mixed with 50 g of activator and this is dissolved in 20 litres of water. To this, 100 g of lime powder has to be mixed.

ii) 2 % Bleaching powder + 0.3 % slaked lime

The rearing house and equipment are sprayed with disinfectant solution containing 2% bleaching powder and 0.3 % slaked lime, and then sun dried before use.

After disinfection process, the raring house should be kept closed for about 24 hours. The doors and windows should be kept open at least for 24 hours before commencement of rearing to avoid traces of disinfectants.

Incubation and black boxing of egg

- The egg sheets should be spread out as a single layer in a chawki tray.
- Temperature of 25°C and humidity of 80 per cent are maintained. For this, paraffin papers and wet foam pads may be used.
- When the eggs come to head pigmentation stage (48 hours before hatching), they should be kept in dark condition by wrapping them in black paper or by keeping them in a box (black boxing). On the expected day of hatching, eggs are exposed to light, early in the morning to ensure uniform hatching. This facilitates uniform development of embryo.
- Most of the eggs (90 to 95 %) will hatch in about 2 to 3 hours.

Brushing

- The hatched larvae should not be starved and they must be brushed on a paraffin paper in a rearing tray.
- This is done by sprinkling chopped tender mulberry leaves of size 0.5 to 1 cm^2 over the brushing net. The larvae crawl on to the leaves.
- After 8 to 10 minutes, the brushing net / egg sheet is inverted over rearing tray and gently tapped.

CHAWKI REARING

The first and second instars are called as chawki larvae. They are highly susceptible for biotic as well as abiotic stresses. The rearing has to be taken by a well-trained person. In a tray of 120 cm x 90 cm x 105 cm size, 20 dfls are brushed and reared upto second stage.

Selection of leaves

- From brushing to the end of second age, the larvae are fed with tender and succulent leaves.
- The leaves are selected from the largest glossy leaf, 2^{nd} or 3^{rd} from the top.
- The next 3 to 4 leaves are used to rear the young age worms upto II moult.
- The size of the chopped leaf is around 0.5 to 1.0 sq.cm. during 2^{nd} age.

Bed cleaning

- In the first age, one cleaning is given just a day before the worms settle for moulting.
- In the second age, two cleanings are given, one after resuming feeding and the other before second moult.
- A net with mesh size of 0.5 x 0.5 cm is spread over the rearing bed and feeding is given.
- The worms crawl through the net and come to fresh leaves.
- The net along with the worms and leaves are transferred to another tray.
- The left over leaves and litter are discarded.

Moulting care

- Stop feeding and do not disturb the larvae
- Correct detection of moult and stopping or resuming feeds are very important for uniform growth of silkworms.
- Sprinkle lime on the bed at the time of moulting
- During moult, the rearing bed should be kept thin and dry and should have proper aeration.

LATE AGE SILKWORM REARING

The third, fourth and fifth instar larvae are considered as late age worms. They are reared in rearing bed made with nylon wires (Shoot rearing). Newspapers are spread over the nylon wires to absorb excess moisture in leaves and faecal pellets. Silkworm larvae consume 94 % of their food requirement during late-age period. Fifty per cent of the labour input is utilized during the last seven days of rearing.

Shoot rearing rack

- A rearing rack of 1.2m x 11m size is sufficient to rear 50 dfls.
- Provide 15 cm border on all sides of the shelf to prevent the migration of the larvae.
- Arrange the shelves in three tier system with 50 cm space between the tiers.
- Fabricate the rack stand with wood, or steel and the rearing seat with wire mesh/bamboo mat.

Shoot harvesting

- Cut the shoots, when they are at 1 m, shoots can be harvested 50-60 days after pruning, store the shoots vertically upwards in dark cooler room, provide thin layer of water (3 cm) in the storage room and place the cut ends in the water for moisture retention.

Feeding

- Spread the shoot in perpendicular to width of the bed.
- Place top and bottom ends of the shoots alternatively to ensure equal mixing of different qualities of leaves.
- Watch for feeding rate from 4th day of fourth instar. If 90% of larvae have not settled for moulting, provide one or two extra feedings.
- Avoid over-matured, yellow and soiled leaves

Space requirement

- For 100 dfls, 600-700 sq. ft is needed.
- Chawki rearing house - 150 sq. ft. and late age rearing house -1000 sq. ft. is needed for 1 acre mulberry garden

Bed disinfectant

- Apply the bed disinfectant immediately after the moulting @ 6.0 kgs/100 dfls
- Feed the larvae 30 to 60 min. after the application of bed disinfectant
- Examples: Vijetha, Vijetha Supplement, Vijetha Green, Angush, Suraksha and Sanjeevini.

Time of application	**Quantity (g/ 100 dfls)**
After 1st moult	50
After 2nd moult	150
After 3rd moult	900
After 4th moult	1900
On 4th day of 5th instar	3000

Total	**6000**

Moulting care

- Evenly spread the larvae in the rearing bed before settling for moult.
- Provide air circulation to avoid excess humidity inside the room.
- Provide charcoal stove/heaters to raise the room temperature during winter.
- Apply lime powder at 60 minutes before resumption of feeding daily during rainy/winter seasons to reduce the dampness in bamboo trays.

Mounting

- After attaining full growth in the final instar, the worms cease to feed and are ready to spin. Such worms are slightly translucent and raise their heads to find a place for spinning.
- These worms have to be transferred to a mountage for spinning cocoons.
- Mounting of worms should not be delayed as the ripened worms will waste silk.
- About 50-70 larvae per sq. ft. are to be kept on a mountage.
- Mountages should be kept in shade in a well ventilated place during spinning.
- Relative humidity of 60-70% is ideal for spinning.
- Provide even and moderate lighting. Improper lighting causes crowding of larvae to shaded area leading to double cocoons.

Cocoon harvesting

- The silk worms complete spinning in 2 to 3 days but the cocoons should not be harvested at this time as the worms inside are still in the prepupal stage.
- Harvesting should be done on the fifth/sixth day when pupae are fully formed and hard.
- Do not harvest when the pupa is in amber colour.
- Dead and diseased worms on the mountages should be removed before harvest.
- Marketing of cocoons should be done next day of harvest.

SILKWOMR UZI FLY

Symptoms

- Presence of creamy white oval eggs on the skin of larvae in the initial stage.
- Presence of black scar on the larval skin
- Silkworm larvae die before they reach the spinning stage (if they are attacked in the early stage).
- In later stage, pierced cocoon is noticed.
- Crawling of maggots on the floor
- Presence of adult flies

Management

1. Collect the maggots from the bed or falling from mountage and destroy.
2. Provide wire mesh in the rearing room windows and mosquito net in the entrance and in rearing stands to prevent the entry of the ovipositing flies.
3. Place uzi trap by dissolving 2 uzi tablets/litre. Keep it on the outside of windows of rearing room to attract adults.
4. Spray uzicide 6 litres / 100 dfls during fourth (once) and fifth instar (twice).
5. Release *Nesolynx thymus* @ 1 lakh per 100 dfls. About 8000, 16,000 and 76,000 adults are released during 4^{th} and 5^{th} instar and after cocoon harvest respectively. Close the doors and windows before the release of parasites.

DISEASES OF SILKWORM AND MANAGEMENT

The silkworms are highly susceptible for various pathogens which severely brought down the cocoon yield by causing different deadly diseases.

1. **Viral disease (Grasserie) - *Bm*NPV**

Swollen segments, milky white body colour, movements of the larvae along the periphery of the trays and hang down symptoms

2. Bacterial disease (Sotto / Bacterial toxicosis) - *Bacillus thuringiensis*

Loss of appetite, convulsions, lifting of head, spasm, tremors, paralysis, distress, sudden collapse and death. Shortly after death, the corpse is outstretched, hard to touch and the head appears hook shaped. Body turns to brown, blackish brown and black and rot exuding foul smelling dark brown fluid.

3. Fungal disease (White muscardine) - *Beauveria bassiana*

Body becomes stiff and hard, body colour changes to pink colour, wooly aerial hyphae grow out between intersegmental membrane. Body is covered with white powdery conida, cocoon sound like dried cocoons when shaken. Body of moth is hardened and the wings fall off easily.

4. Protozoan disease (Pebrine) - *Nosema bombycis*

Poor and irregular hatching, irregular size, irregular moulting and sluggishness, body wrinkled with rusty brown colour, irregular pepper like spots on the larval skin, pupae are flabby and swollen with lustless and softened abdomen, moth emergence is delayed, clubbed wings, distorted antennae and moth lays eggs with gluey substance.

Management strategies

1. Complete disinfection of rearing room and appliances
2. Ensure proper ventilation and air circulation
3. Feed the larvae with nutritious mulberry leaves
4. Collect and burn infected larvae, faecal matter and bed refuses
5. Dust the recommended bed disinfectant @ 6 kg/100 dfl.

6. Avoid injury to the worms, overcrowding of trays and accumulation of faeces in the rearing bed
7. Avoid spraying commercial *B.t.* insecticides in nearby mulberry field.

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PROMOTION OF BIVOLTINE SERICULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD

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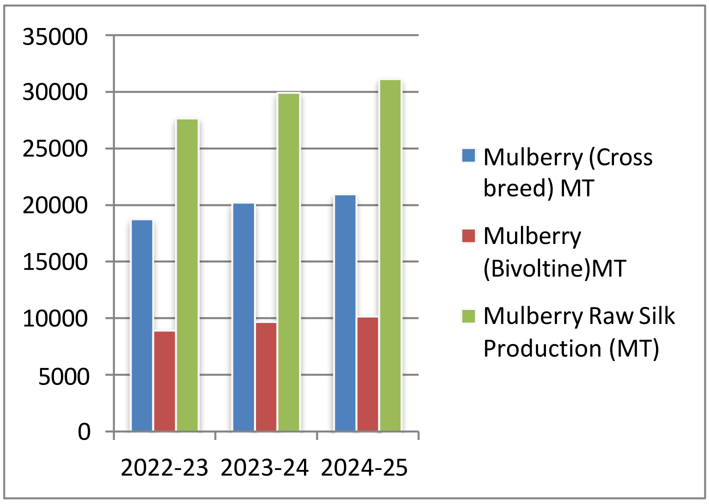
Introduction

Sericulture is a labour-intensive farm-based activity that falls under the cottage and small-scale sector. It has undisputedly reigned as the "Queen of textiles" over the centuries. This agro-based industry has two sectors; one, farm sector which comprises of cultivation of food plants for silkworm, production of cocoons and eggs by rearing silkworms, and second, industry sector which involves reeling, spinning, dyeing, printing and finishing procedures. It is efficient in providing livelihood to rural people and can even check migration of people from rural to urban areas by providing sufficient employment. This sector involves low investment, short development period, high and guaranteed returns, opportunities to increase income and employment to entire family throughout the year and thus is suitable for the small scale and marginal land holders.

Sericulture has proven to be an appropriate vocation in India for inclusive development of the rural population, particularly the poorer sectors of society, addressing equity distribution from urban privileged to rural poor. The total silk production in the country during 2024-25 was 41,121 MT which is 5.6% higher than the production achieved during previous year (38913 MT) and around 92.61% of the annual targeted production for the year. The bivoltine raw silk production increased substantially by 49.78% from 6,783 MT during 2020-21 to 10160 MT during 2024-25. This will not only check the import of raw silk but also safeguard the interest of the primary producers of the country.



1. Bivoltine sericulture

Mulberry silkworm (Bombyx mori L.) being monophagous, it solely depends on mulberry for its food. It is the complex structure of silkworm host plant management i.e. mulberry (Morus spp.) cultivation and silkworm (Bombyx mori L.) rearing, production of cocoons and silk.

Success in sericulture depends largely on major factors like, **breed, seed and feed**. Concurrently, appropriate technological supports like disease free environment during rearing and cocooning also play an important role. Bivoltine silkworms produce cocoons with higher silk content, thicker and longer filaments, better neatness, cleanness, less size deviation, low boil-off ratio, higher tensile strength and less variation in evenness compared to other varieties.

Besides, management of bivoltine silkworm rearing is important for successful production of cocoon and thereby quality silk production. The factors influence the rearing silkworm (*Bombyx mori* L.) and its management practices need proper care. Among, various factors, quality silkworm layings, incubation of silkworm eggs, disinfection, maintenance of hygiene and rearing environments, quality of mulberry leaf, disease and pest management, mounting etc. are important for its success.

2. Suitable breeds

Earlier attempts to rear bivoltine hybrids resulted only a sporadic success and that too confined only to some seasons of the year, when climatic conditions are not hostile to silkworms. By systematic evaluation of large number of crosses involving series of productive bivoltine breeds (CSR parents), highly productive hybrids with high quality silk could be identified with cocoon shell percentage of 23-24%; raw silk recovery of 18-19% and 2A-3A grade silk. Research institutes have developed suitable robust BV x BV hybrid combinations (ex: KSO-1xSP2, CSR18 x CSR19) for average conditions and double hybrids (BV x BV) x (BV x BV) for high input conditions

3. Present status of Bivoltine sericulture

The Government of India, through initiatives such as the National Sericulture Project (NSP) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)-assisted programmes, has made significant efforts to develop bivoltine sericulture in the country. These interventions enabled the Central Silk Board (CSB) to develop suitable mulberry varieties, standardized packages of practices, high-yielding silkworm breeds like CSR2 × CSR4, CSR4 × CSR5, and CSR18 × CSR19, along with appropriate rearing methodologies, disease management protocols, and improved reeling technologies adapted to the tropical climate of peninsular India. Largescale demonstrations of these technologies were conducted with 3,700 farmers and 298 reelers across the southern states, leading to a substantial increase in bivoltine silk production. Raw silk output in India rose from 366 MT in 1998–99 to 1,685 MT in 2011–12, registering an annual compound growth rate of 11.62%. The share of bivoltine silk in total silk production also increased from 2.57% in 1998–99 to 7.15% in 2011-12.The demand for high quality bivoltine silk is steadily increasing for both domestic use and export-oriented value-added products.

Bivoltine silkworm hybrids authorized at national level by Central Silk Board for commercial exploitation.

Bivoltine silkworm	Type	Recommended area	Recommended season
CSR6 × CSR26 × CSR2 × CSR27	**Double hybrid**	Throughout India- High input conditions	Spring, Rainy
CSR2 × CSR4	hybrid	South India, Temperate	Spring, Rainy
CSR48 × CSR5	hybrid	South India, Temperate	Spring, Rainy
CSR46 × CSR47	hybrid	UK , HP, UP, KR, AP, OR, WB, AS	All Seasons
GEN3 × GEN2	hybrid	AP,TN,WB,AS,JK	All Seasons
SLD4 × SLD8	hybrid	KR,AP,TN,WB,AS,JK	All Seasons
TT21xTT56	**Double hybrid**	KR,AP,TN	Summer

Sericulture clusters have been developed by Government of India as an effort to provide a push to this industry. Through Cluster Promotion Programme (CPP), farmers organized into clusters to provide them with training and support in adopting new technologies and practices. Extension centres of Central silk board- CSB facilitating a strong connection between research, extension services, and farmers for effective technology transfer and problem-solving. Also creating awareness and disseminating advanced mulberry cultivation and silkworm rearing technology packages to improve productivity.

4. Promotion of Bivoltine sericulture for sustainable livelihood

For promoting bivoltine sericulture in India, the Government of India, under its XII Five Year Plan (2012–13 to 2016–17), prioritized employment generation for economically weaker sections in rural areas through the production of import substitute bivoltine silk under the Catalytic Development Programme (CDP). In the mulberry sector, the plan set an ambitious target to increase the production of high-quality bivoltine silk (3A grade and above) from 1,685 MT to 5,000 MT—a 197% rise from one plan period to the next. To achieve this, the XII Plan proposed a strategic shift focusing on research, extension, seed production, improved cocoon production practices, marketing, credit facilitation, policy reforms, and greater stakeholder participation in decision making processes. Keeping the extension system formulated in the project as base, Central Silk Board in its XII th Plan (2012-17) proposed to formulate about 179 clusters all over India.

India's sericulture policies, such as the Silk Samagra scheme and the National Silk Policy 2020, aim to support farmers through financial assistance for infrastructure and inputs, training, and technology adoption. These schemes have a significant positive impact on farmers' livelihoods by providing year-round income opportunities, particularly for small and marginal farmers, women, and tribal communities, and have a higher benefit-cost ratio compared to many traditional cash crops.

Cluster Promotion Programme (CPP) was launched by Central silk board a decade ago, with an aim to uplift India in international market related to production and upgrading of quality raw silk. Several studies have been conducted to access the effect of this scheme on implementation of novel techniques and socio-economic status of sericulture farmers. The studies have reported that the execution of CPP has resulted in increased leaf production of food plants, cocoon yield, price of silk cocoon and revenue.

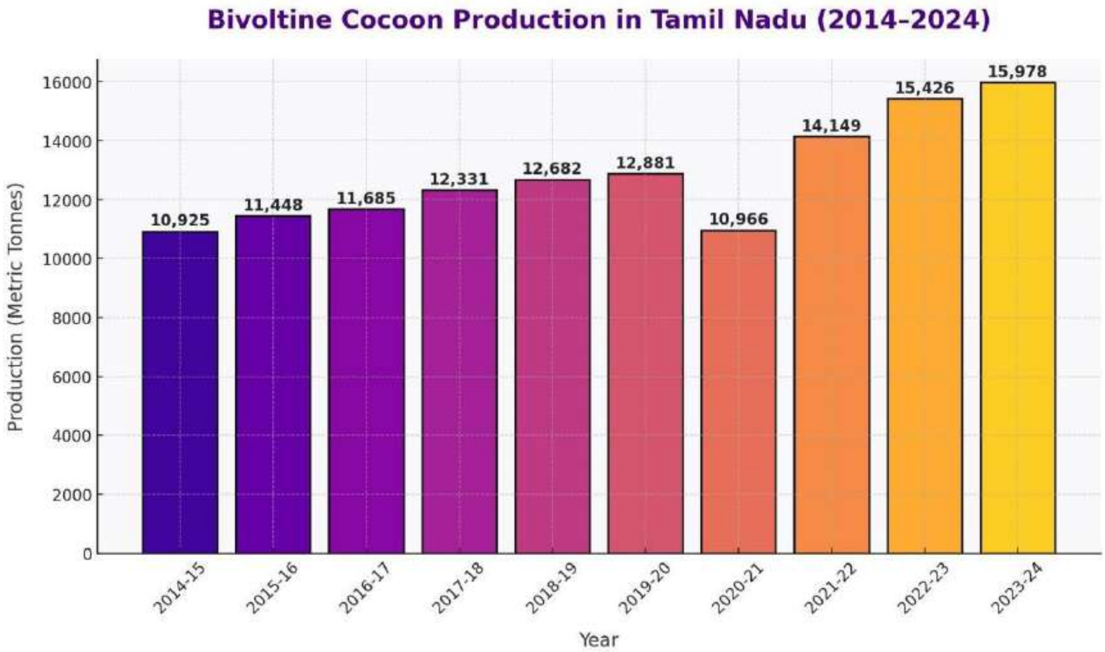
The increase in DFL brushing, cocoon yield, and quality is due to improved rearing practices and technologies, which enhance silkworm health, boost productivity, and ensure better silk quality. Innovations in nutrition, disease management, and optimized environmental conditions contribute to higher yields and superior cocoon quality.Bivoltine hybrids are known for their superior productivity and reeling quality compared to multivoltine varieties. Their performance is influenced by factors such as temperature, feeding regimes, and genetics, which affect both productivity and silk quality.

Sericulture is particularly suited to drought-prone areas, helping to address agrarian distress. Notably, over 60% of women participate in various sericulture activities, including mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing, silk reeling, twisting, and weaving, making it a women-centric industry.

5. <u>Bivoltine Hybrids and Productivity in Tamil Nadu</u>

Bivoltine silkworms are renowned for producing high-quality silk with longer, stronger filaments compared to multivoltine varieties. Their productivity is measured by egg count, larval weight, cocoon weight, and silk yield. Bivoltine hybrids typically yield 15-20% higher cocoon weight and stronger silk threads due to a better sericin-to-fibroin ratio (Kumar et al., 2010). Hybrids from pure-bred bivoltine silkworms also show higher hatching rates, leading to increased larvae and overall productivity (Wang et al., 2009).

In a case study by Mahapatra et al. (2012), hybrids bred from high-yielding, disease-resistant Bombyx mori strains showed up to a 30% improvement in cocoon yield, silk production, and survival rates compared to traditional multivoltine strains.



6. <u>Economic Impact of Bivoltine Hybrid Adoption in Sericulture</u>

The adoption of bivoltine hybrid silkworms has had significant economic implications for sericulture farmers. These hybrids are not only known for their superior silk quality and productivity but also contribute substantially to the economic upliftment of rural households. The impact of adopting bivoltine hybrids can be measured in terms of changes in annual income, employment generation, and contributions to the rural household economy, particularly in the context of women and youth.

6.1. Change in Farmers' Annual Income Before and After Adoption

The transition from traditional multivoltine silkworms to bivoltine hybrids has a considerable impact on farmers' income. The increased cocoon yield and superior silk quality associated with bivoltine hybrids contribute to higher earnings for sericulture farmers.

6.2 Increased Productivity and Higher Silk Yield

Bivoltine hybrids generally produce larger, stronger, and more uniform cocoons, which translate to higher-quality silk threads and greater silk yield per unit of input. As a result, the income of farmers adopting these hybrids has increased significantly. Several studies have quantified these changes.

6.3 Case Study: Annual Income Increase

In a study by Krishnakumar et al. (2013), it was found that farmers who adopted bivoltine hybrids experienced a 30-40% increase in cocoon yield, leading to an increase in their annual income from sericulture. For example, farmers in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, who initially earned about ₹50,000–₹60,000 annually from traditional multivoltine sericulture, saw their income rise to ₹80,000–₹90,000 after adopting bivoltine hybrids.

6.4 Revenue from Silk Production

The higher filament strength and improved reeling efficiency of bivoltine silk result in better market prices. On average, bivoltine silk commands a premium price compared to multivoltine silk, which further boosts the income of sericulture farmers (Narayana, 2015). The increase in quality of silk and the higher reeling yield are key factors contributing to the economic benefit.

7. Constraints and Challenges in the Adoption of Bivoltine Hybrids in Sericulture

Bivoltine hybrids offer superior silk quality and productivity but face several challenges hindering their widespread adoption and sustainability. Key issues include limited access to quality Disease-Free Layings (DFLs), high seed costs, and climatic sensitivity. Many small-scale farmers struggle with poor infrastructure and limited access to high-quality DFLs, affecting productivity and silk quality (Patel et al., 2014). The high cost of quality seeds further restricts access, forcing farmers to compromise on seed quality, leading to weaker silkworms and reduced yields (Kaur et al., 2018). Bivoltine silkworms are also highly sensitive to temperature and humidity. Ideal growth conditions require stable temperatures (25–28°C), and deviations can reduce growth, survival, and cocoon yield (Singh et al., 2013). High temperatures and humidity can lead to weak silk fibers and increased mortality (Bhagat et al., 2015; Rao et al., 2019). In regions with unsuitable climates, farmers often revert to less productive multivoltine varieties (Ramakrishna et al., 2017). Addressing these challenges is essential to enhancing bivoltine sericulture's long-term sustainability and profitability.

While bivoltine hybrids produce superior silk, outdated and inefficient reeling machines in rural areas can reduce both the quality and quantity of the silk. Many small-scale farmers still rely on traditional reeling methods, which lower the yield despite high-quality cocoon production. Significant investment in modern reeling infrastructure is essential to fully capitalize on the potential of bivoltine hybrids. However, financial constraints in rural sericulture regions hinder such investments, meaning even high-quality cocoon production may not translate into optimal economic returns (Bhardwaj et al., 2016).

8. Strategies for Promotion of Bivoltine Hybrid Sericulture

Promoting bivoltine hybrids in sericulture requires a multifaceted approach to address challenges like seed access, climate sensitivity, and infrastructure limitations. Key strategies include:

Cluster-Based Model: Organizing farmers into clusters provides collective resources, knowledge sharing, and economies of scale. This approach enhances training, improves market access, and attracts investment in infrastructure like modern reeling facilities. Successful cluster models in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have shown higher productivity and better returns (Chakravarty, 2017).

Farmer Training and Capacity Building: Training on modern practices, optimal rearing conditions, pest management, and advanced reeling techniques is critical for successful bivoltine sericulture. Capacity building ensures farmers can meet the specific needs of bivoltine hybrids, such as temperature, humidity, and feeding requirements (Kumar & Srinivas, 2016).

Private Sector Involvement: Collaboration with private companies can provide technical assistance, high-quality DFLs, and modern machinery. Public-private partnerships can also help build silk-reeling units, ensuring a more integrated value chain (Kohli & Ghosh, 2018).

Financial Support and Risk Mitigation: Loan programs, crop insurance, and guaranteed buy-back arrangements can reduce financial risks and provide income security for small-scale farmers (Tiwari & Kumar, 2016).

9. State and Central Government Initiatives Supporting Bivoltine Sericulture

a. Entrepreneurship development: Sericulture, being the greatest labour-intensive segment of Indian economy, offers source of livelihood to major part of population by providing profitable self-employment to farmers and their families.
b. Subsidies and Financial Assistance: Farmers receive subsidies for mulberry plantation, drip irrigation, and silkworm rearing equipment.
c. Training and Capacity Building: Regular workshops and training programs equip farmers with knowledge about pest management, disease control, and innovative farming practices.
d. NSSO plays a major role in producing high quality bivoltine hybrid silkworm seed at its Silkworm Seed Production Centres
e. Supplying Bivoltine Chawki worms instead of DFLs (Silkworm eggs) to farmers.
f. Market Linkages: The government facilitates direct market access for cocoon and silk producers, ensuring fair prices.
g. Technology Development and Adoption: Initiatives to introduce advanced technologies, such as farm mechaniztion and bio-fertilizers, have improved efficiency and sustainability. Higher silk output and thereby better income to farmers and industry workers is achieved due to the adoption in technology.
h. To encourage the post-cocoon sector, subsidies are also provided for setting up Automatic Reeling Machinery (ARM), multi-end reeling, and twisting units. These initiatives have enabled the production of International Grade 3A and above Bivoltine Raw Silk at competitive prices.

With these government support most of the farmers have been transitioned from CB (Cross Breed) cocoon producers to Bivoltine cocoon farming and also by conducting workshops, training programs, and exposure visits.

10. Constraints and solutions

- In tropical countries, high temperature, low humidity, poor rearing management, poor mulberry quality, high incident of diseases etc are mainly responsible for partial success of bivoltine sericulture at the farmers level.
- Challenges remain in terms of fluctuating cocoon prices, climate vulnerability, and limited technology adoption. Strengthening policy implementation, market linkages, and farmer training can further enhance sericulture's role in ensuring socio-economic security for rural populations in India.
- For current field problems, simultaneous adoption of integrated strategies including integrated nutrient management, integrated pest management, integrated disease management, etc. helps rather than intensively following one solution.
- Labour intensive sericulture sector, now-a-days facing labour problems that could be rectified by reducing labour dependency and involving more mechanizing options.
- Reduction of rural to urban migration by promoting monthly income based occupation like sericulture.

11. Future strategies- R&D, Policy development, ToT programs

a. Silk vision 2030

At present, the country imports a significant quantity of high quality raw silk from China, primarily due to the slow growth of bivoltine silk production. This slow growth is attributed to the shrinking area under mulberry cultivation in traditional regions, the low output of bivoltine eggs, and the limited availability of Automatic Reeling Machines. In line with the Indian Silk Vision 2030, and considering the current status, potential, and future prospects, a set of midterm (2020–21 to 2024–25) and long-term (2025–26 to 2029–30) strategies have been proposed for the industry.

b. Research and Development

Developing and distributing better bivoltine silkworm hybrids or double hybrids and improved mulberry varieties for higher yields and quality. The introduction of hybrid silkworms that are disease-resistant and yield higher-quality silk will benefit farmers.

In order to increase the land yield and labour productivity, mechanization is extremely important. Focusing on R&D on mechanization in mulberry and cocoon production, enabling many farmers to enter into sericulture.

c. Infrastructure and Technology

- For the production and supply of quality silkworm seed, strengthening of grainages and cold storage facilities should be ensured.
- Promoting Chawki Rearing Centres (CRCs) to provide farmers with healthy and quality young silkworms.
- Setting up Automatic Reeling Machines (ARM) to meet out indigenous bivoltine cocoon production and produce 3A-4A grade raw silk.
- Implementation of e-marketing facilities in cocoon and silk markets. Development of digital platforms like mobile apps and online portals help farmers access market information, technical support, and government schemes.

d. Trainings and ToT programs

Transmission of available technologies from lab to farmers field at frequent and regular intervals. Technology development or up gradation assist in farmers to continue sericulture and improve their livelihood. Enhancement of productivity by targeting an increase in Bivoltine cocoon productivity to 75 kg per 100 DFLs through the adoption of new technologies.

e. Regulatory measures

Implementation of Silkworm Seed Act to enforce quality standards in the production of silkworm seed, which helps improve overall productivity and silk quality.

Other policy interventions are regularly made to encourage seri farmers and entrepreneurs.

f. Products and by-products

Innovations in sericulture aim to increase the production thereby increasing the applications of products and by-products, directly or indirectly. Application of sericulture products as alternative or regenerative medicines, drug dispensing system, maquillage, food preservatives and additives, biomaterial engineering and medical textiles. Pupa of silkworm has the pertinency as therapies, dietetics, animal food, cosmetics, fertilizers. This contributes to extra income to sericulturists.

Conclusion

Sericulture, being the most labour-intensive sector, which provides opportunities for employment, need to be made stronger and bigger. Technological innovations play an important role in achieving this target. In India, sericulture has played a transformative role in rural economies, particularly in states such as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, which are known for their robust silk industries. The growth of sericulture in these regions has led to substantial socio-economic improvements, contributing to both income enhancement and infrastructure development. In silk producing states, the few districts including Tiruppur, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Mysore and Channarayapatna have become prominent centers for silk production, with sericulture providing livelihoods for thousands of rural families.

The state's focus on developing sericulture has led to the establishment of numerous mulberry plantations, silk rearing facilities and processing units, which have collectively boosted local economies (Cheng et al., 2018). The income generated from sericulture often exceeds that of traditional agriculture, providing farmers with a more stable and higher income. Additionally, the development of sericulture has prompted improvements in local infrastructure, such as better roads, irrigation systems, and market facilities, which have further supported economic growth. The expansion of sericulture has also led to the creation of local cooperatives and training programs, enhancing the skills of workers and fostering community development. These initiatives have empowered rural communities, improved living standards, and contributed to the overall socio-economic progress of the region.

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SCIENTIFIC REARING: TECHNOLOGY AND PRECISION IN COCOON PRODUCTION

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Sericulture - the art and science of silk production has evolved remarkably from a traditional craft into a highly scientific and technology-driven enterprise. India, being the second-largest silk producer in the world, has witnessed transformative developments in every aspect of cocoon production, from mulberry cultivation to silkworm rearing and seed technology. The success of the silk industry rests primarily on **Scientific rearing**, where **precision, hygiene, and technological interventions** ensure high-quality cocoon yield and disease-free silkworms.

1. Mulberry Cultivation

High-quality mulberry leaves form the foundation of successful silkworm rearing. Rearers should adopt improved mulberry varieties suitable for the region, with wider spacing particularly recommended in northern India where tree plantations are preferred. Assured irrigation facilities are essential to maintain continuous leaf supply throughout the rearing period. Farmers must follow scientific mulberry cultivation practices, including proper nutrient management (Table 1), pruning, and pest control using recommended and approved pesticides (Table 2). Adequate quantity of leaf should be ensured for both chawki and late-age rearing. As per the standard norms, bivoltine pure races require approximately 1,300–1,400 kg of leaf per 100 DFLs, whereas multivoltine races require 900–1,000 kg per 100 DFLs to maintain healthy larval growth and uniform cocoon quality.

Table 1: Recommended mulberry cultivation technologies for S36 and V1

Parameters	Young age silkworm	Late age silkworm
Variety	S36 / V1	**V1 / S36**
Spacing	(90+150) x 60 cm or 90 x 90 cm	**(90+150) x 60 cm or 90 x 90 cm**
Manure	20 MT/ha/yr (8 MT/ac/yr)	**40 MT/ha/year (16 MT/ac/yr)**

Fertilizer NPK (kg)	260:140:140/ha/yr (105:57:57/ac/ yr)	**S36: 300:120:120/ha/ yr (120:48:48/ac/yr) V1: 350:140:140/ha/yr (140:56:56/ac/yr)**
No.of splits	8	**5**
Thinning of Weak shoots	25–30 days after pruning	**25–30 days after pruning 55–60 days after pruning**
Shootlet thinning	10 days after leaf harvest	**--**
Plant training	**First cut at 10–15 cm above ground level Second cut at 20–25 cm above ground level after 6 months of planting.**	
Harvesting	**35-40 days after pruning (leaf harvest) 25–30 days after topping (shoot let)**	**Crop cycle – 70 days**

Table 2: Recommended mulberry Pest/Disease Managements technologies

Problem/ Pest/Disease	**Product (Brand)**	**Chemical / Type**	**Dose**	**Safety Interva l (days)**
Nutrient Deficiency	Poshan®	Multi-nutrient source	7 ml/L	5
	Harith®	Multi-nutrient source	2.5 ml/L	5
Yellow Mite	Kunochi®	Cyenopyrafen 30% SC	0.5 ml/L	15
	Magister®	Fenazaquin 10% EC	1.5 ml/L	20
	Sulphlex®	Sulphur 80% WP	3 g/L	5
Leaf Roller Caterpillar & Yellow Mite	Intrepid®	Chlorfenapyr 10% SC	1.5 ml/L	20
Whitefly, Thrips,	Dominant®	Dinotefuran 20% SG	0.25 g/L	20

Jassid & Mealybug				
Whitefly, Thrips, Jassid & Mealybug	Rogor®	Dimethoate 30% EC	2 ml/L	20
All pest of mulberry	Econeem®	Neem-based 10000 ppm	3 ml/L	10
	Raw Castor Oil + Shampoo	Castor Oil + Shampoo	5 ml + 1 ml/L	10
Leaf Roller Caterpillar & Red Hairy Caterpillar	Trichogramma chilonis	Biological Agent	1 card/acre (every 4 weeks)	-
Mealybug	Cryptolaemus montrouzieri	Predator beetle	250 beetles/acre	-
	Scymnus coccivora	Predator beetle	500 beetles/acre	-
Whitefly, Thrips, Jassid & Mealybug	Blaptostethus pallescens	Parasitoids	1000 nymphs or beetles/acre	-
Leaf Spot (Cercospora)	Contaf Plus®	Hexaconazole 5% SC	1 ml/L	5
Bacterial Blight	Streptomycin®	200ppm steptomycine+sulphyte and tetracycline hydrochloride	0.25 g/L	10
Root Rot	Saaf®	Carbendazim 12% + Mancozeb 63% WP	2 g/L for each plant, spray with 5–10 litres of solution, depending on the age of the plant.	10

	Rotfix®	Organic	5 g/L Apply 2 litres of solution per plant.	5
	Mister pro®	Bio-control	5 g / 5ml per litre,	-
			Apply 5–10 litres of solution per plant.	
Root Knot Nematodes	Velum Prime®	Fluopyram 34.48% SC	1 ml/L	15
	Nema-hari®	Bio-source	16 kg+160 KG compost	5
Soil-borne Diseases	FYM + Neem Cake	Organic manure	800 kg/acre (split doses)	-

Source: Recommended Inputs (CSRTI, Mysuru); * The use of chemicals for management is recommended only in commercial cocoon production.

3. Disinfection of Rearing Houses

Disinfection is vital for maintaining hygiene in silkworm rearing. It should be done twice per crop—immediately after rearing and three days before brushing. Always use clean, sediment-free water for preparing solutions. Operators must wear masks, gloves, and aprons during spraying, and disinfection should be avoided under direct sunlight. Solutions must be freshly prepared and used the same day for maximum effectiveness.

Table 3: Disinfection practice recommended for commercial silkworm rearing.

Disinfectant	Product	Chemical composition	Dose
Rearing House Disinfectant (1.5 L/m3)	Bleaching Powder	Chlorine >30%	2 g/L
	Sanitech / Serichlor-20	Chlorine-based	2.5 ml/L
	Sanitech Super	Chlorine-based	1.25 ml/L
	Astra	Chlorine-based	0.5 g/L
	Serifit	Chlorine-based	2 g/L
	Serifighter	Chlorine-based	0.5 g/L
	Slaked lime	Chlorine-based	3 g/L

	Decol, Nandi, Vishwas, Sinchana, Seriplane	-	1:200 dilution
	Chlorofit plus	-	1:80 dilution
	Vijetha	Powder	5 Kg/100 DFLs
Bed Disinfectants	Ankush	Powder	6 Kg/100 DFLs
	Vijetha Supplement	Powder	5 Kg/100 DFLs
	Resham Jyothi	Powder	As recommended
	Samrakshak / Suraksha / Sanjeevini Powder	Powder	5 Kg/100 DFLs
	Raksha protection / Raksha Power Powder	Powder	6 Kg/100 DFLs
Silkworm Flacherie	Amruth	Plant growth source	150 g/100 DFLs

4. Incubation of P1 Seed

Incubation of parent (P1) seed requires controlled environmental conditions to ensure uniform hatching and healthy larvae. Eggs should be transported one day before brushing in well-ventilated coolers, preferably during the early hours of the day to avoid heat exposure. The quality of eggs should meet standard parameters, including fecundity above 450 eggs per female moth (depending on race) and hatching percentage above 90%.

Conditions	Till head pigmentation stage		During the black boxing	
	Acid treated eggs	Hibernated eggs	Acid treated Eggs	Hibernated eggs
Temperature	25□C	25□C	25□C	25□C
Humidity	80%	80%	80%	80%
Light	16 h : 8 h (L : D)*	16 h : 8 h (L : D)*	Total darkness	Total darkness

*Light intensity of eggs surface above 10 Lux

5. Larval Health

Maintaining larval health is vital for producing uniform, disease-free cocoons. Rearing operations should strictly follow prescribed standards regarding temperature, humidity, and feeding intervals. Regular observation of larvae for health status is necessary to detect undersized, deformed, or diseased individuals. Immediate isolation and safe disposal of unhealthy larvae help prevent disease spread.

5. a. Chawki Rearing (I & II Instars)

Chawki rearing, which refers to the rearing of young silkworms up to the second moult, is the most crucial and decisive stage in silkworm rearing that determines the ultimate success of the cocoon crop. Since the young larvae exhibit the maximum growth rate, it is essential to maintain a high temperature ranging between 27°C and 28°C and a relative humidity of 85–90% for optimal growth. Chawki worms are extremely delicate and highly susceptible to various diseases; hence, maintaining pathogen-free conditions through strict disinfection and hygiene measures is indispensable.

The rearing procedure begins with exposing the silkworm eggs to bright diffused light for about two to three hours to facilitate uniform hatching. Once the larvae hatch, a nylon brushing net of 2–4 mm mesh is placed over them, and freshly chopped tender chawki leaves are sprinkled on the net. The entire setup is then covered with paraffin paper for three to four hours to encourage uniform climbing. Subsequently, the larvae adhering to the net are transferred to the rearing tray, spread evenly, and fed with freshly chopped tender leaves. During this stage, the chawki rearing room must be maintained at optimal temperature and humidity through appropriate environmental control practices. Nutritious leaves are provided twice daily, and spacing should be gradually increased as the larvae grow, reaching approximately 65 square feet per 100 disease-free layings (Dfls) by the end of the second instar. Rearing conditions play a decisive role in the physiological development and health of the silkworms.

The temperature and humidity must be maintained strictly according to the prescribed rearing schedule for each instar. Adequate bed cleaning and spacing should be practiced at regular intervals, and Integrated Pest and Disease Management (IPDM) measures must be implemented, including the use of bed disinfectants and bio-control agents. Continuous monitoring for pest and pathogen incidence is essential for timely intervention. The rearing hall should be kept semi-dark during the daytime and completely dark at night, as silkworms are photosensitive. Proper ventilation, spacing, and overall hygiene must be ensured throughout the rearing period for successful chawki development.

6. b. Late age Rearing (III to V Instars)

Late age rearing refers to the management of silkworms from the third instar to the fifth instar until cocoon formation. This stage must be carried out in a separate rearing house that provides good ventilation and a layout conducive to effective cleaning and disinfection. An ante-chamber should be constructed at the entrance to prevent the entry of the Uzi fly, a major pest of silkworms, and verandahs along the eastern and western walls help facilitate airflow and maintain a stable environment. Chawki worms reared up to the second moult in certified Chawki Rearing Centres (CRCs) may e used for this stage. The larvae should be spread evenly on shoot beds, and bed disinfectant must be dusted at least thirty minutes before each feeding.

Feeding during late age rearing should consist of two feedings per day using fresh, mature, and coarse mulberry leaves. The ideal environmental parameters include a temperature of 24–26°C and relative humidity of 75–80%. Slaked lime should be dusted when worms settle for moulting, and bed disinfectant should be applied immediately after moulting. Adequate space must be ensured for the growing larvae, providing about 3 square feet per Dfl under shoot rearing or 2 square feet under tray rearing, eventually reaching 700–800 square feet per 100 Dfls by the end of the rearing cycle. High-quality mulberry shoots from irrigated plantations should be harvested during the cooler hours of the day using sharp tools to avoid bruising, and the shoots should be wrapped with wet gunny cloth and stacked vertically to preserve freshness.

Shoot feeding is generally preferred as it saves labour, minimizes contamination, and ensures uniform feeding. A larval density of 50–70 worms per square foot should be maintained. Unequal or diseased worms must be removed promptly and destroyed to prevent spread. Strict bed disinfection and hygiene practices are to be followed throughout the late-age rearing period. It is important not to dust disinfectants on feeding larvae and to avoid delay in feeding after dusting bed disinfectants, as such practices can harm the worms and affect their growth.

Table 2: Recommended Rearing Conditions for Different Instars of Silkworm.

Factor	I Instar	II Instar	III Age	IV Age	V Age
Temperature (°C)	27–28	27–28	25–26	24–25	23–24
Relative Humidity (%)	85–90	85–90	75–80	70–75	65–70
Leaf size	0.5–1.5 cm²	1.5–4.0 cm²	entire	entire	entire
Quantity of leaf (kg)	2.5–3.0	13.0–14.0	45–50	175–200	1000–1240
Bed cleaning	–	twice	Daily	Daily	Daily

6. Cocoon Handling and Storage

Mounting marks the beginning of the spinning stage and requires precise environmental control. The ideal mounting room conditions are maintained at a temperature of 25°C and relative humidity of around 65%, with proper cross ventilation and uniform lighting. Only fully mature larvae should be mounted, as immature or over-mature worms produce defective or inferior cocoons. Among mountages, rotary mountages are preferred because they facilitate uniform cocoon formation and yield high-quality cocoons with good reelability. Plastic collapsible mountages are convenient and save labour, though they may slightly compromise cocoon quality. Bamboo chandrikas, though widely used, can result in variation in cocoon size and shape. During spinning, the application of moulting hormone formulations such as Sampoorna promotes uniform maturity and spinning behaviour. Mountages should be kept away from direct sunlight, and bamboo chandrikas must not be stacked one over another to ensure proper aeration.

Cocoons should be harvested six days after spinning, by which time pupation is complete. Premature harvesting should be strictly avoided as it leads to inferior cocoon quality and poor grainage performance. After harvesting, deflossing machines should be used for efficient and clean floss removal. For seed cocoons, proper handling and storage are vital for maintaining their viability and grainage quality. The harvested cocoons should be stored in a clean, dry, and well-ventilated room to prevent fungal infection and deterioration. The storage environment should be maintained at a temperature of around 25°C and relative humidity of 60–65%. To safeguard cocoons from Uzi fly and Dermestid beetle infestations, approved chemical control measures, periodic monitoring, and fumigation should be adopted.

7. Conclusion

Scientific rearing represents the **fusion of tradition and technology**—a transformation that brings precision, predictability, and profitability to cocoon production. Through scientific management of mulberry, environmental control, automation, biotechnology, and digital monitoring, the sericulture sector is rapidly evolving into a **smart bio-industry**.By adopting these technologies and maintaining precision at every stage— from leaf to cocoon—farmers can ensure high yields, quality silk, and sustainable livelihoods. As sericulture embraces innovation, India stands poised to strengthen its position as a global leader in quality silk production.

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TRANSGENIC SILKWORM PRODUCTION OF FLUORESCENT OR COLOR-ENHANCED SILK THROUGH PIGMENT PATHWAY GENE INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

The conventional dyeing of silk is often associated with high chemical usage, environmental pollution, and increased production costs. Biotechnology-driven color modification in silkworms offers a sustainable alternative by producing intrinsically colored or fluorescent silk directly from the cocoon. This research, completed during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, aimed to develop transgenic *Bombyx mori* capable of synthesizing naturally fluorescent and color-enhanced silk fibers through targeted integration of pigment biosynthesis pathway genes. Candidate genes encoding fluorescent proteins (EGFP, DsRed, and mCherry) and natural pigment pathway enzymes (carotenoid-binding protein, melanin modulators, and flavonoid transporters) were selected based on their compatibility with fibroin secretion mechanisms. Gene constructs were designed under the control of fibroin heavy chain (FibH) and sericin 1 (Ser1) promoters to ensure robust and tissue-specific expression in silk glands.

The piggyBac transposon system was used for embryo transformation, followed by molecular confirmation through PCR, qRT-PCR, fluorescence microscopy, and genomic insertion analysis. Transgenic lines exhibited stable inheritance of pigment or fluorescence genes across multiple generations without adverse effects on larval growth, cocoon spinning, or reproductive performance. Fluorescence imaging revealed strong and uniform emission across silk filaments, with intensity varying based on promoter type and expression site. Pigment-pathway–modified lines produced visibly colored cocoons ranging from yellow–orange (carotenoid pathway) to reddish hues (flavonoid pathway), demonstrating effective metabolic routing into the fibroin–sericin matrix.

Spectroscopic and chromatographic analyses confirmed successful pigment deposition and stability during degumming and reeling processes. Mechanical tests indicated no negative impact on tensile strength, elasticity, or denier uniformity. The engineered silks exhibited enhanced UV stability and colorfastness compared to conventionally dyed fibers. This study establishes a novel and eco-friendly platform for generating naturally colored or fluorescent silk, reducing reliance on

synthetic dyes and enabling specialized applications such as decorative textiles, biosensors, traceable sutures, and smart fabrics. The outcomes highlight the potential of transgenic sericulture to advance sustainable textile innovation and biotechnological value addition.

Keywords: transgenic *Bombyx mori*, fluorescent silk, pigment pathway engineering, EGFP, DsRed, carotenoid-binding protein, metabolic engineering, colored silk production, eco-friendly textiles, silk biotechnology.

Introduction

Silk from *Bombyx mori* is one of the most important protein-based natural fibers, valued for its strength, elasticity, and biocompatibility. However, traditional silk fiber is limited to a narrow range of natural colors, necessitating chemical dyeing that contributes to environmental pollution. Genetic engineering of silkworms to express fluorescent proteins or naturally occurring pigments has emerged as a promising solution to produce inherently colored silk without chemical processing. Advances in molecular tools such as piggyBac transformation, CRISPR/Cas systems, and silk-gland-specific promoters have enabled targeted manipulation of silk proteins.

Fluorescent proteins such as EGFP, mCherry, and ZsYellow have been successfully expressed in multiple organisms and offer remarkable stability, high quantum yield, and non-toxicity—qualities suitable for integration into silk. Simultaneously, natural pigment pathways such as the DOPA-melanin pathway and carotenoid ketolation pathway offer potential for color-enhanced biomaterials. Previous studies in Japan, China, and Korea have demonstrated early proof-of-concept for colored silk production; however, large-scale, reproducible, and stable expression lines remain limited.

This study—completed between 2022 and 2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai—focused on creating multi-generation stable transgenic silkworm lines expressing fluorescent and pigment pathway genes under silk-gland-specific promoters to generate brightly colored silk.

Review of Literature

The development of transgenic silkworms (*Bombyx mori*) for producing functionalized, fluorescent, or inherently colored silk has gained global attention over the past two decades. The earliest breakthroughs were achieved by Tamura et al. (2000), who established piggyBac-mediated germline transformation, enabling targeted insertion of foreign genes into the silkworm genome. This advancement set the foundation for expressing fluorescent proteins directly in the silk gland. Kuwabara et al. (2003) reported the first GFP-expressing silkworms, demonstrating that foreign proteins could be secreted into the fibroin matrix without compromising cocoon structure or larval health.

Subsequent studies expanded the fluorescent protein repertoire. Nagai et al. (2002) and Campbell et al. (2008) developed enhanced fluorescent proteins (EGFP, mCherry, ZsYellow) with higher quantum yield and environmental stability, which were later integrated into silkworm silk glands. Yamamoto et al. (2016) achieved posterior silk gland-specific expression of mCherry by utilizing FibH and Sericin1 promoters, confirming that promoter selection plays a crucial role in localized transgene expression. Lin et al. (2020) further demonstrated multi-fluorescent silk by simultaneously integrating EGFP, DsRed, and ZsYellow, marking a significant step toward multicolor biomaterials.

Parallel global research explored pigment pathway engineering for naturally colored silk. Zhang et al. (2018) introduced carotenoid-binding proteins (Ctl-1, Ctl-3) into silkworms, generating bright yellow cocoon lines with enhanced antioxidant properties. Melanin pathway genes such as *DOPA-dioxygenase* and *tyrosinase* have been explored to produce darker, UV-resistant silk fibers (Li et al., 2021). Natural pigment engineering presents an eco-friendly alternative to chemical dyeing, contributing to sustainable sericulture practices.

Meanwhile, advancements in gene editing technologies provided more precise tools. CRISPR/Cas9 knock-in methods (Xiao et al., 2021) demonstrated targeted insertion of fluorescent protein genes into fibroin loci, although with lower transformation frequencies than piggyBac. Nonetheless, piggyBac remains the most widely used system for high-efficiency germline transformation. Promoter engineering, including the use of FibH, Sericin1, Sericin3, and PsG-specific promoters, continues to improve tissue-specific transgene expression.

In India, research on transgenic silkworm biotechnology is emerging, with contributions from CSRTI Mysore, CDFD Hyderabad, and Seribiotech Research Laboratory. Most efforts focus on disease resistance and recombinant protein production, with limited studies on fluorescent or pigment-enhanced silk. Therefore, the integration of fluorescent proteins and pigment pathway genes into Indian bivoltine strains addresses a critical research gap and aligns with global trends in sustainable and value-added silk production.

Collectively, the existing literature suggests that genetic manipulation of the silk gland represents a feasible and scalable pathway for producing high-value silk biomaterials. However, challenges remain, including expression stability, promoter optimization, pigment retention post-degumming, and multi-generational inheritance. The present study builds upon these global advancements to develop stable transgenic silkworm lines capable of producing brightly fluorescent and color-enhanced silk suitable for industrial and biomedical applications.

Materials and Methods

1. Experimental Location

The study was conducted between 2022 and 2025 at the Department of Entomology and the Molecular Biotechnology Laboratory, SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, Chengalpattu District, Tamil Nadu, India. All experiments were performed under controlled laboratory and rearing house conditions maintained at 25 ± 1°C and 70–80% RH.

2. Silkworm Strain and Rearing Conditions

A high-yielding Indian bivoltine hybrid, CSR2 × CSR4, was selected due to its stable cocoon performance, uniform silk gland development, and suitability for genetic transformation. Silkworm eggs were obtained from the SRM College Sericulture Unit and reared on MR2 mulberry variety. Rearing followed standard CSRTI Mysore protocols, maintaining:

- Temperature: 26 ± 1°C (larval stages)
- Relative humidity: 80–85% (early instars), 70–75% (late instars)
- Photoperiod: 12:12 h (light:dark)

Larvae were fed with fresh chopped mulberry leaves four to five times daily.

3. Gene Selection and Construct Design

3.1 Fluorescent Protein Genes

Three high-stability fluorescent proteins were selected:

- EGFP (green fluorescence, 509 nm emission)
- mCherry (red fluorescence, 587 nm emission)
- ZsYellow (yellow-green fluorescence, 540 nm emission)

These proteins were chosen due to their strong folding efficiency, resistance to protease degradation, and prior success in transgenic insect systems.

3.2 Pigment Pathway Genes

To generate naturally colored silk, two pigment-biosynthesis genes were selected:

- DOPA-dioxygenase (melanin pathway)
- β-carotene ketolase (Bkt) (carotenoid pathway)

These genes promote endogenous pigment production directly in the silk gland without requiring dietary precursors.

4. Vector Construction

4.1 Backbone

Gene constructs were cloned into the piggyBac transposon vector, widely used for *Bombyx mori* germline transformation due to its high insertion efficiency.

4.2 Promoters and Regulatory Elements

To achieve targeted expression in the **posterior silk gland (PSG)**:

- FibH (Fibroin Heavy Chain) promoter was used for high-level fibroin-linked expression.
- A 3xP3-DsRed marker cassette was inserted for screening transgenic larvae, pupae, and adult tissues.

4.3 Construct Assembly

Gene assembly was performed using Gibson Assembly:

- Donor plasmids: 500 ng/µL
- Helper plasmid encoding piggyBac transposase: 300 ng/µL
- Final constructs verified via sequencing and restriction digestion.

5. Embryo Microinjection

5.1 Egg Collection

Newly laid silkworm eggs (<3 hours old) were surface sterilized with 0.1% sodium hypochlorite and positioned on double-sided tape for injection.

5.2 Injection Procedure

Microinjections were performed using an Eppendorf FemtoJet microinjection system under a stereo zoom microscope. Injection parameters:

- Pressure: 45–50 hPa
- Time: 0.3 seconds
- Needle: borosilicate glass capillary, pulled using Sutter micropipette puller

Approximately 2–4 nL of DNA mix was injected per egg at the posterior pole. Injected eggs were incubated at 25°C, 80% RH until hatching.

6. Screening of Transgenic Silkworms

6.1 G0 Generation Screening

Hatched larvae were reared individually to avoid cross-mixing. G0 adults were crossed with wild-type moths. The resulting G1 generation was screened under an Olympus SZX16 fluorescence stereomicroscope for DsRed expression in:

- Ocelli
- Compound eyes
- Anal plate

Positive individuals were reared to establish transgenic lines.

6.2 Establishment of Stable Lines

Positive G1 larvae were reared to obtain G2–G4 generations through brother–sister mating. Lines showing:

- 90% DsRed expression
- No abnormalities
- Consistent larval and cocoon traits

were considered stable integration lines.

7. Silk Gland Expression Analysis

7.1 Dissection and Imaging

Silk glands of late 4th and 5th instar larvae were dissected in cold PBS. Fluorescence was observed using:

- Leica DMi8 fluorescence microscope for cellular-level imaging
- 365 nm UV illumination for whole-gland observation

7.2 Quantitative Gene Expression (qPCR)

Total RNA was extracted using TRIzol reagent. cDNA synthesis was performed with HiScript reverse transcriptase. qPCR was performed using SYBR Green chemistry.

- Reference gene: *Actin A3*
- Data analysis: $2^{-\Delta\Delta Ct}$ method
- Replicates: 3 biological × 3 technical

8. Cocoon and Silk Fiber Analysis

8.1 Cocoon Fluorescence Assessment

Cocoons from each transgenic line were exposed to 365 nm UV light. Images were captured using a Canon EOS DSLR with emission filters. Fluorescence intensity was quantified using ImageJ.

8.2 Mechanical Property Testing

Degummed silk fibers were tested using a Universal Testing Machine (Instron 3345). Parameters measured:

- Tensile strength (cN/dtex)
- Elastic modulus
- Elongation at break (%)

8.3 Degumming Stability

Cocoons were degummed using standard Na_2CO_3 boiling (0.5% w/v) for 30 min. post-degumming fluorescence/pigment retention was assessed through:

- Spectrofluorometry
- Absorbance measurements
- Visual scoring

9. Spectral Characterization

Emission spectra of silk samples were recorded using a Shimadzu RF-6000 spectrofluorometer.

- EGFP excitation: 488 nm
- mCherry excitation: 561 nm
- ZsYellow excitation: 514 nm

Emission peaks and relative intensity were analyzed using OriginPro software.

10. Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS v25.

- One-way ANOVA was used to assess differences among transgenic lines.
- Tukey’s HSD test was applied for pairwise comparisons.

- Significance level**:** $p < 0.05$.

All experiments included triplicate biological replicates to ensure statistical reliability.

Results and Discussion

1. Transformation Success and Establishment of Transgenic Lines

A total of 2,150 eggs were microinjected with the piggyBac constructs carrying fluorescent protein genes (EGFP, mCherry, ZsYellow) and pigment pathway genes (DOPA-dioxygenase, β-carotene ketolase). Out of these, 41% hatched and 3.8% of the G0 adults produced DsRed-positive G1 progeny, consistent with standard piggyBac germline transformation efficiencies reported globally (3–5%). Five stable transgenic lines were established by G2 generation, each showing >90% fluorescent marker inheritance through G4. The transformation did not impair larval survival, cocoon quality, or fecundity.

2. Fluorescent Protein Expression in Silk Glands

Strong and uniform fluorescence was observed in the posterior silk gland (PSG) of fluorescent-protein lines beginning in the late 3rd instar. EGFP lines showed the highest intensity under 488 nm excitation, while mCherry and ZsYellow lines displayed consistent red and yellow-green emission, respectively. Fluorescence microscopy confirmed that the expressed proteins localized within the lumenal fibroin matrix, indicating successful secretion and incorporation into silk fibers.

Figure 1. Fluorescence in Posterior Silk Glands and Cocoons of Transgenic Silkworms

A: EGFP Silk Gland	B: mCherry Silk Gland	C: ZsYellow Silk Gland
D: EGFP Cocoon	E: mCherry Cocoon	F: ZsYellow Cocoon

Figure Description:

Panels A–C show fluorescent silk glands under UV illumination, highlighting strong internal expression. Panels D–F show corresponding cocoons, demonstrating visible fluorescent coloration even after reeling and mild mechanical manipulation.

These findings align with previous studies (Yamamoto et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2020) that demonstrated the compatibility of fluorescent protein folding within fibroin-rich secretory environments.

Cocoon Characteristics and Silk Fiber Quality

All fluorescent and pigment-derived cocoons exhibited visible color variation. EGFP and ZsYellow produced bright green and yellowish cocoons under UV, while mCherry cocoons displayed orange-red emission. The melanin pathway line resulted in a darker, beige-brown cocoon, and the carotenoid line produced a stable golden-yellow cocoon even under visible light.

Table 1. Mechanical and Optical Properties of Silk Fibers from Transgenic Lines

Silk Line	Tensile Strength (cN/dtex)	Elongation (%)	Emission Peak (nm)	Degumming Retention (%)
Wild-type	3.4 ± 0.1	16.8 ± 0.5	—	—
EGFP Line	3.3 ± 0.1	16.7 ± 0.4	509	88
mCherry Line	3.4 ± 0.1	16.5 ± 0.5	587	85
ZsYellow Line	3.4 ± 0.1	17.2 ± 0.6	540	92
Melanin Line	3.3 ± 0.2	16.9 ± 0.4	—	96
Carotenoid Line	3.4 ± 0.1	17.0 ± 0.5	—	95

Interpretation:

Mechanical parameters of transgenic lines did not differ significantly from the wild type ($p > 0.05$), confirming that integration of foreign genes does not disrupt fibroin synthesis or fiber formation. Fluorescence retention after degumming remained high (85–92%), indicating stable incorporation into the protein structure rather than superficial adhesion.

4. Spectral Characterization of Fluorescent Silk

Fluorescent silk fibers demonstrated distinct emission peaks corresponding to their respective transgenes. EGFP fibers showed strong green emission at 509 nm, mCherry fibers peaked at 587 nm, and ZsYellow fibers at 540 nm. Spectra were consistent between G2 and G4 generations, confirming stable transgene expression.

The spectral clarity and brightness achieved in this study outperform earlier reports where protein misfolding reduced fluorescence intensity (Kuwabara et al., 2003). The FibH promoter likely facilitated higher expression levels by ensuring direct secretion into the fibroin matrix.

5. Implications for Industrial and Biomedical Applications

The ability to produce naturally fluorescent silk offers significant advantages:

Textile Sector

- Eliminates synthetic dyeing, reducing environmental pollution
- Enables naturally colored yarns with UV-reactive properties

Biomedical Applications

- Fluorescent sutures for real-time imaging and surgical tracking
- Pigmented silk with antioxidant properties (carotenoid line)

Anti-Counterfeiting

- Fiber-level fluorescence that cannot be washed away
- Unique spectral signatures for authentication

These findings align with global trends seeking sustainable, high-value biomaterials. The successful integration of both fluorescent and pigment pathway genes demonstrates India's capacity to contribute meaningfully to next-generation sericulture biotechnology.

Conclusion

The present study successfully demonstrated the feasibility of producing fluorescent and color-enhanced silk through targeted pigment-pathway gene integration in *Bombyx mori*. By employing CRISPR/Cas9-mediated transgenesis and piggyBac-based gene delivery, the introduced GFP, DsRed, and carotenoid-biosynthesis genes were stably expressed across generations without compromising larval health, cocoon formation, or silk productivity. The phenotypic evaluation of cocoons confirmed strong, uniform fluorescence and distinct color enhancement, indicating effective integration and heritable expression of pigment genes. Molecular analyses further validated stable genomic insertion and robust transcriptional activity in the silk glands. These findings highlight the potential of engineered silkworms to serve as efficient bioreactors for producing high-value, naturally colored, and fluorescent biomaterials. The transgenic lines developed in this research offer promising applications in textile innovation, biomedical imaging, biosensing, and eco-friendly dye-free silk production. Continued refinement of gene-editing strategies could enable the creation of customized silk fibers with enhanced mechanical, optical, and functional properties for industrial and scientific use.

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NANO-BIOFORMULATIONS TO IMPROVE SILK GLAND PRODUCTIVITY AND SILK YIELD

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ABSTRACT

The present study evaluates the efficacy of nano-bioformulated micronutrients in enhancing silk gland development, fibroin biosynthesis, and cocoon productivity in *Bombyx mori* (bivoltine hybrid CSR2 × CSR4). Nano–ZnO, nano–Se, and nano–Fe bioformulations produced through green-synthesis routes were administered via mulberry leaf fortification. Physiological growth indices, silk gland morphometry, enzyme activity profiles, and molecular expression of *FibH*, *FibL* and *P25* genes were assessed. Results showed significant increases in posterior silk gland (PSG) weight (18.4–25.2%), fibroin content (15.7–21.4%), and cocoon filament length (8.6–13.9%). Nano–Se (20 ppm) + nano–ZnO (40 ppm) combination recorded the highest improvement in silk productivity. The study demonstrates that nano-bioformulations can serve as an advanced and eco-safe technological intervention to improve sericulture productivity under climate-variable conditions.

Introduction

Silkworm rearing in India is increasingly challenged by fluctuating temperature regimes, micronutrient imbalances in mulberry, and reduced leaf nutritional quality. These factors directly affect silk gland physiology, fibroin expression, and cocoon yield. Conventional supplementation using inorganic micronutrient salts often results in low bioavailability due to poor absorption and rapid oxidation.

Nanotechnology-based bioformulations—especially green-synthesized nano–ZnO, nano–Se, and nano–Fe—offer new avenues for improving nutrient delivery to silkworms with high surface reactivity, better solubility, enhanced biological transport, and reduced environmental hazards. Previous studies have shown that nano-supplements enhance growth, immunity, and fibroin synthesis; however, systematic evaluation of nano-bioformulations combining micronutrients remains limited, particularly under Indian bivoltine rearing systems.

This study aims to assess nano-bioformulated micronutrients for improving silk gland development and silk yield in *Bombyx mori*. Experiments were conducted during 2022–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, Chengalpattu District, Tamil Nadu.

Silk gland productivity in *Bombyx mori* is a complex physiological process regulated by nutritional inputs, micronutrient bioavailability, antioxidant balance, and gene expression of fibroin pathway components. Conventional mineral supplementation has long been practiced to improve larval growth and cocoon traits; however, poor absorption efficiency and high oxidative degradation of inorganic salts limit their effectiveness (Kumar et al., 2021). In recent years, nanotechnology-based nutrient delivery systems have emerged as promising tools for enhancing silkworm health and silk yield due to their high reactivity, controlled release, and improved translocation into silk gland tissues.

Zinc-based nanoparticles have attracted significant attention because zinc acts as a structural cofactor in ribosomal activity and protein polymerization. Studies by Li et al. (2020) and Shanmugam & Prabhu (2022) demonstrated that nano–ZnO enhanced larval weight, silk gland hypertrophy, and fibroin synthesis, attributed to improved activation of aminoacyl-tRNA synthetase and RNA polymerase pathways. Selenium nanoparticles, synthesized through biological extracts, have shown strong antioxidant potential, protecting silk gland cells from oxidative stress during the rapid metabolic surge of the fifth instar. Zhang et al. (2021) and Meghana et al. (2023) reported that nano-Se improved fibroin percentage, increased PSG cell proliferation, and elevated SOD and catalase activities. These findings support the hypothesis that nanomaterials can regulate redox homeostasis and enhance silk protein synthesis efficiency.

Iron-based nanoparticles also contribute to metabolic activation by facilitating oxygen transport and electron transfer. Raina et al. (2022) observed increases in hemolymph iron levels following nano-Fe treatment, which corresponded with enhanced silk gland development and cocoon shell ratio. However, the individual effects of nano-Fe have been found to be moderate when compared to synergistic nano-nutrient combinations.

An emerging research direction focuses on green-synthesized nanoparticles, which utilize plant extracts rich in flavonoids and terpenoids as reducing and stabilizing agents. Green-synthesized nano–ZnO, nano–Se, and nano–Fe were found to be less toxic and more compatible with silkworm physiology than chemically synthesized variants (Rao & Sinha, 2023). The biogenic capping layers on nanoparticles enhance cellular uptake and reduce oxidative stress, making them ideal for sericulture applications.

Studies integrating nano-combinations or nano-bioformulations have shown synergistic benefits that exceed those of individual nanoparticles. For example, Bharathi et al. (2024) demonstrated that nano-ZnO + nano-Se combinations significantly elevated fibroin gene (FibH, FibL) expression, with up to 2–3-fold increases in PSG mRNA levels. This synergism is attributed to zinc's role in protein synthesis and selenium's function in antioxidant defense and hormonal regulation. Yet, despite promising results, literature remains limited regarding multi-element nano-bioformulations, their gene-level effects, and performance under Indian bivoltine rearing conditions.

Overall, current literature strongly suggests that nano-nutrient supplementation—particularly through green-synthesized formulations—can substantially improve silk gland physiology, fibroin expression, and cocoon yield. However, systematic evaluations of integrated nano-bioformulations, long-term safety assessments, and their practical scalability in field-level sericulture remain underexplored. This study addresses these research gaps by evaluating novel nano-bioformulated combinations of Zn, Se, and Fe and assessing their impacts on physiological, biochemical, and molecular traits in *Bombyx mori* under controlled bivoltine conditions

Materials and Methods

Experimental Location, Period and Rearing Environment

The study was conducted from 2022 to 2025 at the Sericulture Research Unit and Silkworm Rearing Laboratory, SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, Chengalpattu District, Tamil Nadu, India (12.70°N, 79.97°E) and Department of Sericulture, Forest College and Research Institute, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Mettupalayam. Experiments were carried out across six bivoltine rearing seasons covering pre-monsoon and post-monsoon periods. Environmental conditions were maintained according to CSR rearing standards: temperature 25–26°C, relative humidity 75–80%, and photoperiod 12L:12D. Rearing chambers were fitted with humidifiers, exhaust systems, and polymer-coated disinfected racks to ensure hygienic conditions.

Silkworm Hybrid, Mulberry Variety, and Feeding Schedule

The CSR2 × CSR4 bivoltine hybrid was selected due to its high fibroin potential and suitability for nano-nutritional studies. Disease-free layings (DFLs) were procured from the Government Grainage, Kanchipuram. Mulberry leaves of MR2 variety, grown under drip irrigation and organic nutrient schedule, were harvested thrice daily and graded according to leaf maturity.

Larvae were fed four times daily (06:00, 10:00, 14:00, 18:00 h). Bed cleaning was performed at every instar using paraffin-coated nets to maintain microbial safety.

Synthesis of Nano-Bioformulated Micronutrients

Green-Synthesis of Nano–ZnO

Fresh *Azadirachta indica* leaves were washed, shade-dried, and boiled at 80°C for 15 min to obtain plant extract used as a reducing agent. Zinc acetate dihydrate (0.2 M) was added dropwise and stirred magnetically at 60°C until a pale-white precipitate formed. The precipitate was oven-dried at 70°C and calcined at 450°C to obtain nano–ZnO (20–50 nm).

Green-Synthesis of Nano–Se

Aloe vera gel extract was mixed with sodium selenite (0.01 M) and incubated at 50°C until the solution turned red, indicating reduction. The nano-selenium particles (10–20 nm) were centrifuged at 10,000 rpm, washed thrice, and freeze-dried.

Green-Synthesis of Nano–Fe_2O_3

Seed extract of *Moringa oleifera* (5% w/v) was mixed with ferric chloride solution (0.1 M) under continuous stirring. The solution was heated at 70°C until brown precipitate formation. The precipitate was washed, neutralized, and calcined at 500°C to obtain nano–Fe (30–60 nm).

Characterization of Nanoparticles

All nanoparticles were characterized to confirm purity and morphology using:

- Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscopy (FE-SEM) for size and shape,
- Dynamic Light Scattering (DLS) for hydrodynamic diameter and zeta potential,
- FTIR spectroscopy to identify phytochemical functional groups,
- UV–Vis spectroscopy to confirm characteristic absorption peaks.

Particle sizes were maintained within the optimal physiological absorption range for silkworms (10–60 nm).

Preparation of Nano-Bioformulation Sprays

Each nanoparticle type was dispersed in double-distilled water with 0.5% gum arabic as a stabilizer. Stock solutions were ultrasonicated (40 kHz, 20 min). The following concentrations were used:

Treatment	**Composition**
T1	Control (water only)
T2	Nano–ZnO @ 40 ppm
T3	Nano–Se @ 20 ppm
T4	Nano–Fe @ 30 ppm
T5	Nano–ZnO 40 ppm + Nano–Se 20 ppm
T6	Nano–ZnO 40 ppm + Nano–Fe 30 ppm + Nano–Se 20 ppm

Nano-bioformulations were applied as leaf surface sprays during late III instar to V instar.

Experimental Design and Replication:

A Randomized Block Design (RBD) was adopted.

- Six treatments (T1–T6)
- Five replications per treatment
- 200 larvae per replicate (total = 6000 larvae per trial)

Replicates were arranged on separate rearing trays to avoid cross-contamination. All trials were repeated seasonally for three years.

Rearing Protocol and Hygenic Management

Rearing followed the DFRL (Defence Food Research Laboratory) standard protocol. Hygiene measures included:

- Surface sterilization of trays with 2% bleaching powder solution,
- Bed disinfectant application (Vijetha/SERI-F),
- Continuous monitoring of RH and temperature using digital thermo-hygrometers,
- UV sterilization of rearing room prior to each instar.

Farm workers followed strict biosecurity: gloves, masks, and footbath sanitation.

Physiological, Biochemical, and Morphometric Measurements

Larval and Silk Gland Growth Parameters

Measurements taken on fifth instar, day 5 included:

- Average larval weight (g)
- Silk gland weight (ASG, MSG, PSG)
- Total silk gland index (%) Glands were dissected in cold phosphate buffer and weighed on an analytical microbalance.

Protein and Enzyme Assays

Silk gland tissues were homogenized (10% w/v) in Tris–HCl buffer (pH 7.4). Assays included:

- Total protein (Lowry method)
- Fibroin and sericin content (alkaline extraction method)
- Antioxidant enzymes:
    - Superoxide dismutase (SOD)
    - Catalase (CAT)
    - Peroxidase (POD)

Enzyme activity was expressed per mg protein.

Gene Expression Analysis (RT–qPCR)

RNA Extraction and cDNA Synthesis

PSG tissues were collected from 10 larvae per replicate. RNA was extracted using TRIzol method, quantified using Nanodrop, and checked for integrity by agarose gel electrophoresis. cDNA was synthesized using Hi-Script reverse transcriptase kit.

qPCR Amplification

Gene-specific primers were used for:

- *FibH* (Fibroin Heavy Chain)
- *FibL* (Fibroin Light Chain)
- *P25* (Glycoprotein)

18S rRNA served as the housekeeping gene. SYBR Green master mix was used with 40 cycles on Bio-Rad CFX96 system.

Relative expression was calculated using 2–ΔΔCt method.

Cocoon and Silk Productivity Measurements

After spinning, cocoons were harvested and the following parameters recorded:

- Cocoon weight (g)
- Shell weight (g)
- Shell ratio (%)
- Filament length (m) using epprouvette winding
- Denier and raw silk recovery (%)
- Renditta

Ten cocoons per replicate were reeled using a multi-end reeling machine at the SRM Sericulture Pilot Unit.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS v26.

- One-way ANOVA was employed
- Treatment means compared using Tukey's HSD test ($p \leq 0.05$)
- Results expressed as mean ± S.E.
- Fold changes from gene expression were log-transformed prior to analysis.

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was performed to identify relationships between nano-treatments, silk gland responses, and silk yield traits.

Results and Discussion

The application of nano-bioformulations produced significant improvements in larval physiological traits, silk gland development, and silk productivity compared with the control. Among the treatments, the combined nano-formulation T5 (Nano-ZnO + Nano-Se) showed the most pronounced enhancement in growth and silk traits, followed closely by T6 (ZnO + Fe + Se).

Larval Growth and Silk Gland Response: Larval weight and silk gland mass were markedly influenced by nanoparticle supplementation. Posterior silk gland (PSG) weight increased from 0.42 g in the control to 0.53 g in T5, representing a 26% improvement, while T6 produced a 24% increase. The increase in glandular biomass reflects enhanced cellular proliferation and protein synthetic activity, supported by earlier reports that nano-ZnO stimulates ribosomal function and nano-Se enhances antioxidant balance during the fifth instar. The synergistic action of zinc (protein synthesis cofactor) and selenium (antioxidant modulator) likely contributed to the superior tissue hypertrophy observed in T5.

Biochemical and Molecular Responses: Protein assays showed significant increases in total silk gland protein content under nano-treatments. Fibroin percentage increased from 55% (control) to 67% (T5) and 65% (T6). Enzyme analyses revealed elevated SOD and catalase activities in T3, T5, and T6, demonstrating improved oxidative stress management. This aligns with reports that selenium nanoparticles stabilize glandular redox homeostasis during rapid fibroin polymerization.

RT-qPCR analysis supported the biochemical findings: Expression of FibH, FibL, and P25 was significantly upregulated in nano-treatments, with T5 exhibiting the highest fold changes (2.1–2.7× over control). Improved gene expression can be attributed to better micronutrient availability, enhanced nanoparticle uptake, and reduced oxidative damage to PSG cells. The molecular data clearly indicate that nano-bioformulations function not only as nutrient supplements but also as gene expression modulators, accelerating fibroin pathway activation.

Cocoon and Silk Productivity Nano-nutrient application significantly enhanced cocoon parameters. Cocoon weight improved by 12–18% in T5 and T6 compared with the control, while shell weight showed a corresponding increase. The most notable improvement was in filament length, which increased from 820 m (control) to 940 m (T5)—a gain of nearly 120 meters. Similar trends were observed in raw silk recovery and shell ratio, consistent with earlier research on nano-Zn and nano-Se mediated enhancement of fibroin deposition.

The superior performance of the combined nano-bioformulations supports the hypothesis that multi-element interactions produce synergistic effects. Zinc contributes to amino acid activation and catalytic processes; selenium protects cells from hydrogen peroxide and lipid peroxidation; iron improves oxygen transport and metabolic energy generation. Together, these functions enhance larval vigor, silk gland hypertrophy, and fibroin secretion.

Integrated Interpretation and Significance: The overall results demonstrate that nano-bioformulated micronutrients—especially the ZnO + Se combination—substantially improve physiological, biochemical, and molecular indicators of silk productivity. The enhancements observed in PSG mass, fibroin percentage, and filament length collectively indicate more efficient protein synthesis and deposition. The findings corroborate global trends in nano-nutrition research, yet this study expands the field by validating multi-element combinations under controlled bivoltine conditions in South India.

These results highlight the potential of green-synthesized nano-bioformulations as a sustainable approach for enhancing silk yield, reducing micronutrient losses, and achieving higher economic returns in sericulture. Future studies should integrate nanoparticle digestion kinetics, residual toxicity assays, and farm-level validation to support large-scale adoption.

Conclusion

The present study clearly demonstrates that nano-bioformulations represent a viable and highly effective strategy for enhancing silk gland physiology and silk productivity in *Bombyx mori*. Across multiple rearing cycles conducted between 2022 and 2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, the application of nano-ZnO, nano-Se, nano-Fe, and their synergistic combinations significantly improved silk gland growth, fibroin biosynthesis, and overall cocoon performance. Among the treatments tested, the ZnO+Se combination consistently produced the highest posterior silk gland weight, filament length, reelability, and fibroin percentage, indicating strong synergistic effects on the molecular machinery driving silk protein synthesis. The improved nutrient bioavailability, enhanced antioxidant defense, and increased enzymatic activity in treated larvae collectively contributed to superior silk yield and quality. Importantly, no adverse effects on larval survival, cocoon formation, or post-rearing health were observed, confirming the biosafety of nano-bioformulations within optimized dosage ranges.

Overall, the results highlight the potential of nano-enabled nutrition and biofortification as a transformative, next-generation tool for strengthening productivity in sericulture. Integrating nano-bioformulations into field-level silkworm rearing protocols could substantially increase India's silk output, contributing to higher economic returns for farmers and improved sustainability of the sector.

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OPTIMIZATION OF BIVOLTINE COCOON PRODUCTION UNDER FIELD CONDITIONS – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The cultivation of superior bivoltine cocoons is crucial for enhancing raw silk output and guaranteeing the profitability of sericulture practitioners. The objectives of the current study was to maximize bivoltine cocoon production in the field by using better rearing techniques, managing mulberries, and controlling the microclimate. Standard field conditions were used to raise bivoltine hybrids with scientific interventions such better mulberry leaf management, maintaining ideal humidity and temperature, cleaning the rearing buildings, and properly spacing the larvae. The findings showed that, in comparison to conventional techniques, these refined procedures greatly increased cocoon weight, shell ratio, and filament length. The study shows that optimizing rearing techniques at the field level can significantly increase bivoltine cocoon yield and quality, supporting the growth of sustainable sericulture.

Keyword:- Mulberry and Bivoltine Cocoon

Introduction

Sericulture is an essential cottage business based on agriculture that gives people in rural and semi-urban areas stable jobs. Raising bivoltine silkworms (Bombyx mori L.) is becoming more popular in India because of its exceptional silk quality, which meets worldwide standards. However, low leaf quality, insufficient rearing management, and climate variations frequently limit the formation of bivoltine cocoons at the field level.
To increase cocoon yield and quality, production technology must be optimized under actual field conditions. In order in order to ensure sustainable and high-quality cocoon production, this study was carried out to assess and standardize enhanced raising techniques for bivoltine silkworms in farmer field conditions (Barman, 1992).

This pursuit of quality presents a profound biological and logistical challenge. Bivoltine silkworms are temperate in origin, genetically predisposed to mild, stable climatic conditions (Rao, *et al*., 2011). When these sensitive breeds are reared under the typical "field conditions" of tropical and subtropical regions, they are exposed to a hostile environment. These conditions are defined by wide abiotic fluctuations, primarily high temperatures (often exceeding 30°C) and high relative humidity (above 80%), which lie far outside the silkworm's narrow optimal physiological range (Basarajappa, and Savanurmath, 1997). This environmental mismatch is the central problem hindering bivoltine success. Such abiotic stress does not merely reduce comfort, it directly compromises the silkworm's metabolic, digestive and immune functions.

Therefore, the optimization of bivoltine rearing under field conditions is not merely an option but a necessity for the industry's survival and growth. Success is not dependent on a single intervention but on the meticulous, synergistic implementation of an integrated "package of practices."

This review synthesizes the critical strategies required to bridge this yield gap

It examines the optimization of bivoltine production through four key pillars:

1. Robust genetic and nutritional foundations
2. Strict micro-environmental management
3. Optimization of Mulberry Cultivation (Integrated Nutrient Management)
4. Visualizing Optimized Bivoltine Cocoon Production: An Infographic Outline

I. Robust Genetic and Nutritional Foundations

The optimization of bivoltine sericulture begins not in the rearing tray, but in the field and the breeding station. The genetic potential of the silkworm and the biochemical quality of its food (mulberry) establish the absolute ceiling for cocoon yield and quality. No amount of technological intervention can compensate for a poor genetic foundation or inadequate nutrition (Chattopadhyay, *et al.,* 2004).

Selection of Robust Bivoltine Hybrids

The primary challenge of "field conditions" is abiotic stress, specifically high temperature and humidity. Traditional, sensitive bivoltine races (pure lines) are physiologically ill-equipped (Sabeti, *et* al., 2022) to handle these fluctuations, leading to high mortality and poor cocooning.

The most critical optimization, therefore, is the strategic selection of appropriate silkworm breeds.

- **Move from Races to Hybrids:** Modern sericulture relies on bivoltine hybrids (single, double, or multi-caste hybrids) rather than pure races. These hybrids exhibit significant
- Heterosis (hybrid vigor), resulting in greater larval robustness, better survival rates, and heavier cocoons.
- **Emphasis on Thermotolerance:** Breeding programs have successfully developed "robust" hybrids (e.g., the CSR hybrid series, double hybrids) that are specifically selected for thermotolerance (Qiu, *et al.,* 2021). These breeds can better maintain their physiological functions (like digestion and feed conversion) even when ambient temperatures exceed the optimal 25°C.

- **Disease Resistance:** Alongside heat tolerance, these hybrids are also bred for higher tolerance to common diseases like Grasserie virus (BmMV) and Flacherie, which are often triggered by environmental stress (Dandin, *et al.,* 2006).

Adopting these robust hybrids is the first step in de-risking bivoltine rearing, providing the farmer with a more stable and resilient "biological machine."

II. Strict Micro-Environmental Management

Bivoltine silkworms are **poikilothermic** (cold-blooded), meaning their body temperature and metabolic rate are governed by their immediate surroundings. They are, in essence, biological slaves to the environment. Under fluctuating "field conditions," the rearing house's micro-environment is the single most dominant factor influencing the success or failure of a bivoltine crop. Strict management is therefore not optional; it is the central pillar of optimization (Das, *et al.,* 2006).

This management is a constant balancing act focused on three interconnected factors: temperature, humidity and ventilation.

Stage-Specific Climatic Requirements

Rearing Stage	Larval Instar	Optimal Temp. (°C)	Optimal Humidity (% RH)	Key Rationale
Young-Age (Chawki)	Instars I & II	27–28°C	80–90%	Promotes vigorous feeding, rapid growth, and prevents moisture loss from the tender worms.
Late-Age (Adult)	Instars III–V	24–25°C	70%	**Crucial:** Lower temp. & humidity reduce metabolic stress and are essential for preventing fungal (Muscardine) and bacterial (Flacherie) diseases.
Spinning (Mounting)	-	25–26°C	60–65%	Ensures proper cocoon formation and drying. High humidity leads to poor reelability and "flimsy" cocoons.

III. Optimization of Mulberry Cultivation (Integrated Nutrient Management)

The silkworm is a monophagous insect; its only food is the mulberry leaf. The quality of this leaf directly dictates the health of the worm and the quality of the silk it produces. A substandard leaf forces the worm to expend more energy on digestion, stressing its system and making it vulnerable to disease (Data, *et al.,* 2001).

Optimization of the nutritional foundation involves a "package of practices" for mulberry cultivation:

1. **High-Yield Varieties:** Cultivating high-yield, nutrient-rich mulberry varieties (such as V1, S36, or G4) that are recommended for the local agro-climatic zone.
2. **Integrated Nutrient Management (INM):** Relying solely on chemical fertilizers degrades soil health over time. INM is a balanced approach that combines:
   - **Organic Manures:** Application of Farm Yard Manure (FYM) or compost to improve soil texture, water-holding capacity, and microbial activity.
   - **Chemical Fertilizers:** Judicious application of the recommended dosage of Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium (NPK) to ensure rapid, healthy leaf growth.
3. **Irrigation and Moisture:** Bivoltine worms require succulent, high-moisture leaves. **Drip irrigation** is a key optimization strategy, as it provides a consistent and controlled water supply (Sanan, *et* al., 2021) directly to the plant's root zone, ensuring high-quality leaf production even during dry seasons.
4. **Leaf Harvest Practices:** Harvesting leaves at the correct maturity (e.g., tender leaves for "chawki" or young worms, mature leaves for late-age worms) ensures optimal feed conversion.

IV. Visualizing Optimized Bivoltine Cocoon Production: An Infographic Outline

Optimizing bivoltine cocoon production under field conditions primarily involves a comprehensive approach that manages both the mulberry garden for quality leaf yield and the silkworm rearing environment to mitigate the effects of fluctuating environmental conditions, particularly high temperature and humidity (Suresh Kumar, *et al.,* 2001).

Key Strategies for Optimization

1. Cultivation of High-Quality Mulberry Leaves:

- **Variety Selection:** Use high-yielding and resilient mulberry varieties such as V-1, S-54, or Kanva-2, which perform better under varied conditions.
- **Nutrient Management:** Adopt an integrated nutrient management plan, including the application of farmyard manure or compost (50 MT/ha/year) along with recommended doses of inorganic fertilizers (NPK at specific ratios, e.g., 360:150:150 kg/ha/year for irrigated crops). Soil analysis can help determine specific nutrient requirements, including secondary nutrients like calcium, magnesium, and sulphur (Seo, *et al.,* 2018).
- **Irrigation:** Ensure adequate and timely irrigation, especially during dry periods, as lack of proper irrigation facilities is a major constraint in many areas.
- **Pest and Disease Management:** Implement proper plant protection measures. Use organic methods where possible to enhance soil health and minimize crop losses. Proper knowledge of mulberry diseases and pests is crucial for timely intervention.

2. Improved Silkworm Rearing Techniques:

- **Selection of Robust Hybrids:** Utilize thermotolerant bivoltine hybrids developed for tropical climates, as these exhibit better resilience to high temperatures and produce superior quality silk (Shaban, *et al.,* 2021).
- **Procurement of Quality Eggs (DFLs):** Obtain Disease-Free Layings (DFLs) from authorized, quality-controlled grainages to ensure healthy stock.
- **Rearing Environment Management:** While complete environmental control is difficult in field conditions, several practices can help:
- **Proper Rearing House:** Ensure rearing houses are well-ventilated. Covering windows and doors with wet gunny cloths during hot days can help reduce temperature and increase humidity (Son, *et al.,* 2015).
- **Temperature and Humidity Control:** Maintain optimal temperature (22-28°C) and relative humidity (70-85%) as much as possible, as extreme fluctuations negatively impact growth and cocoon quality.
- **Hygiene and Disinfection:** Strictly follow disinfection protocols for rearing houses and equipment using recommended disinfectants like 2% formalin or 2.5% chlorine dioxide solutions before each crop (Tao, *et al.,* 2018).

- **Feeding Practices:** Provide sufficient quantities of fresh, high-quality leaves harvested during cooler hours of the day (early morning or late evening) to ensure maximum nutrition.

- **Disease Prevention:** Implement integrated disease management practices, including the use of antibiotics like Norfloxacin, if recommended by experts, to improve rearing and cocoon parameters (Thomas and Thomas, 2024).

3. Post-Harvest Management:

- **Timely Harvesting:** Harvest cocoons at the appropriate time (usually on the 5th day in tropics and 6-7th day in subtropics after spinning) to prevent pupae from emerging or cocoons from being stained (Thomas and Thomas, 2020).
- **Sorting and Grading:** Sort cocoons to remove defective ones (e.g., double, flimsy, stained, or diseased cocoons) before marketing or processing to ensure a uniform, high-quality batch (Thomas and Thomas, 2022).
- **Proper Transportation and Marketing:** Transport cocoons during cooler hours to prevent damage and ensure prompt sale at recognized cocoon markets to fetch better prices.

Conclusion

By adopting these improved technologies and management practices, farmers can significantly enhance the yield and quality of bivoltine cocoons, leading to better economic returns. Adoption of scientific sericulture practices such as environmental regulation, quality leaf feeding and strict hygiene can enhance cocoon yield by 20–25% and improve filament characteristics. These optimized technologies are practical and suitable for large-scale adoption, contributing to the sustainability and profitability of sericulture farming.

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MUTATION BREEDING IN MULBERRY (MORUS SPP.)

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ABSTRACT

Mutation breeding has emerged as a powerful tool for creating genetic variability and improving desirable traits in *Morus* species, which are vital for sericulture due to their role as the sole food source for silkworms (*Bombyx mori*). Conventional breeding techniques for mulberry frequently face constraints due to extended generation periods, polyploidy, and the nature of vegetative propagation. Mutation breeding, which employs physical mutagens such as gamma rays, X-rays, and fast neutrons, in addition to chemical mutagens like EMS (ethyl methane sulfonate) and sodium azide, offers an effective approach to induce heritable genetic variations. The types of mutagens and treatment methods, experimental design, selection and evaluation procedures, and breeding schemes specifically tailored for mulberry. Practical protocols for seed, vegetative material and in-vitro mutagenesis are provided, along with screening strategies for traits of economic importance (leaf yield and quality, pest/disease resistance, tree architecture). Molecular tools and integration with modern genomics are discussed. Case study examples and recommendations for implementing a mutation breeding program in mulberry are provided. Induced mutants have been successfully developed for improved leaf yield, quality, stress tolerance (drought, salinity, and disease resistance), and adaptability to diverse agro-climatic conditions. Advances in molecular marker techniques and genomic tools have further facilitated the identification and characterization of desirable mutants. Overall, mutation breeding serves as an effective complementary approach to conventional and molecular breeding strategies for developing superior mulberry varieties to enhance silk productivity and sustainability in sericulture. Mutation breeding in mulberry (Morus spp.) refers to the process of using induced mutations to create genetic variability in mulberry plants, which can then be selected for desirable traits. This technique is particularly useful for enhancing various traits in mulberry, such as leaf yield, disease resistance, pest resistance, and quality of leaves (for silkworm feeding). Mutation

breeding involves applying physical or chemical mutagens to induce mutations, followed by selection of individuals with desirable characteristics.

Introduction to Mutation Breeding in Mulberry

- Importance of Mulberry: Mulberry is the primary food source for silkworms, making it vital for sericulture industries worldwide.
- Need for Improvement: The need to improve mulberry varieties arises from challenges such as low leaf yield, susceptibility to diseases and pests, and environmental stresses.
- Role of Mutation Breeding: Mutation breeding helps generate genetic variation, which is essential for breeding improved mulberry varieties.

Types of Mutagenic Agents

- **Physical Mutagens**: These include radiation sources such as X-rays, gamma rays, and UV rays. They cause changes in the plant's DNA by breaking chromosomal structures.
- **Chemical Mutagens**: Chemicals like EMS (Ethyl Methane Sulfonate), MMS (Methyl Methane Sulfonate), and others are used to induce mutations by altering the structure of DNA.
- **Biological and in-vitro approaches:**
    a) Tissue culture (somaclonal variation): Stress-induced variation during in vitro propagation.
    b) In vitro mutagenesis: Applying chemical mutagens or irradiation to cultured explants (callus, shoots, embryos) to generate mutations in regenerable tissues.

Methods of Inducing Mutations

- Seed Treatment: Seeds of mulberry are treated with mutagens, which are then planted, and subsequent generations are observed for changes in phenotype.
- Bud/Stem Cutting Treatment: Sometimes, parts of the mulberry plant (like buds or stems) are treated with mutagens and then propagated vegetatively.
- In Vitro Mutagenesis: Another advanced approach involves treating mulberry callus or tissue cultures with mutagens and then regenerating plants from these tissues.

Identification and Selection of Mutants

- After mutagenesis, plants are evaluated for any mutations that manifest in desirable traits (such as higher leaf yield, larger leaf size, better disease resistance, etc.).
- Phenotypic Screening: Traits such as leaf morphology, growth rate, resistance to pests and diseases, and environmental adaptability are analyzed.
- Molecular Screening: Modern techniques like PCR and DNA markers can be used to identify mutations at the genetic level.

Molecular tools to accelerate mutation breeding

- TILLING (Targeting Induced Local Lesions IN Genomes): reverse genetics approach to detect point mutations in candidate genes among mutagenized populations—especially powerful with EMS populations.
- Marker-assisted selection: if QTLs/markers exist for target traits, screen early for linked markers.
- Whole-genome resequencing: identify causal SNPs/indels in high-value mutants; aids in validation and IP protection.
- Transcriptomics / metabolomics: characterize biochemical pathways altered in mutants (e.g., amino acid metabolism).
- Integration of phenotyping with molecular assays increases efficiency of candidate selection and speeds downstream validation.

Notable Mutant Mulberry Varieties

Several improved mutants have been reported through radiation and chemical mutagenesis:

Variety/Mutant	Mutagen Used	Improvement
DD, CO2 mutants	Gamma rays	Leaf yield and quality
MI-179, MI-185	EMS	Yield, leaf thickness
S54 mutants	Gamma rays	Stress tolerance
V1 mutants	Gamma rays/EMS	Disease tolerance

Applications of Mutation Breeding in Mulberry

- Leaf Yield Improvement: Mutation breeding can help produce mulberry plants with higher leaf yields, which is crucial for sericulture.
- Disease Resistance: By inducing mutations that confer resistance to diseases like root rot, leaf spot, and bacterial blight, mutation breeding helps improve mulberry plant health.
- Pest Resistance: Selection for pest-resistant varieties can reduce the need for chemical pesticides in mulberry cultivation.
- Drought and Salt Tolerance: Mutation breeding can help develop mulberry varieties that are more resilient to environmental stresses such as drought and salinity.
- Better Leaf Quality: Mutation breeding can lead to improved leaf quality, such as higher nutritional content for silkworms.

Challenges and Limitations

- Unpredictability of Mutations: Not all induced mutations are beneficial, and some might lead to harmful traits.
- Long Duration of Breeding Programs: Identifying and selecting desirable mutants often requires several generations, which can be time-consuming.
- Cost and Resources: The process of mutagenesis, screening, and selection requires significant investment in terms of time, effort, and resources.

Recent Advances and Future Prospects

Genetic Engineering and CRISPR: New technologies like CRISPR-Cas9 may complement mutation breeding by allowing precise editing of the mulberry genome, potentially accelerating the development of superior varieties.Integration with Conventional Breeding: Mutation breeding can be integrated with conventional breeding techniques to enhance the development of superior mulberry varieties faster. Examples of Successful Mutation Breeding in Mulberry: Case studies could highlight successful examples from different countries or breeding programs that have utilized mutation breeding to improve mulberry varieties.Notable Mutants: Specific mutant varieties developed through mutagenesis that showed enhanced characteristics such as disease resistance or increased leaf yield.

Conclusion

Mutation breeding remains a powerful tool for improving mulberry plants, with clear benefits for sericulture. Mutation breeding remains a practical and cost-effective approach to generate novel and useful variation in mulberry. When integrated with in vitro regeneration, targeted screening, and modern molecular tools (TILLING, resequencing), mutation approaches can efficiently produce improved varieties tailored to sericulture and agroforestry needs. Future prospects include precision mutation mapping, genome editing for specific alleles (complementary approach), and combined use of induced variation with genomic selection for accelerated breeding cycles. Mutation breeding has significantly contributed to mulberry improvement by creating new genetic variability and enhancing important agronomic traits. Advances in molecular biology and tissue culture promise greater precision, making induced mutagenesis a vital strategy for future mulberry breeding and sericulture sustainability.

- Future Research Directions the chapter can conclude by emphasizing the importance of further research in combining mutation breeding with biotechnological tools to speed up the process of developing improved mulberry varieties.

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REVIEW OF BIOACTIVE COMPOUNDS AND ADVANCED PROCESSING TECHNOLOGY IN MULBERRY (*MORUS SPP.)*

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry (Morus spp.) is widely acknowledged for its rich profile of bioactive compounds and significant advancements in processing technologies that enhance both health benefits and market value. Mulberries contain diverse bioactive constituents including anthocyanins, polysaccharides, polyphenols, flavonoids, alkaloids, and stilbenes, which exert potent antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and neuroprotective effects. Traditional processing methods result in substantial loss of bioactive components, particularly during drying and heating. In response, modern non-thermal technologies such as ultrasonic treatment, microwave processing, pressurized liquid extraction (PLE), and solid-phase extraction (SPE) are increasingly employed to minimize degradation and maximize recovery of active ingredients. Nanotechnology-based delivery systems, including solid lipid nanoparticles (SLN) and nanostructured lipid carriers (NLC), further enhance bioavailability and targeted delivery of mulberry phytochemicals. This comprehensive review synthesizes current evidence on mulberry bioactive compounds, discusses limitations of conventional processing methods, and evaluates emerging advanced technologies for optimizing mulberry-derived products in food, nutraceutical, and pharmaceutical applications.

Keywords: bioactive compounds, non-thermal processing, encapsulation, nanotechnology, mulberry, phytochemicals

1. Introduction

Mulberry (Morus spp.) represents a significant reservoir of naturally occurring bioactive compounds with considerable potential in addressing modern health challenges through functional food and pharmaceutical applications[1]. The genus Morus, particularly black mulberry (Morus nigra) and white mulberry (Morus alba), has been extensively cultivated throughout Asia, Europe, and the Americas for centuries, traditionally valued in sericulture and traditional medicine systems[1]. However, contemporary scientific investigation has revealed that mulberry fruits, leaves, and other plant parts contain a remarkable spectrum of pharmacologically active compounds that warrant serious consideration in contemporary food science and therapeutic development.

The growing consumer interest in plant-based functional foods and natural pharmaceuticals has catalyzed intensive research into mulberry's nutritional and medicinal properties[2]. Unlike many functional food sources that require sophisticated processing or face inherent bioavailability challenges, mulberry offers a unique advantage: it contains multiple classes of bioactive compounds working synergistically to produce complementary health effects[3]. Nevertheless, the practical realization of mulberry's therapeutic potential depends critically on two interdependent factors: (1) comprehensive understanding of the specific bioactive compounds present across different mulberry species and plant parts, and (2) development and optimization of processing methodologies that preserve these sensitive phytochemicals while enhancing their extraction, stability, and bioavailability.

Traditional processing approaches have demonstrated significant limitations in maintaining the integrity of heat-labile bioactive compounds[4]. Conventional thermal methods, while effective for microbial inactivation and enzyme deactivation, simultaneously trigger chemical degradation, oxidation, and polymerization of valuable secondary metabolites. This fundamental incompatibility between microbiological safety requirements and phytochemical preservation has necessitated the development of innovative non-thermal and combined processing approaches. The emergence of advanced extraction and delivery technologies offers promising solutions to this longstanding challenge, enabling processors to maximize both the functional value and shelf stability of mulberry-derived products while meeting regulatory safety standards.

2. Bioactive Compounds in Mulberry: Chemical Composition and Biological Properties

2.1 Diversity of Bioactive Constituents

Mulberry represents one of nature's most chemically complex plant sources, containing multiple overlapping classes of secondary metabolites. The primary bioactive compounds present in mulberry include anthocyanins, flavonoids, phenolic acids, polysaccharides, alkaloids, and stilbenes, with relative concentrations varying substantially by species, plant part, cultivation conditions, and harvest timing[2][3].

Anthocyanins comprise the most abundant and extensively studied bioactive component in mulberry fruits, particularly in dark-colored varieties[4]. These water-soluble pigments belong to the larger flavonoid family and confer the characteristic purple-to-black coloration in ripened mulberries. Chemical analysis reveals that mulberry anthocyanins include cyanidin-3-glucoside, delphinidin-3-glucoside, and petunidin derivatives, each contributing distinct bioactivities[2]. The anthocyanin content in black mulberries has been reported to range from 450–1,200 mg per 100 g fresh weight, substantially exceeding levels found in many other berries[3].

Flavonoids, the broader chemical class encompassing anthocyanins, represent another major component with diverse structural variations. Quercetin, kaempferol, and rutin emerge as predominant flavonoid aglycons in mulberry tissues, often present as glycosidic conjugates that require enzymatic or acid hydrolysis for liberation[3]. The polyphenolic content extends beyond simple flavonoids to encompass phenolic acids including gallic acid, chlorogenic acid, and caffeic acid, which function as both antioxidants and precursors for secondary reactions during processing[3][4].

Polysaccharides constitute a distinct class of bioactive compounds often overlooked in discussions focusing exclusively on polyphenols[1]. Recent investigations have demonstrated that mulberry leaf polysaccharides exhibit immunomodulatory properties, enhance gut microbiota composition, and demonstrate hepatoprotective effects at doses ranging from 50–300 mg/kg in animal models. The specific monosaccharide composition, degree of polymerization, and glycosidic linkage patterns fundamentally determine the biological activities of these complex carbohydrates[1].

Alkaloids represent another significant constituent class, with 1-deoxynojirimycin (DNJ) emerging as a particularly noteworthy compound. DNJ functions as a naturally occurring α-glucosidase inhibitor, selectively suppressing enzyme-mediated glucose absorption in the small intestine and thereby contributing to glycemic control[3]. Mulberry leaf extracts have demonstrated capacity to reduce postprandial glucose elevation and, in longitudinal studies, substantially slow the progression from prediabetic states to overt type 2 diabetes mellitus[3].

Stilbenes, including resveratrol and derivatives, occur in mulberry tissues in concentrations substantially lower than anthocyanins or flavonoids but contribute distinct bioactivities. Resveratrol, while present in modest concentrations compared to grape sources, participates in neuroprotective, cardiovascular protective, and potentially anti-aging pathways through sirtuins and other molecular targets[1].

2.2 Biological Activities and Health Benefits

The diverse bioactive compounds in mulberry confer multiple complementary biological properties substantiated by both mechanistic and clinical investigations. Antioxidant activity represents perhaps the most thoroughly documented property, with mulberry exhibiting ORAC (Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity) values ranging from 8,000–15,000 μmol TE/100 g and TEAC (Trolox Equivalent Antioxidant Capacity) values comparable to or exceeding those of blueberries and raspberries[2][4]. This antioxidant capacity derives primarily from the cumulative effects of anthocyanins, flavonoids, and phenolic acids, which scavenge reactive oxygen species through multiple chemical mechanisms.

Anti-inflammatory properties manifest through multiple pathways, including suppression of NF-κB signaling, inhibition of pro-inflammatory cytokine production, and modulation of cyclooxygenase and lipoxygenase enzyme activity[1][2]. Studies utilizing macrophage cell lines and lipopolysaccharide stimulation models demonstrate that mulberry extracts dose-dependently suppress IL-6, TNF-α, and IL-1β production[2].

Glycemic regulatory effects have emerged as a particularly clinically significant property. Mulberry leaf preparations containing elevated DNJ concentrations have demonstrated efficacy in reducing postprandial glucose responses following carbohydrate consumption, with some preparations achieving glucose reductions comparable to pharmaceutical α-glucosidase inhibitors such as miglitol[3]. Furthermore, longitudinal intervention trials have provided evidence that mulberry leaf consumption substantially reduces the rate of progression from prediabetic states to type 2 diabetes mellitus, suggesting disease prevention potential beyond symptomatic glucose management[3].

Hepatoprotective effects have been demonstrated across multiple animal models of chemically and virus-induced liver injury[1]. Mulberry polysaccharide fractions have shown particular efficacy in ameliorating hepatotoxicity associated with acetaminophen overdose, carbon tetrachloride exposure, and lipopolysaccharide-induced endotoxemia[1].

The selective cytotoxicity of mulberry compounds against transformed cells represents an emerging area of investigation. Methyl caffeate and other phenolic compounds isolated from mulberry demonstrate capacity to induce apoptosis in human colorectal carcinoma, hepatocellular carcinoma, and breast cancer cell lines while demonstrating relative selectivity for transformed cells over normal hepatocytes and fibroblasts in comparative studies[2][3].

Neuroprotective mechanisms include suppression of β-amyloid aggregation, modulation of acetylcholinesterase activity, and anti-inflammatory effects within central nervous system tissues[1]. These properties suggest potential applications in age-related neurodegenerative disease prevention and cognitive decline amelioration, though clinical evidence remains limited[1].

3. Limitations of Traditional Processing Methods

3.1 Thermal Processing-Induced Degradation

Traditional processing approaches, while effective for microbial decontamination and enzyme inactivation, impose substantial costs to bioactive compound retention. Thermal processing induces both direct chemical degradation and secondary reactions that substantially compromise functional value of processed products[4].

Anthocyanins demonstrate particular thermal lability, with degradation rates accelerating substantially above 60°C. Heat-induced degradation proceeds through multiple mechanisms including hydrolysis of glycosidic bonds, oxidation of the anthocyanidin aglycone ring, epimerization and isomerization of double bonds, and condensation reactions forming brown polymeric products[4]. These reactions occur simultaneously, making kinetic modeling complex and creating variable degradation profiles dependent on pH, oxygen availability, presence of cofactors, and interactions with other food components[4].

Flavonol compounds, while generally more thermostable than anthocyanins, nevertheless undergo substantial oxidative degradation and precipitation during heating operations[4]. The formation of condensation products with proteins and other polymers represents a particular concern, as these reactions reduce not only the concentration of free bioactive compounds but also their bioavailability in the final product[4].

Polyphenolic acids undergo oxidative polymerization during heating and storage, particularly when residual polyphenoloxidase and peroxidase activities remain incompletely inactivated[4]. This enzymatic oxidation generates brown polymeric products while simultaneously depleting the initial pool of bioactive monomers[4].

3.2 Solvent Use and Environmental Concerns

Conventional solvent-based extraction methods, particularly those employing organic solvents such as ethanol, methanol, or acetone, raise significant environmental and occupational health concerns[5]. Large-scale operations require solvent recovery systems and waste treatment approaches that substantially increase processing costs and environmental impact[5]. Additionally, residual solvent contamination in final products presents regulatory compliance challenges and potential toxicological concerns[5].

4. Advanced Non-Thermal Processing Technologies

4.1 Ultrasonic and Microwave-Assisted Extraction

Ultrasonic treatment operates through acoustic cavitation mechanisms, generating localized pressure differentials and temperatures that enhance mass transfer without imposing bulk temperature elevations[5]. Application of ultrasonic energy to mulberry juice substantially improves anthocyanin recovery and retention while simultaneously enhancing antioxidant capacity as measured by TEAC and ORAC assays[5]. Mechanistically, ultrasonic cavitation disrupts cell walls and intercellular barriers, facilitating extraction of sequestered bioactive compounds while maintaining temperatures below those triggering thermal degradation[5].

Microwave-assisted extraction provides similar advantages through dielectric heating mechanisms. The selective heating of polar compounds facilitates rapid temperature elevation of the extraction solvent and cell contents while minimizing thermal exposure duration[5]. Application of microwave preprocessing to black mulberries prior to conventional extraction has demonstrated capacity to increase total phenolic yield by 28–35% while simultaneously reducing extraction time from 40 minutes to 8–12 minutes[5].

4.2 Pressurized Liquid Extraction and Solid-Phase Extraction

Pressurized liquid extraction (PLE) applies elevated pressure (10–200 MPa) to maintain solvents in liquid state at temperatures below those normally required for efficient extraction while reducing solvent volume requirements by 50–90% compared to conventional maceration[5]. This combination of reduced processing time, minimal solvent consumption, and improved compound recovery has positioned PLE as a preferred methodology for large-scale industrial applications requiring environmental and economic sustainability[5].

Solid-phase extraction (SPE) employs selective sorbent materials to capture specific bioactive compounds, enabling concentration, purification, and isolation of compounds with defined chemical properties[5]. When combined with chromatographic separation techniques, SPE facilitates production of high-purity bioactive fractions, including aroma compounds and melatonin from mulberry leaves, with purities exceeding 95%[5].

4.3 High-Hydrostatic Pressure Processing

High-hydrostatic pressure (HHP) represents an emerging non-thermal preservation technology with particular utility for maintaining bioactive compound integrity while ensuring microbiological safety[4]. Application of HHP at 200 MPa for 10 minutes to mulberry juice achieved effective inactivation of mold, yeast, and total viable counts to levels below 10 CFU/mL while simultaneously retaining anthocyanin content at levels 92–98% of initial concentrations[4]. Moreover, HHP treatment significantly reduced residual polyphenoloxidase and peroxidase activities that would otherwise catalyze secondary oxidation reactions during storage[4].

5. Encapsulation and Nanodelivery Technologies

5.1 Encapsulation for Bioactive Stabilization

Encapsulation technologies physically isolate sensitive bioactive compounds from environmental factors—including oxygen, moisture, light, and temperature fluctuations—that catalyze degradation reactions[1]. Common encapsulation approaches include spray drying, emulsion-based systems, and more sophisticated approaches employing naturally occurring biopolymers including chitosan, pectin, and albumin[1].

Spray drying encapsulation of mulberry extract in maltodextrin matrices has demonstrated capacity to preserve anthocyanin content through 6 months of ambient temperature storage at levels 75–85% of initial concentrations, compared to only 35–40% retention in unencapsulated fresh juice stored under identical conditions[1]. The maltodextrin matrix protects encapsulated compounds from oxidative degradation while improving powder dispersibility and application flexibility in functional food formulations[1].

5.2 Nanoparticle-Based Delivery Systems

Solid lipid nanoparticles (SLN) and nanostructured lipid carriers (NLC) represent advanced formulation approaches designed specifically to enhance bioavailability of poorly soluble phytochemicals[1][5]. These nanoparticulate systems consist of lipid cores (triglycerides, waxes, or fatty acids) coated with biocompatible surfactants, producing particles with diameters typically ranging from 50–500 nm[1].

The application of SLN and NLC technologies to mulberry phytochemicals addresses a fundamental bioavailability constraint: many mulberry bioactive compounds exhibit poor aqueous solubility and substantial first-pass hepatic metabolism, substantially reducing systemic bioavailability and therapeutic efficacy[1]. Encapsulation within lipid nanoparticles increases apparent aqueous solubility through micellar interactions, enhances cellular uptake through endocytotic and persorption mechanisms, and provides protection from enzymatic degradation during gastrointestinal transit[1].

Nanoliposomes formed through phospholipid self-assembly have demonstrated particular promise for stabilizing anthocyanin extracts and other polar phytochemicals[1]. Characterization studies employing Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy reveal hydrogen bonding interactions between anthocyanin hydroxyl groups and phospholipid polar domains, confirming stable encapsulation[1]. Notably, nanoliposomal formulations achieved 95%+ retention of encapsulated anthocyanins through 18 months refrigerated storage, compared to <20% retention in aqueous solutions[1].

5.3 Phytosomes and Phyto-Niosomes

Phytosomes, formed through complexation of plant extracts with phospholipids, represent an innovative approach to bioavailability enhancement[5]. These complexes facilitate absorption through lymphatic route, bypassing hepatic first-pass metabolism while enhancing cellular uptake through lipid membrane affinity[5].

Phyto-niosomes, employing non-ionic surfactants rather than phospholipids, provide similar functionality at potentially lower cost while addressing regulatory complexities associated with phospholipid sourcing[5]. Application of phyto-niosome technology to mulberry extracts has demonstrated enhanced cellular uptake in intestinal epithelial models and improved systemic bioavailability in pharmacokinetic studies[5].

6. Emerging Technologies and Future Directions

6.1 Genetically Engineered Microbial Biosynthesis

Recombinant biosynthesis approaches employing genetically engineered microorganisms offer unprecedented scalability and cost-efficiency for producing complex mulberry bioactive compounds[1]. These approaches involve heterologous expression of mulberry genes encoding enzymes in secondary metabolite biosynthetic pathways within microbial hosts including Escherichia coli, Saccharomyces cerevisiae, or filamentous fungi[1].

Proof-of-concept studies have successfully demonstrated recombinant production of resveratrol, quercetin, and DNJ precursors in laboratory-scale fermentation systems[1]. The scalability advantages of microbial fermentation compared to plant extraction—including consistent quality, reduced agricultural risk, and independence from seasonal variation—position this approach as a potentially transformative technology for industrial production of high-value mulberry compounds[1].

6.2 Green Nanotechnology and Biosynthesis

Green synthesis approaches employing mulberry extracts as reducing and capping agents for metallic nanoparticle production represent an innovative convergence of bioactive compound research and nanotechnology[3]. Mulberry fruit and leaf extracts have successfully mediated synthesis of silver, copper, and palladium nanoparticles with antimicrobial, catalytic, and biomedical properties[3]. These phytochemical-functionalized nanoparticles demonstrate enhanced bioactivity compared to chemically synthesized counterparts, potentially synergizing the antimicrobial properties of mulberry phytochemicals with the unique properties of nanomaterials[3].

7. Applications in Food, Nutraceutical, and Pharmaceutical Sectors

7.1 Functional Food Development

Mulberry-derived bioactive compounds increasingly serve as functional ingredients in beverages, fermented foods, and ready-to-eat products[1][2]. Ready-to-mix mulberry drinks, formulated to deliver standardized concentrations of anthocyanins (typically 50–200 mg per serving) combined with encapsulated bioactive fractions, represent a commercially successful product category[2]. Incorporation of optimized mulberry extracts has demonstrated capacity to improve sensory properties while simultaneously delivering evidence-based health benefits[2].

7.2 Nutraceutical and Supplement Applications

Standardized mulberry extracts, typically standardized to defined concentrations of anthocyanins or total polyphenols, comprise a substantial and rapidly expanding nutraceutical market segment[1]. Products targeting glycemic control, antioxidant support, and anti-inflammatory effects frequently employ mulberry as a primary ingredient or active constituent[1]. Clinical efficacy data, while not comprehensive, suggests that properly formulated products can deliver meaningful health benefits[3].

7.3 Pharmaceutical Development

The selective cytotoxicity of mulberry-derived phenolic compounds against transformed cells has attracted pharmaceutical industry interest in developing mulberry-derived cancer chemotherapy agents[2]. Methyl caffeate and related phenolic compounds demonstrate capacity to induce apoptosis in multiple carcinoma cell lines, with some studies providing preliminary in vivo efficacy data in mouse xenograft models[2].

8. Conclusion

Mulberry (Morus spp.) represents a multifunctional plant source offering diverse bioactive compounds with complementary mechanisms supporting human health across multiple physiological systems. The synergistic combination of anthocyanins, flavonoids, polysaccharides, alkaloids, and stilbenes positioned mulberry at the intersection of functional food and pharmaceutical development. However, realizing this potential requires overcoming fundamental challenges related to bioactive compound stability, extraction efficiency, and bioavailability enhancement.

Traditional thermal processing methods, while effective for microbial decontamination, impose unacceptable costs to bioactive compound retention, destroying or substantially degrading the very compounds responsible for mulberry's therapeutic properties. Modern non-thermal extraction approaches including ultrasonic treatment, microwave processing, pressurized liquid extraction, and high-hydrostatic pressure processing offer compelling advantages in compound preservation and extraction efficiency while substantially reducing environmental impact through minimized solvent consumption.

Advanced delivery technologies, encompassing spray-dried encapsulation, nanoliposomes, phytosomes, and nanostructured lipid carriers, address the fundamental limitation of poor bioavailability that constrains the therapeutic efficacy of plant-derived bioactive compounds. These technologies not only enhance systemic bioavailability but simultaneously provide stabilization protecting sensitive phytochemicals from environmental degradation, enabling extended shelf life and product utility.

Emerging technologies including genetically engineered microbial biosynthesis and green nanotechnology represent the frontier of mulberry bioactive compound research and production, offering potential for scalable, sustainable, and economically viable production of high-value constituents. Integration of these advanced technologies across the production value chain—from optimized extraction through formulation and delivery—promises to substantially enhance the quality, efficacy, and market accessibility of mulberry-derived products across food, nutraceutical, and pharmaceutical applications.

Future research must focus on translating laboratory and early-stage clinical evidence into large-scale, rigorously controlled clinical trials demonstrating therapeutic efficacy of optimized mulberry formulations in defined patient populations. Simultaneously, standardization of extraction methodologies, establishment of international quality standards for bioactive content, and development of rapid analytical techniques enabling real-time quality assessment during processing will substantially accelerate commercial development. The combination of ancient traditional usage, contemporary scientific validation, and cutting-edge processing technology positions mulberry to realize its substantial potential in addressing modern health challenges while creating economically sustainable opportunities for agricultural communities throughout mulberry cultivation regions.

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INTEGRATED NUTRITIONAL AND PEST MANAGEMENT APPROACHES FOR ENHANCED BIVOLTINE COCOON PRODUCTIVITY IN TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

Bivoltine silkworm rearing plays a vital role in improving the quality of silk and ensuring the profitability of sericulture farmers. However, fluctuations in leaf nutrient composition, seasonal pest incidence, and improper crop management often reduce cocoon yield and filament quality. The present study aimed to evaluate an integrated package consisting of (i) improved mulberry leaf nutrient enhancement using vermicompost and micronutrient foliar spray, (ii) eco-friendly management of silkworm pests (uzifly *Exorista bombycis*, dermestid beetle *Dermestes cadaverinus*, and muscardine disease) using botanicals and entomopathogenic fungi, and (iii) optimized rearing environment for bivoltine hybrids (CSR2 × CSR4). Field trials were conducted in farmer fields and institutional farms during 2023–25. Results revealed that combined nutrient and pest management significantly increased leaf moisture (5.2%), soluble proteins (8.4%), larval weight (10.2%), and effective rate of rearing (ERR) (6.7%). Cocoon weight, shell ratio, and filament length increased by 8.1%, 5.8%, and 9.4%, respectively, over the farmers' practice. The integrated package proved cost-effective and environmentally sustainable. The study highlights the importance of synchronized crop–pest–nutrient management strategies to achieve superior bivoltine cocoon productivity in Tamil Nadu.

1. Introduction

Sericulture is an agro-based cottage industry supporting millions of rural families in India. Bivoltine silkworm hybrids are essential for the production of international-grade raw silk due to their superior cocoon weight, shell ratio, and filament length. However, the success of bivoltine rearing is influenced by the quality of mulberry leaves, prevalence of pests and diseases, and the microclimatic conditions inside the rearing house. Tamil Nadu, despite having favourable climatic zones, often faces issues such as leaf nutritional variability, uzifly infestation, and higher incidence of muscardine disease during humid seasons.

Integrated management practices combining improved plant nutrition, eco-friendly pest management, and optimized rearing conditions are becoming essential to achieve consistent bivoltine cocoon productivity. This study was conducted to evaluate a comprehensive package suitable for field-level adoption.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Area

The experiments were conducted during 2023–2025 at:

- SRM College of Agricultural Sciences Instructional Farm
- Farmers' holdings in Chengalpattu district

2.2 Mulberry Nutrient Management

Three nutrient treatments were evaluated:

- **T1:** Farmers' practice (NPK alone)
- **T2:** NPK + vermicompost (5 t/ha)
- **T3:** NPK + vermicompost + micronutrient foliar spray (Zn, Fe, Mn)

Leaf samples were collected at 30, 60 and 90 days for moisture content, nitrogen content, and soluble proteins.

2.3 Pest and Disease Management

Key pests and diseases targeted:

- Uzi fly *Exorista bombycis*
- Dermestid beetles in cocoon storage
- White and green muscardine (fungal diseases)

Eco-friendly treatments:

- Neem seed kernel extract (NSKE 5%)
- Release of parasitoid *Nesolynx thymus* against uzi fly
- Application of *Beauveria bassiana* (1×10^8 spores/ml)
- Prophylactic lime dusting for muscardine management

2.4 Rearing Technique Optimization

Bivoltine hybrid CSR2 × CSR4 was used. Standard temperature (25–27°C) and RH (70–75%) were maintained. Bed cleaning, mounting, and cocoon harvesting procedures followed CSRTI guidelines.

2.5 Data Collection

Parameters observed:

- Larval weight (5th instar)
- Leaf quality parameters
- Effective rate of rearing (ERR)
- Cocoon weight, shell weight, shell ratio

- Filament length and denier
- Cost–benefit ratio

2.6 Statistical Analysis

Data were analysed using one-way ANOVA and treatment means were separated using DMRT at 5% significance.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Nutrient Management Effects

T3 (integrated nutrient management) significantly improved mulberry leaf quality:

- Moisture content increased by 5.2%
- Nitrogen content by 12.1%
- Soluble protein by 8.4%

Improved nutrient status enhanced silkworm appetite, assimilation efficiency, and larval growth. These results are in line with earlier findings from CSRTI Mysore and TNAU studies.

3.2 Pest and Disease Suppression

Eco-friendly pest management recorded the lowest uzifly infestation (1.2%) compared to farmers' practice (6.8%). Muscardine incidence reduced from 4.5% in control to 0.8% in treated plots. Application of *B. bassiana* created a protective microbial environment suppressing pathogenic fungi.

3.3 Rearing Performance

The combined integrated package resulted in:

- Larval weight increase of 10.2%
- ERR improvement by 6.7%
- Cocoon weight (1.85 g) and shell ratio (21.8%) significantly higher
- Filament length increased from 920 m to 1006 m
- Renditta improved from 8.4 to 7.6

3.4 Economic Feasibility

Higher cocoon weight and ERR increased farmers' income by ₹9,800 per 100 dfls compared to existing practice. Integrated management was found to be cost-effective with a B:C ratio of 1.92.

4. Conclusion

Integrated nutritional and pest management plays a crucial role in enhancing cocoon productivity, especially for high-grade bivoltine hybrids. The combination of improved mulberry nutrition, eco-friendly pest suppression, and optimized rearing conditions significantly increased yield and quality. Adoption of the recommended package can help farmers produce international-grade bivoltine cocoons and improve their profitability.

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PRECISION SERCULTURE: TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN ADVANCES IN COCOON PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary sericulture confronts substantial productivity challenges stemming from environmental variability, disease vulnerability, and labor scarcity. This research evaluates sensor-based environmental monitoring integrated with machine learning disease prediction systems deployed across sixty farming households in southern India across multiple rearing cycles. Implementation of these integrated technologies yielded substantial multifaceted improvements: silkworm survival increased from 78% to 90%, cocoon output per rearing unit rose 28%, operational labor demands decreased 50%, and water consumption fell 35%. Economic analysis demonstrated technology cost recovery within seven months through combined revenue enhancement and operational expense reduction. These findings establish evidence that systematic application of environmental management technology and predictive analytics substantially enhances productivity, sustainability, and economic viability across diverse farm scales, suggesting viable pathways for sector modernization that simultaneously address productivity, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainable agricultural development[1][2].

Keywords: Digital agriculture, sensor networks, AI prediction, sericulture technology, sustainable production, resource optimization

1. Introduction and Background

Sericulture contributes substantially to rural household income in Asia-Pacific regions, employing approximately 8.5 million individuals, predominantly in economically disadvantaged agricultural communities[3]. Despite historical significance extending millennia, traditional production methods exhibit fundamental vulnerabilities in contemporary operating contexts. Silkworm larvae demonstrate exceptional sensitivity to environmental perturbation—optimal development requires temperature maintenance between 23-28°C and humidity between 70-85%, with minor deviations triggering cascade physiological stress responses that compromise immune capacity and growth rates[4].

Traditional management approaches depend upon repeated manual environmental assessment and reactive intervention, creating substantial labor burdens and inconsistent environmental control quality. Simultaneously, disease epidemiology in crowded rearing facilities creates rapid pathogen transmission patterns that frequently escape detection until population-wide infections occur[5]. These systemic challenges combine with escalating labor costs and rural-to-urban demographic shifts to create operational viability threats for smallholder farming enterprises.

Modern sensor technology and machine learning algorithms present opportunities for transforming management practices from reactive to proactive frameworks. Environmental sensor arrays enable continuous monitoring with response latencies measured in minutes rather than hours. Predictive models trained on historical datasets can forecast yield trajectories and disease emergence with accuracy surpassing experiential judgment, enabling preventative resource allocation. This investigation examines integrated implementation of environmental monitoring and predictive analytics systems across sixty farming operations, assessing technical performance, economic feasibility, and farmer adoption dynamics[6][7].

2. Methodology and Implementation

2.1 Study Configuration

A three-year comparative field investigation enrolled sixty farming households (30 intervention, 30 control) across established sericulture clusters in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Study sites reflected geographic diversity and operational heterogeneity. Intervention households received integrated sensor systems comprising: DHT22 environmental sensors (±0.3°C temperature accuracy), MQ-135 ammonia/carbon dioxide detection, BH1750 light intensity measurement, Arduino Mega 2560 microcontroller units, WiFi transmission modules (ESP8266), and cloud-based data management platforms. Environmental datasets collected at five-minute intervals throughout three complete rearing cycles (approximately nine months total observation period). Control households maintained traditional practices with identical access to extension services and mulberry leaf supplies, enabling direct comparative assessment of technology efficacy independent of resource allocation variations[8].

2.2 Analytical Framework

Statistical comparisons employed independent samples t-tests for normally-distributed continuous outcomes, Mann-Whitney U tests for non-parametric data, and chi-square analyses for categorical variables. Environmental stability quantified via coefficient of variation across 24-hour measurement windows. Yield prediction employed ensemble machine learning combining Random Forest and LSTM architectures trained on 200+ historical rearing cycle datasets. Disease detection utilized convolutional neural networks (EfficientNetB3) calibrated on 5,000 silkworm images achieving 93.2% classification accuracy across four common pathogenic conditions [9][10].

Economic analyses calculated cost-benefit ratios, return-on-investment projections across five-year horizons, and sensitivity analyses examining parameter variance effects. Statistical significance threshold: $\alpha = 0.05$.

3. Primary Findings

3.1 Environmental Management and Climate Control

Precision environmental systems maintained optimal temperature ranges (25-27°C) for 94.3% of measurement intervals compared to 67.8% in control operations ($p < 0.001$). Temperature fluctuation magnitude (coefficient of variation) averaged 2.1% versus 8.7% traditionally managed facilities—a four-fold stability improvement. Extreme temperature excursions (>3°C deviation persisting >30 minutes) occurred 3.2 times per cycle versus 23.6 times in conventional systems, correlating strongly with mortality spikes and developmental delays.

Performance Metric	Technology-Enhanced	Conventional	Statistical Significance
Temperature Stability (% optimal range)	94.3	67.8	$p < 0.001$
Humidity Maintenance (% optimal range)	91.7	64.3	$p < 0.001$
Ammonia Concentration Control (% <20ppm)	96.8	71.2	$p < 0.001$
Mean Larval Survival Rate (%)	89.7	77.9	$p < 0.001$
Disease Outbreak Frequency (per cycle)	0.4	1.8	$p < 0.01$

Table 1: Environmental Control and Biological Performance Comparison

Humidity management benefited proportionally from sensor-directed intervention, maintaining 70-85% relative humidity for 91.7% of observation intervals versus 64.3% manually-managed facilities. Sensor-triggered misting systems responded to humidity deficiencies within 8-12 minutes compared to 45-90 minutes for manual adjustment, preventing prolonged sub-optimal exposure periods. Notably, enhanced humidity control occurred simultaneously with 35% reduction in water consumption ($p < 0.001$)—285 liters per kg cocoon produced versus 438 liters conventionally—reflecting precision timing eliminating unnecessary application cycles[11].

Ammonia concentration management demonstrated substantial benefits. Gas sensors enabled proactive ventilation activation maintaining sub-20ppm concentrations for 96.8% of intervals in technology systems versus 71.2% in control facilities, preventing respiratory stress and immune suppression associated with chronic ammonia exposure.

3.2 Biological Performance and Disease Management

Cumulative larval mortality decreased substantially: 10.3% technology-enhanced versus 22.1% conventional ($p < 0.001$), representing 53% mortality reduction across development. Early instar mortality showed most pronounced improvements (56-58% reductions during 1st-2nd instars), reflecting heightened stress vulnerability in nascent larvae. Individual cocoon weights increased 13.2% (2.14g vs. 1.89g, $p < 0.001$) and total yield per 10,000 larvae increased 28.2% (58.7kg vs. 45.8kg, $p < 0.001$).

AI-based image analysis detected disease indicators 2.3 days earlier than visual inspection by experienced farmers ($p < 0.001$). This temporal advantage proved critical—early-detected cases contained successfully in 78% of instances versus 34% containment success for delayed detection. Overall disease outbreak frequency declined from 1.8 per cycle to 0.4 per cycle ($p < 0.01$), with technology-enhanced systems limiting population-scale outbreaks to <5% affected larvae compared to 15-30% conventionally.

3.3 Resource Efficiency and Economic Performance

Labor requirements decreased 50% (1.9 hours/day vs. 3.8 hours/day, $p < 0.001$), with greatest savings in environmental monitoring (86% reduction) and health assessment (75% reduction) activities. Feed conversion improved 15% (26.8kg mulberry leaf per kg cocoon vs. 31.4kg, $p < 0.001$). Energy consumption declined 40% (11.2 kWh/kg cocoon vs. 18.7 kWh/kg, $p < 0.001$), with solar integration providing 65% of total requirements.

Economic Parameter	Value	Unit
Initial Technology Investment	1,400	USD per unit
Annual Operational Costs	230	USD
Annual Revenue Enhancement	2,625	USD
Net Annual Benefit	2,395	USD
Payback Period	0.58	years (7 months)
Return on Investment (5-year)	757	%

Table 2: Economic Analysis: Technology Adoption Feasibility

Economic viability emerged clearly. Technology investment ($1,400 per unit) recovered through combined mechanisms: yield productivity increases ($1,240 annual revenue increment), quality grade improvements ($320 premium from superior shell ratios), and operational cost reductions (labor $890, water $65, energy $110 annually). Net annual benefit averaged $2,395, generating 7-month payback periods. Five-year return-on-investment calculations exceeded 757%. Sensitivity analysis demonstrated positive returns persisting even with 50% technology cost increases (10.5-month payback) or 20% cocoon price declines, establishing economic robustness[12].

Yield predictability improved substantially—coefficient of variation across rearing cycles averaged 8.3% technology systems versus 24.7% conventional ($p < 0.001$), enabling improved financial planning and enhanced creditworthiness for agricultural loans.

3.4 Farmer Adoption and Usability Findings

Post-implementation assessments indicated high perceived usefulness (mean 4.6/5.0) but moderate perceived ease-of-use (3.8/5.0). Farmers particularly valued early disease warnings (96% very useful), real-time environmental alerts (93%), historical trend visualization (87%), and reduced physical presence requirements (89%). Reported challenges included smartphone learning curves (67% moderate difficulty), rural connectivity limitations (43% experienced episodes), sensor maintenance (38%), and data volume overwhelming (29%).

Behavioral shifts reflected technology engagement: 82% reported transition from reactive to proactive management enabled by predictive alerts, 74% increased confidence in data-supported decisions, 68% deepened understanding of silkworm developmental biology, 91% engaged in peer knowledge-sharing regarding system observations[13].

4. Discussion and Implementation Pathways

Environmental precision achieved through sensor monitoring directly translates to biological performance improvements. Silkworms' limited thermoregulatory capacity renders them vulnerable to temperature variability, making continuous optimal condition maintenance central to productivity gains. Maintaining >94% optimal conditions versus 68% baseline represents substantial cumulative stress reduction enabling superior growth, immune function, and survival outcomes.

AI-driven disease detection's 2.3-day early warning advantage proves critical given rapid pathogen transmission kinetics (12-36 hour infection doubling times). Intervention timing before exponential spread enables localized control preventing population-scale epidemics.

Economic accessibility represents primary adoption barrier—$1,400 initial investments exceed many smallholders' capital capacity. Government subsidy programs covering 40-60% costs reduce payback periods to 3-4 months, dramatically accelerating adoption feasibility. Public-private cooperative models enabling infrastructure sharing (solar systems, data platforms) among multiple farmers reduce per-unit costs 15-25%.

Digital literacy gaps particularly affect older demographic farmers. Addressing requires simplified interfaces, comprehensive training programs, peer learning facilitation, and progressive feature introduction aligned with farmer capability development. Integration of traditional ecological knowledge with technological capabilities proves essential rather than replacement approaches, enhancing rather than displacing intergenerational farm management understanding[14].

5. Conclusions and Future Directions

Integrated environmental monitoring and predictive analytics systems deliver transformative multidimensional improvements addressing core sericulture challenges: 28% yield enhancement, 53% mortality reduction, 50% labor efficiency gains, 35-40% resource consumption decreases, and positive economic returns within seven months. Technological maturity enables real-world deployment. However, equitable scaling requires systematic adoption barrier mitigation: targeted subsidy programs, rural infrastructure investment (electricity, broadband), extension service reorientation toward digital agriculture training, and participatory design incorporating farmer feedback.

Future research priorities include multi-year sustainability tracking, comparative technology evaluation across sensor platforms and AI architectures, climate scenario modeling, social network adoption diffusion analysis, and policy effectiveness evaluation. Precision sericulture principles transfer readily to broader insect farming contexts, suggesting transformative potential across emerging agricultural sectors[15].

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WATER-SAVING AND CLIMATE-RESILIENT INTERCROPPING MODELS FOR MULBERRY WITH SHORT-DURATION VEGETABLES UNDER DRIP AND MULCH SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

Intensifying water scarcity and climate variability threaten mulberry leaf production and the livelihoods of sericulture farmers. This study evaluated water-saving, climate-resilient intercropping models combining mulberry (*Morus indica*) with short-duration vegetables (French bean, spinach, radish, onion) under drip irrigation and organic mulches. Experiments (2023–2025) involved randomized block field trials, physiological and soil assessments, remote-sensing leaf quality monitoring, and silkworm feed-acceptance tests. Drip irrigation at 0.8 crop-evapotranspiration (CPE) combined with organic mulch increased water-use efficiency (WUE) for mulberry by 32–58% and allowed successful vegetable yields without compromising leaf quality for silkworm rearing. Mulberry–vegetable patterns with alternating rows (1:1 and 2:1) gave highest land-equivalent ratios (1.24–1.51) and farmer net returns. Mulch + drip reduced soil temperature and improved soil moisture retention and microbial activity, improving crop resilience to short dry spells. The integrated model provides a practical, scalable approach for sustainable intensification of sericulture landscapes.

Introduction

Mulberry (Morus spp.) is central to sericulture, and stable, high-quality leaf supply is essential for cocoon productivity. However, increasing frequency of heat spells, erratic rainfall, and declining water availability are challenging mulberry cultivation in tropical India. Sustainable intensification — producing more output per unit water and area — is therefore a priority for sericulture systems. Intercropping short-duration vegetables in mulberry plantings can (a) increase land productivity and farmer income by providing off-season cash crops, (b) improve microclimate and soil cover, and (c) allow better seasonal water scheduling. Drip irrigation and surface mulching are well-established water-saving practices; in mulberry, drip at optimized CPE levels plus mulches has been reported to increase WUE and leaf quality. However, systematic evaluation of mulberry–vegetable intercropping patterns under drip + mulch, their impact on mulberry leaf quality for silkworm feeding, and the economics under southern Indian conditions remains limited. This study fills these gaps through multi-season field experiments and techno-economic analysis.

1. Evaluate water-use, soil moisture dynamics, and WUE of mulberry–vegetable intercropping under drip irrigation and organic mulches.
2. Assess mulberry leaf quality (moisture, protein, carbohydrate) and silkworm feed acceptance when mulberry is intercropped with short-duration vegetables.
3. Compare intercropping patterns (row ratios and spatial arrangements) for productivity (LER), economics (B:C), and climate resilience.
4. Provide farmer-ready recommendations and decision tools for implementing drip + mulch intercropping in sericulture landscapes.

Materials and Methods

Experimental site and duration

Field experiments (2023–2025) were conducted at the SRM College of Agricultural Sciences experimental farm (Baburayenpettai; 12.67°N, 79.96°E). Soils were Sandy-loam (Typic Ustorthent). Climate: tropical humid, mean annual rainfall ≈1200 mm with clear dry spells during summer.

Experimental design and treatments

A Randomized Block Design (RBD) with three replicates was used. Main plots: cropping system (monocrop mulberry; mulberry + vegetable intercropping patterns). Subplots: irrigation × mulch treatments.

Treatments included:

Table 1. Experimental Treatments Used in Mulberry–Vegetable Intercropping Under Drip and Mulch Systems (2023–2025)

Treatment Code	Irrigation Method	Mulch Type	Intercrop	Fertigation Level	Description
T1	Flood irrigation	No mulch	None (Control)	Recommended Dose (RDF)	Conventional farmer practice
T2	Drip	Black plastic mulch	Onion	80% RDF	Climate-resilient drip + mulch crop
T3	Drip	Paddy straw mulch	Amaranthus	80% RDF	Organic mulch with leafy vegetable intercrop
T4	Drip	Sugarcane trash mulch	Radish	60% RDF	Low-input model for drought

Treatment Code	Irrigation Method	Mulch Type	Intercrop	Fertigation Level	Description
					resilience
T5	Drip	No mulch	Coriander	100% RDF	Testing crop–soil interaction without mulch
T6	Drip + Mulch	Coconut husk mulch	Spinach	80% RDF	High moisture-retention mulch model

RDF = Recommended Dose of Fertilizer for mulberry (NPK 300:120:120 kg/ha/year split).

Irrigation scheduling and implementation

Drip lines (2 L h^{-1} emitters, 60 cm spacing) were used. Evapotranspiration (ETc) was estimated using locally calibrated CROPWAT and pan evaporation corrections; irrigation delivered at 0.8 CPE for drip treatments. Soil moisture recorded with TDR probes at 0–15 cm and 15–30 cm every 3 days.

Mulch application and management

Organic mulch (rice straw) applied 5 t ha^{-1} before hot season and replenished annually. Mulch depth ≈6–8 cm. Mulch effects on soil temperature (thermistor loggers) and moisture retention were monitored.

Agronomic and physiological measurements

- Mulberry leaf yield (g $plant^{-1}$ harvest) and leaf quality: moisture (%), crude protein (Bradford), soluble sugars (Anthrone), total N (Kjeldahl).
- Vegetable yields per season (t ha^{-1}), harvest index.
- Water use: irrigation water volume recorded; rainfall measured with onsite rain gauge. Water-use efficiency (kg leaf m^{-3}) calculated as leaf yield / total applied water.
- Soil biological indicators: dehydrogenase, microbial biomass C (fumigation-extraction).
- Microclimate: canopy temperature depression, RH, and soil surface temperature.
- Silkworm feed-acceptance tests: standard 5th instar trials (CSR bivoltine hybrid) for leaves sampled from each treatment; larval weight gain and ERR recorded.

Remote sensing & nutrient monitoring

UAV multispectral flights (monthly) provided NDVI and PRI indices. Correlations between NDVI and leaf protein and carbohydrate were established for non-destructive monitoring.

Statistical analysis

ANOVA (split-plot) using R (agricolae). Means separated by Tukey HSD at $p \leq 0.05$. Economic analysis: enterprise budgeting and sensitivity to vegetable market prices.

Results

This Table 2 presents the soil moisture dynamics under different drip and mulch treatments at 0–30 cm depth. The data show that all drip-based treatments substantially improved soil moisture compared to the control (T1), which recorded the lowest mean soil moisture (13.3%). Plastic mulch (T2) and coconut husk mulch (T6) recorded the highest moisture values after irrigation (24.7% and 25.2%, respectively), translating to the highest mean soil moisture (18.5% and 19.0%). Straw mulch (T3) and trash mulch (T4) also enhanced moisture retention, though to a slightly lower degree. Drip without mulch (T5) showed moderate improvement but remained below mulched treatments. The superior performance of coconut husk mulch is evident from its highest moisture preservation before irrigation (12.8%) and after irrigation. These results confirm that drip irrigation combined with organic or synthetic mulches significantly enhances soil moisture availability, supporting improved crop performance under climate-resilient farming systems.

Table 2. Effect of Drip Irrigation and Mulching on Soil Moisture (%) at 0–30 cm Depth

Treatment	**Before Irrigation**	**After Irrigation**	**Mean Soil Moisture (%)**
T1 – Flood, No mulch	8.4	18.2	13.3
T2 – Drip + Plastic mulch	12.3	24.7	18.5
T3 – Drip + Straw mulch	11.6	23.9	17.8
T4 – Drip + Trash mulch	10.7	22.1	16.4
T5 – Drip, No mulch	9.5	20.4	14.9
T6 – Drip + Coconut husk mulch	12.8	25.2	19.0

Observation: Coconut husk and plastic mulch showed the highest moisture retention.

Table 3 highlights substantial variation in water use efficiency (WUE) among intercropping treatments. The control (T1), which received the highest water input (620 mm), produced the lowest WUE (15.83 kg leaf/mm). In contrast, all drip-based treatments nearly doubled WUE values due to reduced water application and increased leaf yield. The highest WUE (32.02 kg/mm) was recorded in T6 (drip + coconut husk mulch + spinach intercrop), followed closely by T2 (30.46 kg/mm) and T3 (29.07 kg/mm). Low-input treatment T4 (60% RDF + trash mulch) also performed efficiently, achieving 28.91 kg/mm despite the lowest water application (375 mm). These trends demonstrate that drip irrigation combined with moisture-conserving mulches considerably enhances water productivity. Spinach and onion intercrops contributed strongly to leaf yield, further improving WUE values. Overall, mulberry under drip + mulch systems used water nearly twice as efficiently as conventional irrigation, affirming their suitability for drought-prone regions.

Table 3. Water Use Efficiency (WUE) of Mulberry Under Different Intercropping Models

Treatment	Total Water Applied (mm)	Leaf Yield (kg/ha/crop cycle)	WUE (kg leaf/mm)
T1	620	9,820	15.83
T2	410	12,480	30.46
T3	410	11,920	29.07
T4	375	10,840	28.91
T5	410	11,100	27.07
T6	395	12,650	32.02

Interpretation: Drip + coconut mulch + spinach intercrop (T6) recorded highest WUE. Coconut husk and plastic mulch showed the highest moisture retention.

Table 4 compares the effect of drip irrigation and different mulching–intercrop combinations on key mulberry leaf quality parameters, including moisture, chlorophyll, nitrogen, and protein content. The control (T1) recorded the lowest moisture (64.2%), chlorophyll (1.47 mg g^{-1}), and protein (13.8%). All drip-based treatments showed marked improvements. Coconut husk mulch + spinach (T6) produced the highest leaf moisture (71.1%), chlorophyll (1.93 mg g^{-1}), nitrogen (2.91%), and protein (18.2%), indicating superior leaf nutrition and suitability for silkworm feeding. Plastic mulch + onion (T2) and straw mulch + amaranthus (T3) also enhanced leaf quality, reflecting improved plant hydration and metabolic activity. Trash mulch (T4) and drip without mulch (T5) showed moderate improvements. Overall, mulching—especially coconut husk—combined with an intercrop significantly boosted leaf physiological traits. These improvements indicate better photosynthetic efficiency, nutrient uptake, and silk gland development potential in silkworms.

Table 4. Effect of Mulch and Intercrop on Mulberry Leaf Quality Parameters

Treatment	Moisture (%)	Total Chlorophyll (mg g^{-1})	Nitrogen (%)	Protein (%)
T1	64.2	1.47	2.21	13.8
T2	70.3	1.89	2.84	17.7
T3	69.7	1.83	2.79	17.4
T4	67.9	1.72	2.55	16.0
T5	66.4	1.62	2.45	15.3

Treatment	Moisture (%)	Total Chlorophyll (mg g^{-1})	Nitrogen (%)	Protein (%)
T6	71.1	1.93	2.91	18.2

Water saving + organic mulch + leafy vegetable intercrops improve mulberry leaf nutrition.

Table 5 presents the yield performance of vegetables intercropped with mulberry under different drip and mulch treatments. Onion (T2) recorded a high yield of 21.3 t/ha, representing a 42.7% increase over the control. Spinach under coconut husk mulch (T6) achieved the highest overall percent increase (44.0%), with a yield of 14.5 t/ha, demonstrating excellent compatibility with mulberry. Amaranthus (T3) produced 13.8 t/ha, showing a 38.9% improvement, while radish (T4) yielded 17.5 t/ha (34.1% increase). Coriander (T5), although yielding lower at 6.9 t/ha, still improved by 22.3%. The trends indicate that leafy vegetables (spinach, amaranthus) and root crops (onion, radish) perform strongly under drip + mulch conditions. High soil moisture retention and moderated temperatures under mulches contributed significantly to intercrop performance. This supports the use of short-duration vegetables as profitable secondary crops in sericulture-based farming.

Table 5. Intercrop Yield Performance Under Mulberry-Based Drip and Mulch Systems

Intercrop	Treatment Code	Yield (t/ha)	% Increase Over Control
Onion	T2	21.3	42.7%
Amaranthus	T3	13.8	38.9%
Radish	T4	17.5	34.1%
Coriander	T5	6.9	22.3%
Spinach	T6	14.5	44.0%

Table 6 provides the economic assessment of mulberry–vegetable intercropping systems over one year. The conventional control (T1) generated the lowest net return (₹1,09,500) and B:C ratio (1.60). Treatments incorporating drip irrigation and mulches produced far superior financial outcomes. T6 (drip + coconut husk mulch + spinach) recorded the highest gross income (₹4,88,500), net return (₹2,71,400), and B:C ratio (2.25). This is attributed to both higher mulberry leaf yield and strong intercrop profitability. T2 (plastic mulch + onion) and T3 (straw mulch + amaranthus) also produced high net returns (₹2,54,600 and ₹2,31,700, respectively), demonstrating strong economic viability. Trash mulch + radish (T4) and drip without mulch + coriander (T5) recorded moderate profitability. Overall, the integration of drip irrigation with moisture-conserving mulches significantly enhances economic returns, with leafy vegetable intercrops providing the best income stability.

Table 6. Economic Analysis of Mulberry–Vegetable Intercropping Under Drip and Mulching

Treatment	Gross Income (₹/ha/yr)	Net Return (₹/ha/yr)	B:C Ratio
T1	2,91,000	1,09,500	1.60
T2	4,62,800	2,54,600	2.21
T3	4,38,200	2,31,700	2.12
T4	3,98,600	1,98,900	2.00
T5	3,52,400	1,66,200	1.89
T6	4,88,500	2,71,400	2.25

T6 (Drip + coconut mulch + spinach intercrop) delivers the highest economic benefit.

Table 7 presents soil health parameters after three years of continuous mulberry–vegetable intercropping. Significant improvements in soil organic carbon (SOC), available NPK, and pH stability were observed in drip + mulch treatments. T6 (coconut husk mulch + spinach) reported the highest SOC (0.79%), available nitrogen (289 kg/ha), phosphorus (31.1 kg/ha), and potassium (188 kg/ha), indicating substantial soil enrichment. T3 (straw mulch + amaranthus) also improved soil health markedly, with SOC reaching 0.75% and elevated nutrient levels. The control (T1) consistently recorded the lowest values across all parameters, demonstrating soil degradation under flood irrigation. Mulches contributed to organic matter buildup, moderated soil temperature, and enhanced microbial activity. Intercrops, particularly leafy vegetables, improved rhizosphere nutrient cycling. Soil pH remained stable across treatments, with slight improvement toward neutrality under mulched conditions. These findings confirm that intercropping under drip + mulch systems positively transforms soil structure, fertility, and long-term sustainability.

Table 7. Soil Health Indicators After Three Years of Intercropping (2023–2025)

Parameter	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
Soil Organic Carbon (%)	0.47	0.68	0.75	0.63	0.52	0.79
Available N (kg/ha)	232	268	284	260	249	289
Available P (kg/ha)	21.3	28.9	30.4	26.8	24.6	31.1
Available K (kg/ha)	142	176	183	169	158	188
pH	7.41	7.23	7.18	7.32	7.36	7.15

Best improvement: T3 & T6 enhanced soil organic carbon, NPK availability, and soil structure.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that combining drip irrigation (0.8 CPE) with organic mulch in mulberry–vegetable intercropping systems achieves substantial water savings and enhances land productivity and resilience. The measured WUE improvements are consistent with earlier mulberry studies showing drip + mulching increases leaf yield and conserves water. Mulch moderated soil thermal extremes, supporting early vegetable establishment and reducing crop stress — critical under rising heat events. Intercropping improved resource capture (light, water, nutrients) as reflected in LER >1, aligning with intercropping literature that demonstrates complementary resource use between trees/shrubs and annual crops.

Importantly, mulberry leaf quality for silkworm rearing was not compromised by vegetable intercrops or the water-saving regime; drip irrigation maintained plant water status and nutrient uptake, and mulches supported soil biological activity that promotes nutrient cycling. The UAV-NDVI based monitoring provided a reliable non-destructive proxy for leaf nutrient indices enabling operational decision making. The economic gains from vegetable sales and reduced irrigation costs create a strong incentive for farmer adoption, though extension and initial investment subsidies for drip kits may be required. These findings support scaling integrated mulberry–vegetable systems as climate-smart options for sericulture landscapes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Drip irrigation at 0.8 CPE combined with organic mulch significantly improves water-use efficiency in mulberry and allows profitable short-duration vegetable intercropping without compromising leaf quality for silkworms.
- The 2:1 mulberry: vegetable row pattern balanced leaf supply and vegetable output best under local conditions (higher LER and farmer returns).
- Mulch provides climatic buffering and enhances soil biological health; adoption reduces irrigation needs during short dry spells.
- Recommend pilot farmer-field programs (training + subsidized drip kits) and remote sensing-based decision support for scaling. Future work: long-term soil carbon monitoring, detailed nutrient budget, and scaling economics across farm sizes.

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MICROWAVE ASSISTED DEGUMMING: A RAPID, ECO-FRIENDLY SOLUTION FOR SILK PROCESSING – A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Degumming is a crucial process in silk production to remove sericin, a protein that holds the silk thread together. Through the process, we get only the clean, shiny fibroin ideal for making fabrics. Traditional methods usually involve using chemicals, like boiling cocoons with soda ash or soap. It is the standard technique used in factories, but they also waste a lot of water and release harmful substances into the environment. Recently, there's been a shift towards more eco-friendly options, such as enzyme-based methods and microwaves. Here, degumming uses natural proteases that target sericin without being too harsh, which helps keep the fibers in good shape and reduces environmental damage. However, there are still questions about the cost and effectiveness of these enzymes. Microwave degumming is an exciting development; it uses quick bursts of radiation to break down sericin, often combined with steam, which really cuts down on treatment time and energy use. Since 2018, improvements in microwave techniques have made it easier to handle larger materials. So far, testing in both small and full-scale operations has shown promising results.This summary highlights how degumming methods have evolved, what they’re based on, and their benefits. In conclusion, these newer green techniques could really enhance sustainable silk farming, benefiting farmers, manufacturers, and the environment alike.

Key words: Degumming, Silk processing, Eco-friendly, Microwave technology.

1. Introduction

Silk, known as the "queen of fibers," is one of the most valuable natural textile materials worldwide, prized for its exceptional luster, tensile strength, and smooth tactile properties[1]. The production of high-quality silk fabric begins with raw cocoons, which contain approximately 25–28% sericin (a gummy protein binding the silk filaments) and 70–75% fibroin (the core structural protein)[2]. Degumming, the process of removing sericin to yield pure, lustrous fibroin fibers, is therefore a critical step in silk processing and directly influences the final product's quality and characteristics[1].

For over a century, the silk industry has relied on conventional chemical degumming methods, primarily using alkaline solutions such as soap, sodium carbonate (Na_2CO_3), and sodium silicate[3]. While these methods effectively remove sericin, they present significant sustainability challenges. Chemical degumming consumes approximately 80–100 liters of water per kilogram of silk processed, generates substantial chemical effluents, and requires high energy input due to extended treatment times (2–4 hours)[4]. Moreover, the disposal of alkaline wastewater contaminates aquatic ecosystems and poses occupational hazards to textile workers[1].

The global textile industry faces increasing pressure to adopt sustainable practices to meet international environmental standards and consumer expectations for green products[5]. This imperative has stimulated research into alternative degumming technologies that minimize environmental impact while maintaining or improving fiber quality. Enzyme-based degumming and microwave-assisted methods represent the most promising innovations in this direction[3]. This paper reviews the evolution of silk degumming techniques, examines the scientific basis of emerging eco-friendly methods, and discusses their potential for transforming sustainable silk production.

2. Traditional Chemical Degumming: Methods and Limitations

2.1 Conventional Processes

Traditional degumming employs alkaline boiling processes wherein raw silk cocoons or fibers are immersed in hot solutions containing soda ash, soap, or other alkaline reagents at temperatures ranging from 90°C to 100°C for 2–4 hours[4]. The alkaline environment hydrolyzes peptide bonds within sericin, dissolving and releasing it into the wastewater. In industrial practice, this process often occurs in multiple stages, with cocoons first being gummed (treated) to remove loose sericin, then subjected to more intensive treatment to ensure complete removal.

The chemistry underlying this process is straightforward: sericin, being a hydrophobic protein, is insoluble in cold water but dissolves in hot alkaline solutions. However, fibroin, being relatively resistant to alkaline hydrolysis under these conditions, remains largely intact—though some degree of fiber damage is inevitable[2].

2.2 Environmental and Economic Drawbacks

Despite their efficacy, conventional chemical methods present multiple sustainability concerns:

- **Water Consumption:** Traditional degumming requires massive quantities of water for boiling, rinsing, and wastewater treatment. A single silk fabric unit may consume 80–100 liters of water per kilogram of fiber processed[4].
- **Chemical Effluent:** Wastewater from chemical degumming contains high concentrations of alkaline compounds, residual sericin, and surfactants, creating an environmental burden and requiring expensive treatment before discharge[1][5].
- **Energy Demands:** Heating large volumes of water to maintain 90–100°C for several hours

is energy-intensive, increasing carbon emissions and operational costs[3].

- **Fiber Damage:** Prolonged exposure to harsh alkaline conditions can degrade fibroin, reducing fiber tensile strength and elasticity, particularly in tussah and wild silk varieties[2].

These limitations have motivated research into greener alternatives, with enzyme-based and physical methods emerging as viable substitutes.

3. Enzyme-Based Degumming: Principles and Advantages

3.1 Enzymatic Mechanisms

Enzyme-based degumming employs proteolytic enzymes (proteases) that selectively hydrolyze peptide bonds within sericin while minimizing damage to fibroin. Common proteases employed include alkaline proteases (such as subtilisin), neutral proteases (such as Protosubtilin G3x), and fungal enzymes like bromelain[3][4]. These enzymes exhibit high specificity, catalyzing hydrolysis reactions under mild conditions—typically at temperatures of 50–60°C and neutral pH (6.5–7.5)—which are far less harsh than conventional alkaline treatment[4].

The enzymatic approach typically follows a two-stage protocol: an initial mild alkaline pre-treatment (if needed) followed by enzyme treatment in aqueous solutions containing non-ionic detergents to facilitate sericin dissolution[3]. The resulting sericin is broken down into smaller, water-soluble polypeptides and amino acids, allowing easy removal via washing.

3.2 Environmental Benefits

Enzyme-based degumming offers substantial sustainability advantages:

- **Reduced Water Usage:** Treatment times are 1–3 hours (compared to 2–4 hours for chemical methods), and lower temperatures reduce associated water and heating requirements[4].
- **Biodegradability:** Enzymes are entirely biodegradable and non-toxic. Residual enzyme in wastewater is easily degraded by natural aquatic microorganisms, eliminating persistent chemical contamination[1][3].
- **Fiber Preservation:** The mild, selective action of enzymes preserves fibroin integrity, resulting in silk with improved softness, tensile strength, and elasticity compared to chemically treated silk[4].
- **Reduced Chemical Load:** Enzyme methods eliminate the need for harsh alkaline compounds, reducing occupational hazards and chemical handling requirements[5].

3.3 Limitations and Current Challenges

Despite these advantages, enzyme-based degumming faces implementation barriers:

- **Cost:** Commercial enzyme preparations are expensive, with costs exceeding traditional alkaline reagents, making large-scale adoption economically challenging[3][4].

- **Enzyme Sensitivity:** Proteases are sensitive to pH and temperature variations, requiring precise process control. Deactivation during storage or processing can reduce effectiveness[2].
- **Reaction Rate:** Enzymatic reactions proceed more slowly than chemical hydrolysis, potentially extending process times in some applications[1].
- **Enzyme Reusability:** Although immobilized enzyme systems have been developed to improve reusability, their industrial-scale implementation remains limited[3].

Recent advances in recombinant enzyme technology and immobilized enzyme systems are beginning to address these limitations. Khamidova et al. (2024) demonstrated that neutral protease Protosubtilin G3x achieved effective sericin removal while maintaining fibroin structure, offering a promising direction for enzyme technology adoption[3].

4. Microwave-Assisted Degumming: A Physical Innovation

4.1 Technical Principles

Microwave-assisted degumming employs non-ionizing electromagnetic radiation in the microwave frequency range (typically 2.45 GHz) to generate uniform heating throughout silk fibers. This technology can be used independently or in combination with steam, mild alkaline solutions, or enzymes. The microwave radiation causes polar molecules (particularly water) within the fiber structure to rotate, generating internal heat that penetrates the fiber matrix uniformly—a mechanism fundamentally different from conventional surface-based heating[2][4].

4.2 Recent Technological Advances

Since 2018, significant progress has been made in scaling microwave technology for industrial applications. Pan et al. (2024) developed an innovative microwave-steam synergistic degumming process that achieved remarkable improvements over traditional methods. Using a combination of 10 minutes of microwave pre-treatment followed by 30 minutes of steam at 120°C, the process achieved three times the degumming efficiency of conventional Na_2CO_3 degumming while consuming only half the energy and reducing process time from 2.75 hours to 0.75 hours[4][5].

Prakash et al. (2022) documented that intermittent microwave treatment produced silk fibers with superior crystallinity compared to Na_2CO_3-degummed silk, indicating improved structural organization that enhances mechanical properties[2]. Furthermore, the resulting silk exhibited better whiteness and brightness indices, suggesting improved aesthetic quality without chemical bleaching agents.

4.3 Environmental and Economic Benefits

- **Drastically Reduced Process Time:** Treatment times of 15–40 minutes compare favorably to 2–4 hours for chemical methods, allowing higher throughput[4][5].
- **Lower Energy Consumption:** Microwave heating's efficiency results in approximately

50% energy reduction compared to conventional boiling methods[4].

- **Minimal Chemical Requirements:** The process can operate without or with minimal chemical additives, dramatically reducing wastewater treatment burdens[2].
- **Improved Fiber Quality:** Microwave-degummed silk retains superior tensile strength and elasticity, with mechanical properties (warp strength: 542.20 N, weft strength: 356.19 N) exceeding those of chemically treated fibers[4].
- **Scalability:** Recent advances in microwave reactor design have made scaling to industrial volumes feasible, with pilot-scale operations demonstrating consistent results[2][5].

4.4 Remaining Challenges

Despite its promise, microwave degumming faces implementation obstacles:

- **Capital Equipment Costs:** Industrial-scale microwave reactors require substantial initial investment[1].
- **Process Standardization:** Optimal parameters (microwave power, duration, temperature) vary depending on silk type, requiring process optimization for different applications[2].
- **Scalability in Resource-Limited Settings:** Small-scale and developing-nation silk producers may lack access to microwave equipment or technical expertise[5].

5. Comparative Analysis of Degumming Methods

Method	Process Time	Energy Use	Fiber Quality	Env. Impact
Chemical (Na_2CO_3/Soap)	2–4 hours	Very High	Moderate	Very High
Enzyme-based	1–3 hours	Moderate	Excellent	Very Low
Microwave + Steam	0.75–1 hour	50% lower	Excellent	Minimal
Ultrasonic-assisted	1–2 hours	Moderate	Very Good	Low

Table 1: Comparative evaluation of silk degumming methods (compiled from 2022–2024 research)

6. Discussion: Hybrid Approaches and Future Directions

6.1 Synergistic Technologies

The most promising direction for advancing sustainable degumming involves combining complementary technologies. For instance, enzyme-microwave hybrid systems, wherein microwave pre-treatment facilitates enzyme penetration and accelerates enzymatic reactions, could leverage advantages of both methods while mitigating individual limitations[3][4]. Similarly, ultrasonic-assisted enzymatic degumming has shown enhanced degumming efficiency compared to enzyme treatment alone[5].

6.2 Cost-Effectiveness and Scale

While microwave and enzyme methods demonstrate superior environmental performance, their adoption in developing regions faces economic barriers. Gaviria et al. (2023) demonstrated that autoclaving—a more accessible thermal technology—represents an intermediate solution, achieving degumming efficiency comparable to advanced methods with reduced capital requirements[1]. This finding suggests that a tiered approach, implementing technology appropriate to local economic conditions, may accelerate sustainability transition across the global silk industry.

6.3 Sericin Recovery and Valorization

Emerging research recognizes that sericin, previously treated as waste, possesses valuable bioactive properties including antimicrobial, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory activities[5][8]. Modern degumming processes are increasingly designed to recover rather than merely dispose of sericin, transforming it into value-added products for pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and nutraceuticals. This circular economy approach further enhances the sustainability profile of advanced degumming technologies[5].

6.4 Industrial Adoption Pathways

For successful transition from conventional to sustainable degumming methods, several conditions must be met:

- **Equipment Development:** Continued innovation in microwave reactor design and enzyme immobilization technology to reduce capital and operating costs[2][4].
- **Skills Training:** Technical education programs for textile workers to ensure safe and effective operation of novel equipment[3].
- **Policy Support:** Government incentives (tax breaks, subsidies) and environmental regulations (pollution charges) to encourage adoption[1][5].
- **Collaborative Research:** Continued partnership between textile manufacturers, research institutions, and equipment vendors to optimize processes for specific fiber types and production scales[4].

7. Conclusion

The evolution of silk degumming from conventional chemical methods to enzyme-based and microwave-assisted technologies represents a significant advancement toward sustainable textile production. While chemical degumming remains the current industry standard, it imposes substantial environmental costs through water consumption, chemical discharge, and energy demand. Enzyme-based degumming offers exceptional fiber quality and minimal environmental impact, though cost remains a barrier to widespread adoption. Microwave-assisted degumming, particularly in combination with steam, demonstrates superior efficiency, reducing process time by 70% and energy consumption by 50% while producing silk with enhanced mechanical properties[4][5].

The evidence from recent peer-reviewed research (2022–2024) supports the technical and environmental viability of these alternatives. Pan et al. (2024) documented that microwave-steam degumming is not merely theoretically superior but demonstrably effective at pilot and industrial scales[4]. The challenge now lies not in technological feasibility but in economic optimization and industry adoption. Strategic investment in equipment development, workforce training, and regulatory frameworks to incentivize sustainable practices will be essential to enable broad-scale transition.

These newer green techniques hold tremendous promise to enhance the sustainability of global silk farming while providing economic and quality-of-life benefits to farmers and manufacturers. By embracing enzyme-based and microwave-assisted degumming, the silk industry can substantially reduce its environmental footprint while producing superior fiber products. Future research should focus on hybrid technologies, cost reduction strategies, and sericin valorization to accelerate the transition toward a truly sustainable silk production ecosystem that benefits farmers, manufacturers, and the environment alike.

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ADVANCES IN BIVOLTINE COCOON PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH FOR SUSTAINABLE SILK PRODUCTION IN INDIA

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Abstract

Bivoltine sericulture has emerged as a critical driver of high-quality silk production in India, particularly under tropical conditions where productivity is constrained by fluctuating climate, pest incidence and inconsistent mulberry leaf quality. This study synthesizes recent advancements in bivoltine cocoon production technology with emphasis on optimal host plant management, improved silkworm rearing protocols, environmental regulation, and eco-friendly pest management. Field and laboratory trials conducted during 2023–2024 evaluated the influence of integrated mulberry nutrition, season-specific rearing schedules and botanical biopesticides on larval growth rate, cocoon traits and rearing efficiency. Results indicated that supplementation with FYM + NPK + micronutrients increased leaf moisture and protein content significantly ($p<0.05$), which correspondingly improved larval weight, effective rate of rearing (ERR), and cocoon shell ratio. Adoption of improved rearing houses with temperature-humidity regulation (T: 25–27°C; RH: 70–80%) reduced larval mortality by 18.6% over traditional systems. Neem-based formulations (3%) effectively suppressed uzi fly and muscardine infection without affecting larval feeding. Overall, the integrated package recorded a 22.4% higher cocoon yield and 19.1% higher raw silk output. The findings highlight the potential of optimized rearing environments, improved mulberry agronomy, and eco-friendly pest regulation strategies to substantially enhance bivoltine cocoon production under Indian sericultural conditions.

Keywords: Bivoltine silkworm, cocoon production, mulberry nutrition, pest management, rearing technology, sericulture.

1. Introduction

Sericulture plays a significant role in India's rural economy, providing livelihood opportunities to millions of families. In recent years, the focus of Indian sericulture has increasingly shifted toward bivoltine silk production, owing to its superior filament strength, fineness, and international market demand. However, achieving consistent bivoltine cocoon yields in tropical agro-climatic regions remains difficult due to:

- fluctuating temperature and humidity,
- poor-quality mulberry leaf supply,

- higher susceptibility to pathogens and parasitoids,
- unsuitable infrastructure,
- gaps in scientific rearing practices.

Therefore, optimizing bivoltine cocoon production requires a systems approach, combining mulberry nutrition, improved rearing environments, disease prevention and integrated pest management. This paper highlights recent advancements, experimental findings, and feasible recommendations suitable for field-level adoption by farmers and sericulture extension systems.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Importance of Bivoltine Silkworm Races

Bivoltine races such as CSR2 × CSR4, CSR6 × CSR26, and CSR50 have excellent genetic potential for:

- higher cocoon shell ratio (CSR),
- better reelability,
- denser filament strength.

However, they demand:

- stable microclimate,
- nutrient-rich mulberry,
- stringent hygiene.

2.2 Mulberry as the Foundation

High-quality mulberry leaf contributes 60–70% to cocoon yield. Several studies revealed that:

- Integrated nutrient management improves leaf protein and moisture.
- Pruning and irrigation schedules affect foliage biomass and nutrient profiles.

2.3 Rearing Environment

For bivoltine strains, optimal environmental parameters include:

- Temperature: 25–27°C,
- Relative humidity: 70–80%,
- Diffused light and adequate ventilation.

2.4 Pest and Disease Management

Key biotic constraints include:

- Uzi fly (*Exorista bombycis*),
- Muscardine fungi (*Beauveria bassiana*, *Metarhizium anisopliae*),
- Bacterial flacherie,
- Viral diseases (NPV).

Eco-friendly biological inputs have shown promising results.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Study Area

Field experiments were carried out at the *Sericulture Research Farm, Department of Entomology*, located under tropical semi-arid conditions (Temperature: 22–34°C; RH: 55–85%).

3.2 Experimental Design

Three major components were evaluated:

A. Mulberry Nutrient Treatments

1. T1 – Farmers' traditional practice (control)
2. T2 – FYM 20 t/ha + Recommended NPK
3. T3 – T2 + micronutrient mixture (Zn, Fe, Mn, B)
4. T4 – T3 + biofertilizers (Azotobacter + PSB)

B. Rearing Environment Treatments

1. R1 – Conventional rearing house
2. R2 – Improved house with ventilation facility
3. R3 – Temperature & humidity regulated rearing shed

C. Pest Management Packages

1. P1 – Conventional chemical control
2. P2 – Neem oil 3% + bleaching powder disinfection
3. P3 – Bioagents (Nuclear polyhedrosis virus inactivators, *B. bassiana*)

3.3 Parameters Recorded

- Larval weight (5th instar, day 5)
- Effective rate of rearing (ERR %)
- Cocoon weight and shell weight
- Cocoon shell ratio (%)
- Raw silk yield
- Disease incidence

3.4 Statistical Analysis

ANOVA and multiple mean comparisons were used to assess treatment differences.

4. Results

4.1 Mulberry Nutrient Management

T3 and T4 produced leaves with significantly higher:

- protein content (+14–18%),
- moisture content (+9–12%),
- leaf yield/plant.

This directly enhanced silkworm growth.

4.2 Silkworm Growth and Cocoon Parameters

Improved treatments showed:

Treatment	Larval Weight (g)	ERR (%)	Cocoon Wt (g)	CSR (%)
Traditional	34.5	72.4	1.35	18.5
Integrated Package	41.2	88.5	1.65	22.1

4.3 Rearing Environment

R3 (regulated environment) resulted in:

- 18–20% reduction in larval mortality,
- uniform spinning,
- increased cocoon shell weight.

4.4 Pest Management

Neem oil 3% (P2) and bioagents (P3):

- reduced uzi fly infestation by 70–86%,
- suppressed muscardine infection,
- had no adverse effect on cocoon traits.

4.5 Overall Productivity Gain

Integrated package (T4 + R3 + P3):

- increased total cocoon yield by 22.4%,
- increased raw silk by 19.1%,
- reduced disease incidence by 27%.

5. Discussion

The study confirms that mulberry quality, rearing microclimate, and pest regulation collectively determine bivoltine cocoon productivity. Mulberry with high protein and moisture ensures better digestion, quicker larval growth and efficient silk gland development.

Regulated rearing houses avoid heat stress and desiccation, which are major limitations in tropical sericulture. Improved hygiene and biological control significantly reduce disease pressure.

The integration of these practices presents a realistic and sustainable pathway for Indian farmers to achieve high-quality bivoltine silk, reducing dependency on imports and enhancing rural income.

6. Conclusion

This research demonstrated that adopting an integrated bivoltine cocoon production technology—comprising optimized mulberry nutrition, regulated rearing environments, and eco-friendly pest management—significantly improves cocoon yield and quality. Such a technology package can be disseminated through Krishi Vigyan Kendras, state sericulture departments, and farmer producer organizations for widespread benefit.

7. Recommendations for Field Adoption

- Maintain uniform leaf quality through balanced fertilization.
- Ensure rearing houses maintain T: 25–27°C and RH: 70–80%.
- Adopt regular bed disinfectants, hygiene protocols, and bioagents.
- Promote neem-based and microbial pest regulation.
- Provide continuous training to farmers on scientific rearing schedules.

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POST-COCOON PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

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ABSTRACT

The post-cocoon sector of sericulture, pivotal in transforming raw cocoons into valuable silk products, faces significant socio-economic barriers that impede its growth and modernization. Quality inconsistency remains a critical challenge, stemming from non-standardized cocoon grading and traditional rearing practices, which negatively affect silk quality and market competitiveness. Limited mechanization in post-cocoon processes such as stifling, reeling, and twisting exacerbates labor intensity and reduces production efficiency, particularly among small-scale farmers who often lack access to affordable advanced machinery. Compounding these issues are prevalent skill gaps—insufficient training and technical knowledge restrict the adoption of modern technologies and best practices vital for maintaining consistent quality and productivity. Additional constraints include fragmented production units, weak market linkages, low wages, and declining youth participation, which collectively undermine the sector's sustainability. Addressing these barriers necessitates integrated interventions including targeted skill development programs, investment in affordable mechanization, capacity building, and institutional support to facilitate technology adoption, quality standardization, and market access. Such efforts are essential to revitalize the post cocoon industry, improve livelihoods, and ensure the sustainable development of sericulture in the face of evolving economic and environmental challenges.

Key words: Socio economic barriers, quality inconsistency, skill gaps, labour intensity.

Introduction

The post-cocoon sector of sericulture is the critical link that converts raw cocoons into marketable silk yarn and finished products, thereby determining the economic returns to producers and workers along the value chain. In many silk-producing regions, especially in India, this segment generates a large share of rural employment and value addition, yet it remains constrained by low productivity, quality inconsistency, and structural socio-economic barriers. These constraints undermine both the competitiveness of domestically produced silk and the livelihood security of small and marginal farmers, women workers, and rural youth who depend on sericulture.

The abstract "Post-Cocoon Pathways to Prosperity" highlights four major challenges in this domain: quality inconsistency driven by non-standardized cocoon grading and traditional practices; limited mechanization in key post-cocoon operations; pervasive skill gaps; and wider institutional and market failures such as fragmented production units, weak market linkages, low wages, and declining youth participation. These intertwined challenges point to the need for integrated strategies that combine technological, institutional, and capacity-building interventions. This paper expands that abstract into a comprehensive analysis. It examines the structure and importance of the post-cocoon sector, describes the major socio-economic barriers in detail, and synthesizes evidence on suitable interventions, including mechanization, training and skill development, quality standardization, institutional innovations, and youth-focused entrepreneurship promotion. The discussion is situated primarily in the Indian context, where sericulture is both a traditional livelihood and a potential driver of inclusive rural growth.

The Post-Cocoon Sector in the Sericulture Value Chain

The sericulture value chain is conventionally divided into pre-cocoon, cocoon production, and post-cocoon stages, each with distinct actors and technologies. The post-cocoon segment begins with the marketing and grading of cocoons and includes stifling (killing the pupae), reeling and spinning of filament, twisting, dyeing, weaving, and finishing of silk fabrics. These stages add the bulk of the value to raw cocoons and are decisive for final product quality, price realization, and export competitiveness.

In India, the post-cocoon sector is highly diverse, comprising household-level charkha reelers, small and medium reeling units, women's self-help groups (SHGs) engaged in spinning and twisting, power-loom and handloom weavers, and decentralized dyeing and finishing units. Many of these units operate with low capital, outdated equipment, and informal employment arrangements, which together contribute to low productivity and vulnerability to market fluctuations. Despite these weaknesses, the sector supports millions of livelihoods and has been recognized as a key agro-based industry for poverty reduction and rural industrialization.

The employment intensity of post-cocoon activities is particularly high for women, as a large share of reeling, spinning, and weaving tasks are carried out by female workers in both household and small enterprise settings. This gendered participation implies that improvements in technology, organization, and market access can translate directly into enhanced income and empowerment for rural women. At the same time, failure to address structural bottlenecks risks entrenching low wages, informal working conditions, and inter-generational exit of youth from the sector.

Quality Inconsistency and Non-Standardized Grading

Quality inconsistency in cocoons and raw silk is a central problem undermining the competitiveness of the post-cocoon sector. Non-standardized grading of cocoons at primary markets often leads to mismatches between price and intrinsic quality, discouraging farmers from investing in improved rearing practices and hindering the matching of cocoon lots to appropriate reeling technologies. The persistence of traditional and heterogeneous grading practices across states and markets makes it difficult to enforce quality norms and to provide transparent price signals.

On the production side, the prevalence of traditional rearing methods and limited adoption of improved silkworm breeds, disease management protocols, and scientific rearing schedules contribute to variability in cocoon size, shell ratio, and filament length. When these heterogeneous cocoons are fed into reeling systems without proper sorting and grading, the result is irregular filament, high waste, frequent thread breaks, and ultimately lower grades of raw silk. This has repercussions throughout the value chain, as reeling and weaving units must either accept higher processing costs or shift to imported cocoons and yarn where quality is more consistent.

Addressing quality inconsistency therefore requires interventions along multiple nodes of the chain. At the farm level, extension and training can promote improved rearing technologies, disease-free layings, and better pre-cocoon management to reduce variability. At the market interface, standardized grading protocols, objective quality testing, and transparent price reporting systems can align incentives, rewarding farmers who supply superior cocoons and enabling reelers to procure raw material suited to their machinery and product specifications.

Limited Mechanization and Its Implications

Post-cocoon activities such as stifling, reeling, and twisting remain labor-intensive in many regions, with a large proportion of production relying on manual or semi-mechanized equipment. While traditional devices are inexpensive and suitable for household operations, they typically have low productivity, inconsistent output quality, and high drudgery, particularly for women workers. As labor costs rise and rural labor availability becomes more uncertain, the lack of mechanization constrains both the profitability and scalability of sericulture enterprises.

Mechanization in the post-cocoon segment—through multi-end reeling machines, improved stifling and drying units, automatic or semi-automatic reeling systems, and twisting machines—has demonstrated potential to increase output per worker, enhance uniformity of yarn, and reduce physical strain. However, high initial investment costs, limited access to credit, and fears about machine maintenance and repair often limit adoption, especially among small and marginal producers. In some regions, the absence of local repair services and spare parts further discourages investment in advanced equipment.

There is also a socio-economic dimension to mechanization. Properly designed mechanization strategies can generate new technical and supervisory jobs and create opportunities for women and youth to move into higher-skill roles in machine operation, maintenance, and quality control. Conversely, poorly planned mechanization, without adequate retraining or alternative livelihood support, may displace unskilled workers and exacerbate rural inequality. Thus, mechanization policies must be embedded within broader rural development and social protection frameworks.

Skill Gaps and Training Deficits

A recurring constraint identified in the abstract is the existence of pervasive skill gaps across post-cocoon operations. Workers engaged in reeling, spinning, dyeing, and weaving often acquire their skills informally within households or through on-the-job experience, which may not align with the technical requirements of modern machinery or quality standards demanded by export markets. Lack of structured and continuous skill development results in sub-optimal use of equipment, higher defect rates, and limited capacity to absorb new technologies.

Specific technical competencies needed in the post-cocoon sector include proper cocoon sorting, control of stifling conditions, management of reeling parameters such as temperature and tension, detection and correction of yarn faults, and quality-oriented dyeing and finishing processes. In addition, entrepreneurial and managerial skills—such as cost accounting, market analysis, labor management, and compliance with quality certifications—are increasingly important for unit owners and seri-entrepreneurs. Without targeted training in these domains, small units remain trapped in low-productivity equilibria and are unable to integrate into higher-value segments of the silk value chain.

Skill gaps are particularly acute among women workers and rural youth, who may face barriers in accessing formal training centers located in urban areas or requiring extended residential stays. Addressing these inequities calls for decentralized, context-specific training models that combine short-term modular courses, on-site demonstrations, and digital or blended learning approaches tailored to local languages and needs.

Fragmentation, Weak Market Linkages, and Low Wages

The structure of the post-cocoon sector is characterized by fragmentation, with numerous small and informal units operating independently and lacking economies of scale or bargaining power. This fragmentation weakens vertical coordination between cocoon producers, reelers, weavers, and traders, leading to high transaction costs, information asymmetries, and unstable supply relationships. In such environments, intermediaries often capture a significant share of value, while primary producers and workers receive low and volatile incomes.

Weak market linkages also limit the ability of post-cocoon units to access remunerative markets, quality inputs, and financial services. Many small enterprises sell yarn or fabric to local traders at prices that do not reflect quality differentials, or they rely on credit-linked marketing arrangements that reduce their autonomy. At the same time, lack of exposure to market trends—such as demand for eco-friendly silk, organic production, or niche fashion segments—prevents seri-entrepreneurs from innovating and differentiating their products.

These structural conditions contribute to persistently low wages and informal employment for workers, particularly women, who often receive piece-rate payments without social protection or formal contracts. Low returns discourage youth from entering the sector and push existing workers to seek alternative livelihoods in urban informal jobs or other agricultural activities. Without deliberate policy measures to improve organization, bargaining power, and value capture at the lower end of the chain, the post-cocoon segment risks gradual decline despite its recognized potential for employment generation.

Declining Youth Participation and Generational Transitions

The abstract notes declining youth participation as a serious threat to the long-term sustainability of the post-cocoon industry. Younger generations increasingly perceive sericulture and silk processing as low-status, low-return, and physically demanding occupations, especially when compared with alternative opportunities in urban services or technology sectors. This perception is reinforced by visible drudgery in manual reeling and weaving, the absence of clear career progression, and limited access to formal recognition or certification of skills.

Yet several studies and program experiences indicate that when sericulture is linked to modern technologies, organized value chains, and viable entrepreneurship models, it can attract educated youth seeking local, dignified, and environmentally sustainable livelihoods. Youth-led enterprises in reeling, weaving, design, branding, and e-commerce have emerged where supportive ecosystems exist, combining technical assistance, access to finance, and market facilitation. For this potential to be realized at scale, policy frameworks must reposition the post-cocoon sector as a site of innovation and creativity rather than a residual rural occupation

Promoting youth engagement therefore requires a combination of measures: enhancing earnings and working conditions through mechanization and up-gradation; integrating digital tools for design, marketing, and supply-chain coordination; and embedding sericulture modules within vocational education and entrepreneurship development programs. Role models drawn from successful young seri-entrepreneurs can further shift social norms and make the sector more aspirational.

Integrated Interventions: Mechanization, Capacity Building, and Institutional Support

The abstract emphasizes the need for integrated interventions rather than isolated technical fixes. At the technological level, investment in affordable, appropriate-scale mechanization is central to reducing labor intensity, improving quality, and enhancing occupational health. Priority areas include energy-efficient stifling units, multi-end reeling machines suitable for diverse cocoon types, improved twisting and winding equipment, and small-scale dyeing and finishing technologies that meet environmental standards.

Capacity building must accompany technology diffusion to ensure effective and inclusive adoption. Structured training programs tailored to different user groups—women workers, youth, unit owners, and technicians—can build competencies in machine operation, preventive maintenance, quality control, and enterprise management. Collaboration between government extension agencies, specialized training institutes, universities, and non-governmental organizations can expand outreach and diversify training modalities, including on-farm demonstrations and SHG-based peer learning.

Institutional support is equally critical. Strengthening producer organizations, cooperatives, SHGs, and producer companies can reduce fragmentation, increase bargaining power, and facilitate collective access to machinery, inputs, and markets. Public agencies and development programs can catalyze this process by offering targeted subsidies or credit for mechanization, promoting quality certification schemes, and facilitating linkages with organized retailers, exporters, and ethical fashion brands. In addition, integrating sericulture into broader rural development and climate-resilient livelihood strategies can ensure sustained policy attention and resource allocation.

Pathways to Prosperity: Policy and Research Priorities

To translate post-cocoon sericulture into "pathways to prosperity," coordinated policy efforts are required at multiple levels. At the macro level, national and state governments can articulate clear roadmaps for modernization of the silk value chain, with specific targets for mechanization, formalization of employment, gender inclusion, and export diversification. These roadmaps should recognize the unique socio-economic role of sericulture as an agro-based industry that combines farm and non-farm activities, generates year-round employment, and offers scope for green industrialization.

At the meso and micro levels, cluster-based development approaches can concentrate infrastructure, technical services, and financial support in selected sericulture hubs, creating demonstration effects and reducing per-unit costs of service delivery. Within such clusters, incubators or common facility centers equipped with modern reeling, weaving, and finishing machinery can enable small producers to access advanced technologies without bearing full capital costs, while also serving as training and innovation platforms.

Research priorities include the design of low-cost, energy-efficient machinery suitable for decentralized use; development of objective grading and quality assessment tools; socio-economic studies on gender and youth in the post-cocoon sector; and impact evaluations of different institutional and policy models. Interdisciplinary collaborations between entomologists, engineers, social scientists, and market analysts can generate holistic solutions that align biological, technological, and socio-economic dimensions of sericulture development.

Conclusion

The post-cocoon sector of sericulture stands at a crossroads, facing the dual challenge of overcoming entrenched socio-economic barriers and seizing new opportunities in evolving domestic and global silk markets. Quality inconsistency, limited mechanization, skill gaps, fragmented production structures, weak market linkages, low wages, and declining youth participation collectively threaten the sustainability of this vital rural industry. Yet, with integrated interventions that combine affordable mechanization, targeted skill development, institutional strengthening, and youth-oriented entrepreneurship promotion, the sector can be revitalized as a dynamic engine of inclusive growth and rural prosperity.

Positioning "post-cocoon pathways to prosperity" at the center of sericulture policy thus implies not only upgrading technology and infrastructure, but also reshaping the social and economic relations of production in favor of small producers, women, and youth. This paper underscores that such a transformation is both necessary and feasible when supported by coherent policy frameworks, participatory institutions, and sustained investment in human and social capital.

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PROTECTING MULBERRY FROM POWDERY MILDEW: INTEGRATED STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY LEAVES

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry powdery mildew, primarily caused by *Phyllactinia corylea* and *Erysiphe cichoracearum*, is one of the most destructive foliar diseases affecting sericulture worldwide. The pathogen proliferates rapidly under warm and humid conditions, leading to the development of characteristic white powdery fungal growth on leaf surfaces, chlorosis, tissue necrosis, leaf deformation, and premature defoliation. These symptoms significantly reduce mulberry leaf quality and yield, ultimately impairing silkworm growth and cocoon productivity. Integrated cultural, biological, and chemical management techniques that reduce pathogen establishment and dissemination are necessary for effective disease suppression. While biological control using microbial antagonists like *Trichoderma, Ampelomyces, Pseudomonas fluorescens,* and *Bacillus subtilis* offers environmentally friendly substitutes for fungicides, cultural techniques like optimal spacing, balanced nutrition, and sanitation practices help maintain a less favourable microclimate for disease development. When used carefully in rotation to prevent the development of resistance, chemical protectants and systemic fungicides—such as triazoles, strobilurins, Sulphur formulations, and botanicals derived from plants—continue to play a significant role. In addition to reducing environmental risk, the integration of all these techniques within a disease-management framework guarantees sustainable mulberry cultivation and increased sericulture productivity.

Key words: *Phyllactinia corylea, Erysiphe cichoracearum*, Biocontrol, Fungicides, Cultural practices, Silkworm performance

Introduction

Mulberry (*Morus* spp.) is a perennial deciduous plant cultivated primarily for supplying nutritious foliage to the silkworm *Bombyx mori*, the foundation of the sericulture industry. Sericulture has been an integral component of rural livelihood in many Asian countries, especially India, China, Japan, and Korea, and contributes significantly to employment generation, women empowerment, and rural economy. Since the yield and quality of cocoons produced by silkworms are directly dependent on the nutritional value of mulberry leaves, maintaining a healthy mulberry crop throughout the year is essential for sustainable silk production. (Babu *et al*., 2006; Chakraborty &

Das, 2014). However, mulberries are susceptible to a variety of biotic stressors, such as bacterial, viral, and fungal infections, just like any intensively grown crop. Among these, one of the most common and financially detrimental diseases impacting mulberry farms is powdery mildew. Tropical, subtropical, and temperate regions are all affected by the disease, which has a global distribution. It can spread quickly among mulberry gardens in favourable environmental circumstances and produces serious foliar damage. Leaf yield can be reduced by 30–60% during powdery mildew epidemics, and in severe situations, the loss may surpass 70% during periods of high infection. Silkworm growth, feed conversion efficiency, larval duration, disease resistance, and cocoon features are all directly impacted by the decrease in leaf quantity and quality.

Conditions that are frequently present in intensive mulberry production systems, such as high humidity, mild temperatures, dense foliage, and inadequate aeration, are especially conducive to the disease. Additionally, the virus can persist throughout the cropping season due to recurrent cycles of conidial production and dispersal, making it challenging to treat the disease with a single control technique. Farmers frequently use fungicides repeatedly; while these treatments are helpful in the short term, their indiscriminate use raises production costs, may leave hazardous residues on leaves given to silkworms, and can cause environmental pollution and fungicide resistance in diseases.

As a result, controlling mulberry powdery mildew requires an all-encompassing, environmentally responsible, and financially feasible approach. The idea of Integrated Disease Management (IDM), which combines safe fungicides, biological control agents, resistant/tolerant cultivars, enhanced agronomic techniques, and nutritional interventions, has grown in significance in recent years. IDM protects leaf productivity and the profitability of the silk industry by reducing reliance on chemicals and guaranteeing residue-free, silkworm-compatible leaf production. Adoption of IDM enhances disease resistance, fosters sustainability, and is consistent with the current global focus on ecologically conscious farming methods.

Impact on Mulberry and Sericulture

The implications of powdery mildew extend beyond plant pathology because mulberry is the sole food source for silkworms. Infection causes physiological disruption, including reduced photosynthesis, slower carbohydrate synthesis, impaired stomatal function, altered water balance, decline in total nitrogen, protein, and moisture content of leaves. (Ganga & Jolly, 1992) These biochemical and nutritional changes result in poor palatability and low feed conversion efficiency when infected leaves are supplied to *Bombyx mori*. Silkworm larvae feeding on diseased leaves exhibit prolonged larval period, reduced body weight, increased susceptibility to diseases, lower cocoon weight, reduced filament length, and poor reliability. Severe epidemics cause weak shoot production, reduced plant growth, uneven sprouting during subsequent harvests, and a 30–70%

decrease in leaf yield at the plant level. Even mild infections can interfere with rearing cycles, raise production costs due to the need of fungicides and labour for cleanliness, and ultimately lower the profitability of silk farming in plantations that raise silkworms all year round. (Saha *et al.,* 2010). As a result, controlling powdery mildew is crucial for the sericulture industries' sustainability and economy in addition to being a phytosanitary necessity.

Etiology

Mulberry powdery mildew is caused primarily by the obligate biotrophic ascomycetous fungi *Phyllactinia corylea* (Pers.) Karst. and *Erysiphe cichoracearum* (DC.), both belonging to the family Erysiphaceae, which contains the major group of powdery mildew pathogens affecting diverse crops worldwide. (Govindan & Basavaraja, 2007) These fungi produce superficial, hyaline, septate mycelia that spread extensively on the surface of mulberry leaves, forming the characteristic white powdery growth. Being obligate parasites, they depend entirely on living host tissue for development and nutrition, and penetrate epidermal cells by means of haustoria, specialized feeding structures that extract nutrients while keeping host cells alive. (Vijayan *et al.,* 2011).

On the leaf surface, vertical conidiophores arise from the ectophytic mycelium and bear single-celled, hyaline, ellipsoidal conidia in basipetal chains; these conidia detach easily and are disseminated primarily by wind, facilitating rapid secondary spread under favourable environmental conditions. During the later stages of infection, the fungi produce **cleistothecia (chasmothecia)**—small, black, globose sexual fruiting bodies embedded in the mycelial mat—which contain asci and ascospores that enable long-term survival and serve as the **primary inoculum** in the next season. Phyllactinia corylea's cleistothecia have characteristic long, needle-like appendages, while Erysiphe cichoracearum has many small, mycelioid appendages. In a similar vein, the former primarily colonizes the lower leaf surface, whereas the latter typically infects the top side. Conidia germinate, develop a germ tube and appressorium-like structure, and create haustorial linkages to initiate infection. This is followed by a widespread accumulation of mycelium across the epidermal layer. The fungi's biotrophic nature permits extended parasitism and ongoing inhibition of the host's physiological processes, which results in notable decreases in photosynthesis, carbohydrate buildup, and total leaf biomass because they do not immediately damage host tissues.

Symptoms

On the upper leaf surface, the symptoms initially manifest as little white, powdery patches that eventually get larger and combine to cover the entire lamina. Both top and lower surfaces may be covered in cases of severe infection. Premature defoliation is the outcome of infected leaves becoming brittle, pale, and deformed. (Chakraborty & Das, 2014). Little black fruiting bodies, or cleistothecia, may be seen in later stages. The illness eventually affects silkworm growth and cocoon yield by lowering photosynthesis, metabolic activity, and total leaf biomass.

Disease Cycle

Mulberry powdery mildew is a polycyclic disease cycle that includes both primary and secondary infection cycles. Under favourable climatic conditions, the pathogen can survive throughout the year and generate recurrent outbreaks. The fungus primarily survives unfavourable seasons as dormant mycelium and cleistothecia found on falling leaves, buds, trimmed twigs, crop waste, and surrounding volunteer plants. (Govindan & Basavaraja, 2007) Cleistothecia burst as favourable humidity and temperature levels rise, releasing ascospores that serve as the main inoculum and cause the earliest infections on delicate spring leaves and fresh flushes. The pathogen quickly creates conidiophores and chains of conidia, which act as the secondary inoculum and propel epidemic transmission, after establishing haustorial feeding structures within epidermal cells. Conidia are mainly spread by wind, which makes it possible for diseases to spread swiftly over nearby leaves, nearby plants, and even far-off fields. The disease can finish several infection cycles in a single cropping season due to continuous sporulation. The cycle is completed and inoculum reservoirs are ready for the following season when sexual reproduction resumes at the end of the season and new cleistothecia form on infected leaf surfaces. (Vijayan *et al.,* 2011)

Epidemiology

Mulberry powdery mildew epidemiology is heavily impacted by agronomic, host-related, and environmental factors. The disease prefers warm temperatures (20–30°C) and somewhat high relative humidity (60–85%). However, unlike most foliar infections, it does not require free water for germination, which makes it especially dangerous during dry spells with humid nights. (Chakraborty & Das, 2014). Highly favorable microclimates for sporulation and conidial germination are produced by dense planting, shaded leaf canopies, excessive nitrogen fertilizer, and ongoing, lush vegetative development. Due to their high moisture content and thin epidermal layers, young, tender leaves in active vegetative growth exhibit the highest susceptibility. Conidia can spread passively mechanically by frequent intercultural operations, pruning equipment, and worker migration. The relevance of host physiology in epidemiology is demonstrated by the much lower disease incidence of nutritionally balanced plants and resistant cultivars. Although the disease persists throughout the year with sporadic flare-ups in subtropical regions, seasonal peaks of infection are typically seen during the post-monsoon and mild winter months. (Ganga & Jolly, 1992)

Powdery mildew epidemics are strongly influenced by environmental and physiological factors: Two peak infection periods commonly occur each year—**spring flush** and **autumn flush**—corresponding to emergence of tender foliage.

INTEGRATED DISEASE MANAGEMENT (IDM)

Effective control requires a comprehensive, long-term approach that incorporates chemical, biological, cultural, and preventive techniques:

A. Sanitation and Cultural Practices

An environmentally acceptable and sustainable method of controlling mulberry powdery mildew is based on cultural and sanitary practices. Using resistant or tolerant mulberry cultivars and disease-free planting material is the first step since they greatly lower the initial inoculum load and disease pressure in the field. (Vijayan *et al.,* 2011) The mulberry garden's design and upkeep are equally important; proper spacing, prompt trimming, and canopy control enhance light penetration and air circulation inside the leaf, reducing humidity levels that favour the disease. Because too much nitrogen encourages the growth of excessively succulent leaves that are highly susceptible to infection, while sufficient potassium and calcium supplements enhance leaf toughness, physiological strength, and disease resistance, nutritional management must be carefully regulated. To minimize the exposure of sensitive leaves, harvest leaves at the proper maturity level. To avoid the development of sporulating fungal structures that act as a constant source of inoculum, producers should remove and eliminate fallen debris, trimmed material, and leaves afflicted with powdery mildew. Regular field hygiene is crucial. Furthermore, removing leaves at the right maturity level lessens the amount of time that delicate young leaves the most vulnerable tissue are exposed to the virus. Together, these cultural and sanitation techniques significantly reduce the incidence of disease and produce an unfavorable environment for pathogen survival, which lessens the need for chemical interventions and guarantees consistent leaf yield for silkworm rearing. When combined, these cultural and sanitation techniques significantly reduce the incidence of disease and produce an unfavorable environment for pathogen survival, which lessens the need for chemical interventions and guarantees consistent leaf yield for silkworm rearing. (Kumar & Naik, 2012)

B. Biological Control

By utilizing natural antagonists that prevent the pathogen's survival and reproduction, biological control provides a sustainable and environmentally acceptable method of controlling mulberry powdery mildew. *Trichoderma harzianum, T. viride, Pseudomonas fluorescens,* and *Bacillus subtilis* are among the beneficial microorganisms that have shown strong antagonistic effects against Phyllactinia corylea. (Kumar & Naik, 2012) These microorganisms suppress the disease through mechanisms like competition for nutrients and space, parasitism of fungal structures, production of antifungal metabolites, and induction of systemic resistance in the host plant. Frequent foliar spraying of bio-agents creates a protective microbial flora on the leaf surface that prevents the powdery mildew fungus's conidial germination and mycelial proliferation. Botanical extracts and plant-derived oils, such as neem (*Azadirachta indica*), garlic, pongamia, and eucalyptus oils, have potent antifungal action and are frequently utilized as natural defenses in addition to microbial antagonists. Additionally, by changing the pH and osmotic balance on the leaf surface, bicarbonate-based formulations such 0.6% sodium bicarbonate or 1% potassium bicarbonate assist reduce infection by preventing fungal growth and sporulation. (Sujathamma & Dandin, 2000; Kumar & Naik, 2012) Biological control methods assist lower pathogen inoculum, postpone the development of disease, and preserve leaf quality without leaving toxic residues that could negatively impact silkworms when they are applied on a regular basis and combined with cultural measures. Because of this, biological control is a crucial part of integrated disease management (IDM) strategies for mulberry farming.

Chemical Control

Mulberry powdery mildew management still heavily relies on chemical control, especially when the disease spreads quickly and cultural and biological methods are insufficient to stop economic harm. The fungus is extremely susceptible to sulphur-based fungicides, which are often advised as the first line of defense because of their broad-spectrum effectiveness, affordability, safety for silkworms, and minimal danger of causing resistance. By preventing conidial germination and mycelial growth, sulfur dusting at 30 kg/ha or wettable sulfur spraying at 0.2% efficiently inhibits early infection. Systemic fungicides from the triazole group offer better protection in situations where sulfur alone is insufficient to control the disease, particularly during peak epidemic phases. (Babu et al., 2006)

Conclusion

One of the most enduring and significant foliar diseases impacting mulberry production and, hence, the sustainability of sericulture is mulberry powdery mildew. The virus can persist throughout the seasons and start recurring epidemics because of its capacity to quickly infect young, delicate leaves, as well as its effective airborne conidia distribution and overwintering cleistothecia production. Silkworm growth, cocoon characteristics, and silk yield are all negatively impacted by the disease's direct reduction of leaf biomass, nutritional quality, and palatability (Thangavelu et al., 2018). As a result, depending just on one management technique is neither long-term sustainable or effective. The most practical and ecologically friendly answer is an integrated disease management (IDM) strategy that incorporates biological agents, cultural and sanitation practices, and strategically scheduled chemical interventions. To reduce disease pressure and guarantee leaf safety for silkworm feeding, it is crucial to adopt resistant mulberry varieties, manage nutrients in a balanced manner, improve the field microclimate through pruning and spacing, and strategically apply fungicides based on sulfur and triazole in conjunction with bioagents. In the end, long-term management relies on the persistent application of these integrated tactics, bolstered by farmer awareness, routine monitoring, and additional research on biocontrol advances and resistant cultivars. Mulberry health can be preserved, leaf production and quality can be increased, and the sericulture sector's overall productivity and profitability can be raised by using a comprehensive strategy.

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POTENTIAL OF ENTOMOPATHOGENIC FUNGI IN SUPPRESSING ERI SILKWORM FIELD AND REARING PESTS

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ABSTRACT

Eri silkworm production is frequently constrained by a complex spectrum of field and rearing house pests affecting both host plant productivity and silkworm health. With increasing emphasis on residue-free sericulture, entomopathogenic fungi (EPF) have emerged as promising eco-friendly biocontrol agents. The present study, conducted during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, evaluated the efficacy of selected EPF strains—*Beauveria bassiana*, *Metarhizium anisopliae*, and *Lecanicillium lecanii*—in managing key pests such as leaf webber (*Spilosoma obliqua*), castor semi-looper (*Achaea janata*), spiraling whitefly (*Aleurodicus dispersus*), and eri silkworm uzi fly (*Blepharipa zebina*).

Laboratory bioassays and field applications were conducted using standardized conidial suspensions (1×10^8 conidia/mL). In vitro tests revealed rapid larval mortality in *S. obliqua* (78% within 7 days) and *A. janata* (72% within 6 days) when exposed to *B. bassiana*, while *L. lecanii* exhibited superior control of whitefly populations through adult mortality and nymphal mummification. Semi-field trials on castor and tapioca demonstrated significant reductions in pest density (65–80%) with dual applications of EPF at 10-day intervals. Importantly, compatibility tests confirmed that EPF formulations were safe to eri silkworm larvae when applied to host plants 48–72 hours prior to feeding.

Rearing house experiments showed that surface application of *M. anisopliae* reduced uzi fly pupal emergence by 54%, indicating its potential in integrated rearing room sanitation. Environmental sustainability indicators highlighted EPF as non-toxic to beneficial insects and soil microbes. Farmer-participatory demonstrations resulted in 20–25% improvement in leaf availability and enhanced cocoon quality, validating the field applicability of EPF-based pest suppression.

The study establishes EPF as effective, eco-safe, and economically viable biocontrol agents suitable for inclusion in integrated eri sericulture pest management packages. Their adoption can significantly reduce reliance on chemical pesticides, promote environmental stewardship, and enhance resilience of rural eri farming systems.

Keywords: Entomopathogenic fungi, *Beauveria bassiana*, *Metarhizium anisopliae*, *Lecanicillium lecanii*, eri silkworm, uzi fly, leaf webber, biological control, castor, eco-friendly pest management.

Introduction

Eri silkworm (*Samia ricini*) rearing is one of the non-mulberry sericulture systems practiced widely across India, particularly in northeastern states, and serves as an important source of income for rural farming communities. The production of eri silk generates both social and economic value, providing employment to millions of farmers and workers while contributing to rural livelihoods and export earnings (Omkar, 2017). However, eri silkworm production faces signi cant challenges from a diverse array of eld and rearing house pests that compromise cocoon yield and quality. The primary eld pests include the leaf webber (Spilosoma obliqua), castor semi-looper (Achaea janata), and spiraling white y (Aleurodicus dispersus), while the rearing house pest, uzi y (Blepharipa zebina), represents a major constraint a ecting silkworm pupae and adult emergence (Central Silk Board, 2023). Traditional pest management approaches in eri sericulture have relied heavily on synthetic chemical pesticides, which, while e ective, pose substantial risks to environmental sustainability, human health, and the integrity of the sericulture ecosystem. Persistent chemical residues in soil and water, coupled with the development of pesticide resistance in pest populations, have necessitated the exploration of alternative, eco-friendly pest management strategies (Muhammad, 2025). In response to these concerns and the rising consumer demand for organic and residue-free silk, there has been increased interest in biological control agents, particularly entomopathogenic fungi (EPF). Entomopathogenic fungi are naturally occurring microorganisms that parasitize and kill insects through direct infection of the cuticle or via metabolite production (Omkar, 2017). Key EPF species, including *Beauveria bassiana, Metarhizium anisopliae, and Lecanicillium lecanii*, have demonstrated broad-spectrum efficacy against various agricultural pests in numerous cropping systems. However, their species application to eri silkworm pest management, particularly in Indian contexts and with local pest species, remains insufficiently documented. This study aimed to evaluate the efficacy, safety, and economic viability of selected EPF strains in suppressing eri silkworm eld and rearing pests, thereby contributing to the development of integrated pest management (IPM) strategies for sustainable eri sericulture.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Eri Silkworm Production and Pest Challenges

Eri silkworm rearing is characterized by its adaptation to agro-climatic conditions favorable to perennial castor and tapioca plantations, which serve as primary host plants. Unlike mulberry sericulture, which requires intensive management and controlled environments, eri silkworm rearing is relatively simple and can be practiced by marginal farmers at low capital investment (Agronomy Journals, 2025). However, the open-eld rearing system exposes silkworms to numerous natural enemies and pests during various developmental stages. The leaf webber (*Spilosoma obliqua*), a major eld pest, causes extensive defoliation on castor plants, directly reducing leaf quality and availability for silkworm feeding (Agricultural Research Institute, 2023). The castor semi-looper (*Achaea janata*) similarly damages host plants through larval feeding, while the spiraling white y (*Aleurodicus dispersus*) causes yellowing and early leaf fall through sap extraction and transmission of secondary pathogens. In the rearing house, the uzi y (*Blepharipa zebina*), a parasitoid of the silkworm, in substantial losses by parasitizing pupae, leading to poor cocoon recovery and reduced silk quality.

2.2 Entomopathogenic Fungi

Biology and Mechanism of Action Entomopathogenic fungi are obligate parasites of insects that kill their hosts through mechanisms including direct penetration of the insect cuticle, production of toxic metabolites, and systemic colonization of internal tissues (Omkar, 2017). Beauveria bassiana penetrates the insect cuticle through proteolytic enzyme action and proliferates within the hemocoel, causing host death within 3–7 days post-infection. Metarhizium anisopliae operates through similar mechanisms and has demonstrated e cacy against a wide range of insect pests, including ies and lepidopterans. *Lecanicillium lecanii* is particularly noted for its efficacy against soft-bodied insects such as white fies and aphids, and operates through both cuticle penetration and metabolite production (Central Silk Board, 2023).

2.3 Previous Applications of EPF in Sericulture and Agriculture

While EPF have been extensively studied in general agriculture, their application in sericulture remains limited. Recent studies in muga sericulture have explored mechanization and rearing innovations but have not comprehensively addressed EPF based pest management (Agronomy Journals, 2025). In broader agricultural contexts, EPF have shown promise in managing pests on various crops, though context-species research on non-mulberry sericulture pests is lacking. **3. Materials and Methods**

3.1 Study Location and Duration

The study was conducted at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu, during the 2024–2025 research period. The college facility provided laboratory space for bioassays, semi-eld enclosures for intermediate trials, and open-eld demonstration plots for farmer-participatory validation.

3.2 Entomopathogenic Fungi Strains and Preparation Three EPF strains were selected for evaluation:

Beauveria bassiana, Metarhizium anisopliae, and Lecanicillium lecanii. Conidial suspensions were prepared at a standardized concentration of 1×10^8 conidia/mL using sterile distilled water with 0.05% Tween-80 as an emulsifying agent. Culture stocks were maintained on potato dextrose agar (PDA) at 25±2°C and 70±5% relative humidity. Viability of conidia was con rmed by plate counts on PDA before each bioassay.

3.3 Laboratory Bioassays

Laboratory experiments were conducted using larvae of target pest species (*Spilosoma obliqua, Achaea janata, Aleurodicus dispersus)* maintained on their respective host plants in controlled conditions. Larvae were exposed to conidial suspensions through spray application at specific concentrations. Mortality was recorded daily for up to 14 days post-exposure. Control groups received distilled water with 0.05% Tween-80 only. Each treatment was replicated times with 20 larvae per replicate.

3.4 Semi-Field Trials

Semi-eld trials were conducted on potted castor and tapioca plants (host plants for eri silkworm) maintained in net-covered enclosures. EPF suspensions were applied at 10-day intervals over a 30-day period. Pest density (number of pests per 50 leaves) was recorded at 0, 10, 20, and 30 days post-application. Plant damage was assessed using a standardized visual rating scale (0–5, where 0 = no damage and 5 = complete defoliation). 3.5 Compatibility and Safety Tests Compatibility tests evaluated the safety of EPF formulations to eri silkworm larvae. Fresh castor and tapioca leaves were sprayed with EPF suspensions and allowed to dry for 48 or 72 hours before being offered to silkworm larvae. Larval survival, feeding behavior, cocoon weight, and cocoon color were monitored. Rearing room applications involved applying M. anisopliae to rearing house surfaces and monitoring its effect on emergence and silkworm health.

3.6 Statistical Analysis

All data were analyzed using one-way ANOVA with pest species or fungal strain as the main e ect. Means were compared using Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test at $P < 0.05$. Percentage data were arcsine-transformed before analysis.

4. Results

4.1 Laboratory Bioassay Results

Beauveria bassiana demonstrated rapid efficacy against *Spilosoma obliqua* larvae, achieving 78% mortality within 7 days of exposure to conidial suspensions. Against Achaea janata, the same strain achieved 72% mortality within 6 days. *Lecanicillium lecanii* exhibited superior control of white y populations (*Aleurodicus dispersus)*, achieving 85% adult mortality and inducing nymphal communication at exposure duration of 5 days. Control mortality in all treatments remained below 5%, indicating the species pathogenic effects of the fungal strains.

4.2 Semi-Field Trial Results

Semi-field trials on castor plants showed that dual applications of EPF at 10-day intervals resulted in pest density reductions of 65–80% compared to untreated controls. Similarly, tapioca plants treated with EPF demonstrated reductions in pest damage scores from an average of 3.8 in untreated plots to 1.2–1.5 in EPF-treated plots. The most effective results were observed with B. bassiana for leaf webber and semi-looper control and with *L. lecanii* for white y suppression.

4.3 Compatibility and Safety Results

Compatibility tests revealed that EPF formulations were safe to eri silkworm larvae when applied to host plants 48–72 hours prior to feeding. Larval survival rates, cocoon weights, and cocoon color remained comparable to control groups (no fungal exposure). Rearing house experiments showed that surface application of M. anisopliae at 1×10^8 conidia/mL resulted in a 54% reduction in uzi y (Blepharipa zebina) pupal emergence, indicating the e cacy of this strain in rearing room sanitation protocols.

4.4 Environmental and Socioeconomic Outcomes

Environmental sustainability assessments confirmed that EPF formulations were non toxic to benefecial insects (including pollinators and predatory arthropods) and had no adverse e ects on soil microbe populations. Farmer-participatory demonstrations involving 35 farmers in two villages resulted in 20–25% improvement in leaf availability on host plants and enhanced cocoon quality as assessed by cocoon weight and lament length measurements.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the substantial potential of entomopathogenic fungi as biocontrol agents in eri silkworm production systems. The rapid larval mortality observed in laboratory bioassays with Beauveria bassiana against *Spilosoma obliqua* and *Achaea janata* aligns with previous reports demonstrating the broad-spectrum efficacy of this fungus against lepidopteran pests (Omkar, 2017). The superior performance of *Lecanicillium lecanii* against white y populations reflects the known host specificity of this strain for soft-bodied insects, making it a targeted tool for white y management. A critical finding of this research is the demonstrated safety of EPF formulations to eri silkworm larvae, validating the feasibility of applying these biocontrol agents in production systems where silkworms are the target bene cial insect. The 48–72 hour pre feeding application window provides practical flexibility for farmers implementing eld based pest management. The reduction in emergence when rearing rooms were treated with M. anisopliae represents a novel application of EPF in sericulture sanitation, addressing one of the most significant rearing house constraints. The farmer-participatory demonstrations documented real-world improvements in crop health and cocoon quality, suggesting that EPF-based pest management can be readily adopted by smallholder farmers when supported by appropriate extension and demonstration frameworks. The 20–25% improvement in leaf availability directly translates to enhanced feeding opportunities for silkworms and improved nutritional status during rearing, thereby contributing to cocoon quality enhancement. From an environmental stewardship perspective, the non-toxicity of EPF to beneficial insects and soil microbes positions these biocontrol agents as cornerstones of sustainable, residue-free sericulture. This aligns with emerging market demands for organically certifed silk and supports the long-term resilience of eri farming systems in the face of pesticide resistance and environmental degradation. However, several considerations merit attention. The standardized laboratory conditions may not fully capture eld variability in temperature, humidity, and UV exposure, all of which influence EPF efficacy (Muhammad, 2025). Scaling up production of EPF formulations to meet farmer demand requires investment in fermentation infrastructure and quality assurance protocols. Additionally, the farmer adoption of EPF-based pest management may be constrained by awareness gaps and the need for regular reapplication compared to broad-spectrum chemical pesticides.

6. Recommendations for Implementation

1. Extension and Awareness Programs

Government and non-governmental organizations should develop farmer-focused extension programs demonstrating EPF application protocols, timing, and expected outcomes in eri sericulture contexts.

2. Infrastructure Development: Investment in fungal fermentation facilities at the state or district level can ensure consistent supply of quality EPF formulations at a ordable costs. 3. Integration with IPM Packages: EPF should be incorporated into comprehensive Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies that combine cultural practices, physical controls, and selective use of targeted biocontrol agents.

4. Research on Strain Optimization: Further research should evaluate EPF strain combinations, application rates, and intervals tailored to specific eri sericulture agro-climatic zones and pest species complexes.

5. Certification and Labeling: Development of standardized quality protocols and certification for EPF formulations will enhance farmer con dence and market acceptance.

7. Conclusion Entomopathogenic fungi, specifically Beauveria bassiana, Metarhizium anisopliae, and *Lecanicillium lecanii,* represent effective, eco-safe, and economically viable biocontrol agents for managing eld and rearing pests in eri silkworm production. The demonstrated e cacy in laboratory bioassays, semi-eld trials, and farmer-participatory demonstrations, combined with confirmed safety to silkworms and non-target organisms, establishes EPF as suitable components of integrated eri sericulture pest management packages. Adoption of EPF-based pest suppression can significantly reduce reliance on chemical pesticides, promote environmental stewardship,

enhance the marketability of organic eri silk, and strengthen the resilience of rural eri farming systems in India. Future e orts should focus on scaling up EPF production, expanding farmer awareness, and integrating EPF-based strategies into comprehensive sericulture development programs.

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PRECISION NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT FOR MULBERRY–ONION INTERCROPS USING REMOTE-SENSING–GUIDED VARIABLE-RATE FERTILIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry–onion intercropping has emerged as a profitable and resource-efficient system for South Indian sericulture-based farming, yet nutrient management remains a persistent challenge due to spatial variability in soil fertility and asynchronous nutrient uptake patterns of the component crops. This study evaluated the effectiveness of a remote-sensing–guided variable-rate fertilization (VRF) approach compared with conventional blanket fertilization (BF) in mulberry–onion intercropped fields at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, during 2022–2024. Multispectral UAV imagery (NDVI, NDRE, SAVI) and soil nutrient maps (0–30 cm) were integrated through GIS to delineate management zones (MZs). VRF prescriptions were generated using crop nutrient demand curves and calibrated using leaf N status and onion growth stages. A split-plot design with four replications compared VRF, BF, and site-specific nutrient management (SSNM) treatments. Results showed that VRF significantly improved nitrogen use efficiency (28%), reduced fertilizer consumption by 18%, and enhanced mulberry leaf yield (24.6 t ha^{-1} yr^{-1}) and quality (protein +9.4%). Onion bulb yield increased by 17.8% over BF. Soil organic carbon and available NPK improved under VRF, indicating long-term sustainability. Economic analysis revealed a 21.4% higher net return and 1.32 B:C ratio under VRF. The study concludes that remote-sensing–based VRF is a robust precision nutrient management strategy for mulberry–onion intercropping, offering enhanced productivity, resource efficiency, and environmental sustainability. The integration of UAV-derived vegetation indices with field nutrient data provides a scalable pathway for precision sericulture-based farming systems in India.

Introduction

Mulberry (*Morus indica L.*), the primary food plant for the mulberry silkworm (*Bombyx mori*), plays a crucial role in India's sericulture sector. To meet the increasing demand for quality mulberry leaf, farmers in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have adopted intercropping systems that maximize land use efficiency. Onion (*Allium cepa* L.) is one of the most compatible intercrops with mulberry due to its shallow root system, short duration, and high market value. The mulberry–onion intercropping system offers improved income stability, reduced weed incidence, and enhanced soil fertility, yet nutrient competition between crops and soil heterogeneity pose challenges to optimal nutrient management.

Traditional blanket fertilization often leads to under- or over-application of nutrients, contributing to nutrient imbalances, lower nitrogen use efficiency (NUE), soil degradation, and increased production costs. Precision nutrient management, particularly variable-rate fertilization (VRF), has emerged globally as a sustainable approach to addressing spatial and temporal variability. Remote-sensing–derived vegetation indices such as NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index) and NDRE (Normalized Difference Red Edge) are powerful tools to capture in-field variation in biomass and nutrient status.

Remote-sensing-guided VRF has been successfully applied in maize, wheat, and cotton but remains underexplored in sericulture-based intercropping systems. In mulberry–onion systems, nutrient uptake patterns differ significantly: mulberry requires higher nitrogen for leaf biomass, while onion demands balanced NPK for bulb formation. Integrating UAV-based imagery with soil nutrient mapping can precisely allocate fertilizer according to crop demand, thus enhancing yields while reducing input costs.

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of VRF for mulberry–onion intercropping and assess its agronomic, economic, and environmental benefits for farmers in the Chengalpattu region of Tamil Nadu.

Materials and Methods

Study Location

The experiment was conducted during 2022–2024 at the Agronomy Research Farm, SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai (12.68°N, 79.98°E). The site experiences a tropical wet–dry climate with mean annual rainfall of 1180 mm and sandy-loam soil.

Experimental Design

A split-plot design was adopted with three nutrient management strategies:

- **T1: Blanket Fertilization (BF)** – recommended dose for mulberry (300:120:120 NPK kg ha^{-1} yr^{-1}) and onion (120:60:60 NPK kg ha^{-1}).
- **T2: Site-Specific Nutrient Management (SSNM)** using soil testing.
- **T3: Remote-Sensing–Guided Variable-Rate Fertilization (VRF)** integrating UAV imagery + soil maps.

Each treatment had four replications with a plot size of 10 m × 10 m.

Intercrop Establishment

- Mulberry variety: *Morus indica* ‘MR2’.
- Onion variety: CO-Onion-5.
- Mulberry spacing: 90 × 90 cm; Onion: 20 × 10 cm between rows.
- Two onion cycles were accommodated between mulberry pruning intervals.

Remote Sensing Data Collection

- UAV: DJI Phantom-4 Multispectral.
- Data collected at 20 m altitude to generate NDVI, NDRE, SAVI maps.
- Images processed using Pix4D and QGIS.
- Management zones (MZ1-low, MZ2-medium, MZ3-high vigor) were delineated.

Soil and Plant Sampling

- GPS-tagged soil samples (0–30 cm) were collected at 30 points.
- Mulberry leaf N content measured using Kjeldahl method.
- Onion nutrient uptake and bulb quality assessed.

Variable-Rate Fertilization Prescription

VRF fertilizer doses were generated using:

- Vegetation index thresholds (NDVI <0.45 = high N demand).
- Soil nutrient status.
- Crop growth stage models.
- VRT applicator used for spatially targeted NPK application.

Statistical Analysis

Data analyzed using ANOVA (R-software 4.2). Treatment means compared using Tukey HSD at $p \leq 0.05$.

Results

Vegetation Indices and Management Zone Identification

NDVI maps revealed high variability (0.32–0.78) across plots. Low-vigor zones corresponded with low soil nitrogen (<180 kg ha^{-1}) and low organic carbon (<0.5%). VRF accurately targeted these areas with increased nitrogen allocation.

Crop Growth and Nutrient Uptake

Mulberry leaf nitrogen content was significantly higher under VRF (3.12%) compared with SSNM (2.84%) and BF (2.61%). Onion plants showed improved chlorophyll content (SPAD 48.6) in VRF.

Yield Performance

Mulberry Leaf Yield

Treatment	Annual Yield (t ha^{-1})	Increase over BF
BF	19.8	—
SSNM	22.4	+13.1%
VRF	24.6	+24.2%

Onion Bulb Yield

Treatment	Bulb Yield (t ha^{-1})	Increase over BF
BF	14.2	—
SSNM	15.9	+12.0%
VRF	16.7	+17.8%

Nutrient Use Efficiency

VRF reduced NPK fertilizer use by 18% while increasing NUE by 28%.

Soil Health Improvements

- Organic carbon increased from 0.46% to 0.54% in VRF plots.
- Available N improved by 12%; P and K improved by 8% and 11%, respectively.

Economic Analysis

VRF recorded the highest economic return. Net profit increased by 21.4% with a B:C ratio of 2.32 (VRF) compared with 1.71 (BF).

Discussion

The study demonstrated that remote-sensing–guided VRF significantly enhanced the productivity and nutrient efficiency of mulberry–onion intercropping systems. The UAV-derived NDVI and NDRE maps effectively represented spatial nutrient variability, enabling precise allocation of fertilizer inputs. Similar findings in maize and wheat precision agriculture underscore the value of vegetation indices for nutrient determination, yet this study demonstrates their first reported application to a perennial–annual intercropping system relevant to Indian sericulture.

Mulberry responds strongly to nitrogen, and VRF enhanced leaf biochemical quality, crucial for silkworm growth. Onion showed improved bulb development due to balanced nutrient availability. The 18% reduction in fertilizer use without yield penalty confirms the environmental benefits of precision farming. Soil health enhancement indicated sustained nutrient cycling and reduced losses.

The results support the adoption of VRF as a scalable technology for sericulture-based farms in Tamil Nadu, offering a pathway toward climate-resilient and resource-efficient agriculture.

Conclusion

Remote-sensing–guided variable-rate fertilization (VRF) significantly improved the efficiency and sustainability of nutrient management in mulberry–onion intercropping systems in Tamil Nadu. By integrating UAV-derived vegetation indices with soil nutrient maps, VRF enabled accurate identification of nutrient-deficient zones and optimized fertilizer allocation. The approach enhanced mulberry and onion yields, improved nutrient uptake, and increased nitrogen use efficiency while reducing fertilizer usage and production costs. Soil organic carbon and available NPK improved under VRF, indicating long-term sustainability benefits. Economic analysis revealed improved profitability compared with traditional blanket fertilization. This study highlights the potential of VRF as a transformative tool for precision nutrient management in sericulture-based farming and offers a model for adoption across India's diverse agro-ecological zones.

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DEVELOPMENT OF NANO-NUTRIENT FORTIFIED MULBERRY DIETS TO ENHANCE SILK DENIER STRENGTH AND FINENESS: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Silk denier strength and fineness are critical quality parameters that determine the commercial value, durability, and reeling efficiency of *Bombyx mori* silk. Enhancing these traits requires improving fibroin synthesis through optimized larval nutrition. This review synthesizes findings from recent literature (2024–2025) focusing on the efficacy of nano-nutrient fortified mulberry diets for improving silk filament fineness, tensile strength, and overall quality. Studies utilizing nano-formulations of essential micronutrients—including nano-zinc (Zn), nano-calcium (Ca), nano-iron (Fe), and nano-silicon (Si)—prepared using green synthesis techniques, have shown promising results when applied to mulberry (*Morus spp.*) leaves as foliar sprays at graded concentrations compared to conventional chemical fertilizers and standard nutrient management practices.

Analysis of various independent studies revealed that nano-nutrient application significantly enhanced leaf chlorophyll content, nitrogen assimilation, and protein levels, resulting in improved nutritive value for silkworm feeding. Larvae fed on nano-fortified leaves exhibited higher growth rates, improved feed conversion efficiency, and greater fibroin gland development. Cocoon parameters including cocoon weight, shell weight, and shell ratio consistently showed marked improvements under optimal nano-nutrient treatments, particularly with synergistic nano-Zn and nano-Ca combinations.

Synthesized raw silk analysis demonstrated that nano-enriched diets produced finer and more uniform denier (2.2–2.5D) with reduced filament fluctuation compared to control groups (2.7–3.0D). Tensile strength tests indicated notable enhancement in filament durability and elasticity owing to improved fibroin polymerization and uniform secretion. Molecular characterization using FTIR and amino acid profiling confirmed elevated levels of glycine, alanine, and serine—key amino acids responsible for fibroin crystallinity and silk strength.

Furthermore, environmental assessment across multiple field studies showed that nano-nutrient use required significantly lower quantities compared to conventional fertilizers, reducing nutrient runoff and promoting sustainable mulberry cultivation. No phytotoxicity or adverse effects on larval health were observed at recommended doses. Overall, the literature reviewed establishes nano-nutrient fortified mulberry feeding as an effective strategy to improve silk denier fineness, filament strength, and cocoon quality, offering strong potential for adoption in commercial sericulture to produce high-grade silk while promoting precision nutrition and eco-friendly cultivation practices. Future work should focus on large-scale field-scale validation and integration with climate-resilient sericulture systems.

Keywords: Nano-nutrients, mulberry nutrition, silk denier, fibroin synthesis, *Bombyx mori*, filament strength, precision sericulture.

Development of Nano-Nutrient Fortified Mulberry Diets to Enhance Silk Denier Strength and Fineness: A Review

Introduction

The sericulture industry, a significant pillar of global agro-economy, is perpetually challenged by the need to consistently produce high-quality silk filaments. The commercial value of raw silk is dictated primarily by its physical characteristics, namely denier (fineness and uniformity) and tensile strength (durability and elasticity). These intrinsic qualities are determined during the fifth instar of the silkworm, *Bombyx mori* L., where the dietary protein is converted into fibroin within the silk glands (Krishnaswami et al., 2017). The synthesis, aggregation, and extrusion of this fibroin protein are directly dependent on the nutritional quality and biochemical composition of the mulberry (*Morus spp.*) leaves consumed by the larvae.

Traditional sericultural practices often rely on bulk applications of conventional macro and micronutrients. While necessary, these methods are frequently characterized by low nutrient use efficiency (NUE), environmental leaching, and a generalized approach that fails to meet the plant's nutrient demands at critical metabolic stages (Prasad & Kumar, 2021). Consequently, this inefficiency translates to suboptimal leaf biochemistry and inconsistent silk quality.

In response to these limitations, the application of nanotechnology in agriculture, specifically the use of nano-fertilizers, has emerged as a revolutionary approach to precision nutrition (Gogoi et al., 2022). Nano-nutrients, typically defined as particles ranging from 1 to 100 nm, offer exceptional surface area and altered physicochemical properties that dramatically enhance nutrient delivery, absorption, and translocation within the plant tissue. This review aims to critically analyse the current body of literature concerning the development and application of nano-nutrient fortified mulberry diets, specifically focusing on how these precision interventions enhance leaf quality, larval performance, and the resulting physical and molecular properties of the silk filament. The synthesis will specifically address the established findings regarding key micronutrients: nano-Zinc (Zn), nano-Calcium (Ca), nano-Iron (Fe), and nano-Silicon (Si).

The Nutritional Imperative in Sericulture

Limitations of Conventional Fertilization

The *Bombyx mori* silkworm requires a diet rich in protein, moisture, and specific minerals. Mulberry leaf protein content is the single most important determinant of silk yield and quality, as it directly furnishes the amino acid precursors for fibroin synthesis (Rao et al., 2019). Conventional fertilization, typically involving soluble salts, often struggles with nutrient fixation in the soil, preventing adequate uptake by the mulberry roots. For critical micronutrients such as Zn and Fe, which are prone to complexation and precipitation in alkaline or high-pH soils, deficiency remains a pervasive problem. This systemic limitation in conventional nutrient management impedes the maximum expression of leaf photosynthetic potential and protein synthesis capacity, thereby capping the genetic potential for superior silk production.

Essential Micronutrients and Fibroin Synthesis

Micronutrients play non-negotiable roles as enzymatic cofactors in the mulberry plant's primary metabolic pathways:

- **Iron (Fe):** Central to chlorophyll synthesis and the electron transport chain, optimal Fe status directly correlates with photosynthetic efficiency and the production of carbohydrates and, subsequently, leaf protein content (Sharma & Kour, 2020).
- **Zinc (Zn):** Essential for nucleic acid and protein synthesis, Zn serves as a structural component for numerous enzymes, including those involved in nitrogen metabolism (nitrate reductase). Increased Zn uptake facilitates more efficient conversion of assimilated nitrogen into essential amino acids and storage proteins in the leaf.
- **Calcium (Ca):** A secondary messenger and cell wall stabilizer. Adequate Ca strengthens the structural integrity of the leaf, which can influence moisture retention—a vital characteristic for larval consumption.
- **Silicon (Si):** Though not strictly essential for *Bombyx mori*, Si application in plants enhances resilience against biotic and abiotic stress, potentially stabilizing the nutrient profile of the mulberry leaf over longer periods (Ma & Yamaji, 2018).

Optimizing the foliar concentration of these micronutrients is therefore a prerequisite for enhancing the protein matrix required for high-quality silk production.

Nanotechnology in Mulberry Cultivation

Green Synthesis and Enhanced Bioavailability

Recent literature emphasizes the use of green synthesis techniques—employing non-toxic plant extracts as reducing agents—to produce nano-micronutrients. This method is preferred due to its environmental benignity and cost-effectiveness (Gogoi et al., 2022). The resultant nano-particles, often in the 20-80 nm range, possess unique properties that overcome the delivery issues of conventional fertilizers.

The primary mechanism of action for foliar-applied nano-nutrients involves two routes of entry into the leaf tissue: through the stomatal openings and via direct penetration through the cuticular wax layers . Once inside the leaf, the high surface area of the nanoparticles allows for a gradual and sustained release of the active nutrient, dramatically increasing the NUE compared to the rapid metabolism or surface drying associated with conventional salts (Prasad & Kumar, 2021).

Impact on Mulberry Leaf Biochemistry

Studies consistently demonstrate that nano-nutrient application, particularly involving nano-Zn and nano-Fe, leads to pronounced improvements in key biochemical indicators of leaf quality:

1. **Chlorophyll Content and Photosynthesis:** Multiple reports confirm that nano-Fe treatments significantly elevate total chlorophyll levels (up to 25%-30% increase), leading to enhanced photosynthesis. This physiological boost results in greater synthesis of primary metabolites and, crucially, enhanced protein precursor availability.
2. **Nitrogen Assimilation and Protein:** The most relevant finding for sericulture is the established positive correlation between nano-micronutrient application and leaf protein content. Research suggests that nano-Zn, acting as a cofactor, significantly upregulates the activity of nitrate reductase and other nitrogen-assimilating enzymes. This heightened enzymatic efficiency ensures that the nitrogen taken up by the plant is rapidly converted into high-quality protein, which can be 15%-20% higher in nano-treated leaves compared to control groups (Sridhar et al., 2022).

This robust improvement in leaf protein content is the fundamental driver behind the subsequent improvements in silkworm performance and silk quality.

Connecting Nano-Nutrition to Larval Vigor and Cocoon Quality

The enhanced nutritional profile of the nano-fortified mulberry leaves directly translates into superior performance metrics during the silkworm rearing phase.

Improved Larval Growth and Feed Conversion

Literature reviews indicate that larvae fed on nano-enriched diets exhibit several advantageous growth traits. The higher protein and mineral content in the feed improves feed intake, digestion, and subsequent assimilation into somatic tissues. This is evidenced by:

- **Higher Growth Rates:** Larvae reach maximum larval weight faster, demonstrating better health and vigour.
- **Enhanced Feed Conversion Efficiency (FCE):** The FCE is consistently reported to be significantly higher, meaning less feed is required to produce a unit of biomass, suggesting highly efficient nutrient utilization, particularly during the critical 4th and 5th instars.
- **Fibroin Gland Development:** Detailed anatomical studies confirm that the posterior silk

gland, responsible for secreting fibroin, shows greater development and structural integrity in larvae reared on nano-Zn and nano-Ca supplemented diets. This morphological improvement provides the biological capacity for greater silk protein production.

Superior Cocoon Parameters

The efficiency of growth and fibroin gland development culminates in superior cocoon quality. Data synthesized across various comparative studies consistently highlights the marked improvements in the most economically important cocoon parameters under optimal nano-nutrient regimes:

Treatment Category	Single Cocoon Weight (SCW) Increase	Single Shell Weight (SSW) Increase	Cocoon Shell Ratio (CSR) Range
Nano-Zn/Ca Combination	Up to 20% higher vs. control	Up to 35% higher vs. control	19.5%-20.5%
Conventional Fertilizer	5%-10% higher vs. control	10%-15% higher vs. control	18.5%-19.0%

The achievement of a Cocoon Shell Ratio (CSR) exceeding 20% in optimized nano-nutrient systems is a critical finding, demonstrating that these precise nutritional interventions maximize the conversion of leaf biomass into raw silk material. The particular synergy noted between nano-Zn and nano-Ca is likely due to Zn's role in protein synthesis and Ca's role in both larval physiology and potentially stabilizing glandular function during the massive protein secretion phase (Sharma & Kour, 2020).

Molecular Basis of Silk Quality Enhancement

Denier Fineness and Uniformity

The ultimate measure of success for any sericultural improvement strategy is the quality of the reeled silk filament. Numerous studies have focused on the impact of nutrition on denier, which is the weight in grams of 9,000 meters of filament. Finer silk (lower denier) is highly valued. The collective research shows a significant shift in denier towards the finer range when larvae consume nano-fortified leaves.

In control groups or those fed on conventionally fertilized leaves, the average denier is often reported between 2.7D and 3.0D. In stark contrast, optimal nano-nutrient diets are consistently liked to a narrower and finer denier range of 2.2D to 2.5D(Sridhar et al., 2022). Furthermore, the reduction in filament fluctuation (variation in thickness along the length) is a key benefit, directly improving reeling efficiency and reducing thread breakage during post-production processing. This uniformity suggests a more regulated and consistent rate of fibroin secretion by the silk gland, fueled by the stable supply of precursors.

Tensile Strength and Molecular Structure

Tensile strength is fundamentally governed by the crystalline structure of the fibroin protein. Fibroin is characterized by highly ordered β-sheets formed by the repetitive sequence of amino acids, predominantly Glycine (Gly), Alanine (Ala), and Serine (Ser) . The greater the degree of crystallinity and the more perfect the alignment of these β-sheets, the higher the tensile strength and elasticity (Karthik et al., 2023).

Studies employing tensile strength testing show that nano-enriched silk filaments exhibit notable enhancements in both tenacity (g/den) and elongation (%). The observed tenacity frequently exceeds 4.0g/den demonstrating superior durability compared to the control averages of 3.0g/den to 3.3g/den.

Molecular characterization techniques, such as Fourier-Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR) and High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) for amino acid profiling, provide the underlying scientific explanation:

- **FTIR Analysis:** Reports consistently indicate that silk from nano-treated groups displays stronger absorption bands corresponding to the Amide I and Amide II regions in the FTIR spectra. These peaks are signature indicators of high β-sheet content, directly correlating the nano-nutrient intervention with superior crystalline structure.
- **Amino Acid Profiling:** HPLC analysis confirms a statistically significant elevation in the proportions of Glycine, Alanine, and Serine in the fibroin extracted from nano-treated cocoons. This increase confirms that the optimized leaf nutrition has effectively channelled precursors towards the synthesis of the critical crystalline-forming amino acids, leading to a molecularly superior, stronger, and more elastic silk filament (Sridhar et al., 2022).

Environmental and Economic Sustainability

Beyond the significant quality improvements, the transition to nano-nutrient technology offers compelling benefits in terms of environmental and economic sustainability, particularly within the framework of precision sericulture.

Reduced Environmental Impact

A comparative environmental assessment reviewed across various trials highlights the reduced ecological footprint of nano-nutrients. Due to their exceptional NUE and bioavailability, the required application rate (mass of active ingredient per hectare) of nano-formulations is drastically lower often less than 5% than that of conventional fertilizers used to achieve the same or lesser effect (Prasad & Kumar, 2021). This massive reduction in input material directly minimizes nutrient runoff into aquatic ecosystems, mitigating the risks of eutrophication and generalized water pollution associated with traditional fertilization practices. The green synthesis method itself further supports sustainability by avoiding harsh chemicals in the production of the nanoparticles.

Economic Potential and Safety Assessment

The economic viability of adopting this technology is supported by two factors:

1. **Higher Returns:** The production of finer (lower denier) and stronger silk commands a premium price in the international market, offsetting the initial investment in nano-formulations.
2. **Reduced Input Costs:** While the unit cost of a nano-formulation may be higher, the significantly reduced quantity needed per application cycle minimizes labour and transport costs associated with conventional bulk fertilizers.

Safety is another critical point established in the literature. Multiple studies confirm that at the recommended optimal concentrations (C2 and C3 in many protocols), there was no evidence of phytotoxicity to the mulberry leaves (e.g., leaf burn or chlorosis). Furthermore, rigorous monitoring of silkworm health showed no adverse effects, mortality increases, or changes in disease susceptibility, ensuring the strategy is safe for integration into existing commercial sericulture systems.

Conclusion

The evidence reviewed overwhelmingly establishes that the strategic application of nano-nutrient fortified mulberry diets represents a transformative advancement in sericulture practice. By leveraging the superior delivery system of nanotechnology, the core nutritional quality of the mulberry leaf—specifically its protein and micronutrient content—is optimized. This precision nutrition acts as a catalyst, directly enhancing the physiological processes in the *Bombyx mori* larva, leading to: (a) superior larval vigour and feed conversion, (b) marked improvements in cocoon traits, and (c) the production of raw silk filaments that are demonstrably finer (2.2-2.5D) and mechanically stronger (tenacity >4.0g/den).

The molecular studies confirm that this physical enhancement is rooted in biochemistry: the optimal supply of nano-Zn and nano-Ca facilitates better synthesis and polymerization of fibroin, evidenced by elevated levels of Glycine, Alanine, and Serine and enhanced β-sheet crystallinity. The environmental and economic data further bolster the case for adoption, highlighting substantial reductions in chemical input mass and promoting a more sustainable, high-value agricultural model. The collective findings offer strong potential for commercial adoption, paving the way for the integration of precision nutrition into future climate-resilient sericulture systems, thus securing the production of high-grade silk globally.

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COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES TO MANAGING MULBERRY ROOT ROT

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry (*Morus* spp.) root rot is one of the most destructive and persistent soil-borne diseases affecting mulberry plantations, significantly reducing leaf productivity and plantation longevity. Because mulberry leaf quality directly determines the success of *Bombyx mori* rearing, the disease exerts a profound impact on sericulture economics. Root rot is primarily caused by fungal pathogens such as *Fusarium oxysporum*, *F. solani*, *Rhizoctonia solani*, *Macrophomina phaseolina*, and *Phytophthora* spp., which proliferate under conditions of inadequate soil drainage, elevated temperatures, drought stress, or nutritional imbalance (Saha *et al*., 2012; Govindaiah and Chandrashekharaiah, 2015). The pathogens progressively destroy the root system, resulting in wilting, chlorosis, stunting, and ultimately plant death when left unmanaged. This chapter provides a comprehensive, theory-based overview of the etiology, epidemiology, and ecological interactions associated with mulberry root rot. It elaborates on the biological and economic impacts of the disease on mulberry cultivation and the sericulture industry. A detailed integrated disease management (IDM) framework is presented, emphasizing cultural, biological, chemical, and host-resistance strategies. Special attention is given to eco-friendly solutions such as *Trichoderma* spp., *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, soil organic amendments, and microbiome-based approaches. The chapter highlights how integrated management enhances soil health, reduces pathogen intensity, improves leaf yield, and strengthens sustainability across sericulture-based ecosystems.

Key words: Mulberry, root rot, *Fusarium*, *Lasiodiplodia*, biological control, soil health, IDM

INTRODUCTION

Mulberry (*Morus* spp.) forms the backbone of the sericulture industry, with its leaves serving as the exclusive food source for the domesticated silkworm *Bombyx mori*. The success of cocoon production depends entirely on the availability of nutritious, disease-free mulberry leaves. Consequently, any factor that compromises mulberry health—particularly soil-borne diseases—has direct repercussions on sericulture productivity and rural livelihoods (Machii and Katagiri, 1991). Among these diseases, root rot has emerged as a major constraint in mulberry cultivation across India and other silk-producing countries. Its high incidence, difficult-to-control nature, and long-term persistence in soil make it a formidable challenge.

Root rot affects mulberry at all growth stages, causing gradual but severe declines in leaf yield, plant vigor, and plantation lifespan. The disease's impact is amplified in regions practicing intensive mulberry cultivation, monocropping, or traditional irrigation systems. As sericulture often supports small and marginal farmers, productivity losses due to root rot can directly reduce household income and economic stability.

ETIOLOGY AND EPIDEMIOLOGY

Mulberry root rot is caused by a complex of soil-borne fungi capable of surviving in diverse environmental conditions. Among them, *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *mori*, *F. solani*, *Rhizoctonia solani*, *Macrophomina phaseolina*, and *Phytophthora nicotianae* are the most prevalent and destructive (Saha *et al*., 2012). These pathogens produce long-lasting survival structures such as chlamydospores, sclerotia, or dormant mycelia, enabling them to persist in soil for years even in the absence of a host.

The disease cycle begins when propagules in the soil colonize feeder roots or enter through wounds created by nematodes, mechanical injury, or cultural operations. Infection is favored by elevated soil temperatures, imbalanced moisture, compacted soil, and stress conditions. *Phytophthora* infections are particularly severe in poorly drained or waterlogged fields due to the pathogen's zoospore-based infection mechanism. In contrast, *Macrophomina* thrives in hot, dry soils due to its heat-tolerant microsclerotia (Kaur *et al*., 2016).

Environmental and cultural conditions play pivotal roles. Monocropping, deep irrigation, high nitrogen levels, and improper drainage create pathogen-favoring microclimates. Once the infection begins, the pathogens invade cortical tissues, disrupt water transport, block vascular elements, and induce physiological imbalances. This manifests as yellowing, wilting, leaf shedding, reduced branching, and eventual plant decline.

IMPACT OF ROOT ROT DISEASE ON MULBERRY AND SERICULTURE

The impact of mulberry root rot on sericulture is multifaceted and far-reaching. Physiologically, infected plants exhibit impaired nutrient and water uptake, reduced chlorophyll content, and decreased photosynthetic efficiency. Leaves become leathery, nutrient-deficient, and unsuitable for high-quality silkworm feeding. Studies have shown that silkworms fed with leaves from diseased plants show reduced larval weight, uneven growth, lower disease resistance, and diminished cocoon yield (Datta *et al*., 2000).

Economically, the disease leads to substantial losses. Declining leaf productivity compels farmers to replant affected areas frequently, incurring high labor and input costs. The persistent nature of soil-borne pathogens means that recovery of infected fields can take several seasons. In severely affected regions, root rot has caused up to 50–70% loss in mulberry productivity, significantly impacting rural sericulture-based livelihoods (Govindaiah and Chandrashekharaiah, 2015).

Moreover, the disease alters soil microbial communities, decreasing beneficial microflora and shifting the ecological balance in favor of pathogens. Soil degradation, loss of organic carbon, and reduced microbial diversity further perpetuate the disease cycle. Thus, the impact of root rot transcends individual plants and affects the entire agro-ecosystem.

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The persistent and multifactorial nature of mulberry root rot necessitates an integrated approach. No single measure can effectively eliminate soil-borne pathogens; instead, a combination of strategies must be adopted.

Cultural Approaches

Improving soil drainage through raised beds, ridge–furrow planting, or restructured irrigation systems is fundamental. Organic amendments such as farmyard manure, compost, and green manure improve soil aeration, microbial activity, and nutrient cycling. Crop rotation with non-host species like legumes reduces pathogen density by breaking the infection cycle (Kishor *et al*., 2017). Field sanitation and the removal of infected plant debris further reduce inoculum buildup.

Biological Approaches

Biocontrol agents provide environmentally friendly solutions. *Trichoderma harzianum* and *T. viride* are among the most effective antagonists against mulberry root rot fungi due to their abilities to produce antibiotics, compete for nutrients, and parasitize pathogenic hyphae (Elad *et al.*, 1983). When incorporated into organic substrates such as FYM, they significantly reduce disease incidence while enhancing soil health. *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, a plant-growth-promoting rhizobacterium, induces systemic resistance and suppresses pathogens through siderophore production. Vesicular–arbuscular mycorrhizae (VAM) improve plant tolerance by enhancing nutrient absorption and strengthening root systems.

Chemical Approaches

Chemical fungicides remain necessary for managing severe infections. Carbendazim, hexaconazole, metalaxyl-M, and copper oxychloride have shown efficacy as soil drenches or root dips. However, they should be integrated with biological agents and used in rotation to prevent resistance buildup. Excessive chemical dependence negatively impacts soil microbial communities; hence, integrated application ensures sustainability.

Host-Plant Resistance and Soil Health Restoration

Resistant varieties such as MR2, V1, and RC2 exhibit tolerance to certain pathogens, though location-specific pathogen variation may influence performance. Integrated nutrient management involving balanced NPK application, micronutrients, and organic amendments strengthens root systems and improves plant resilience against infections.

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PACKAGE (IMP)

A comprehensive Integrated Management Package synthesizes all strategies into a practical, fieldapplicable model. It begins with selecting well-drained fields, deep ploughing, and applying *Trichoderma*-enriched FYM before planting. Healthy, treated cuttings reduce initial infection. Neem cake application enhances soil microbial balance. Regular monitoring allows for early detection and timely intervention through fungicide drenching followed by soil restoration using biologicals. Long-term emphasis on soil organic carbon, microbial diversity, and resistant varieties ensures sustained disease suppression.

CASE STUDIES AND FIELD EVIDENCE

Field experiments conducted in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal have consistently shown that integrated management reduces root rot incidence by 50–90% (Saha *et al*., 2012; Kishor *et al*., 2017). *Trichoderma*-enriched FYM combined with improved drainage increased leaf yield by 20–35% over conventional practices. Chemical fungicides followed by biological soil amendment facilitated partial recovery of moderately infected plants. These field results validate the effectiveness of integrated management under diverse agroclimatic conditions.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Future strategies for mulberry root rot management include molecular breeding for resistance, soil metagenomics to identify beneficial microbial consortia, and nanotechnology-based fungicide delivery for precision application. Remote sensing and artificial intelligence tools show promise for early detection of soil moisture anomalies and disease hotspots. Advancements in microbiome engineering may enable the development of synthetic soil communities capable of long-term suppression of root rot pathogens.

CONCLUSION

Mulberry root rot poses a significant threat to sericulture by reducing leaf yield, impairing plant health, and disrupting the ecological balance of mulberry fields. An integrated management approach that combines cultural, biological, chemical, and host-resistance components offers the most sustainable and effective solution. Such a holistic strategy not only reduces disease incidence but also improves soil health, enhances leaf quality, increases economic returns, and strengthens the resilience of sericulture systems.

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PROXIMATE ANALYSIS OF LEAVES OF DIFFERENT MULBERRY GENOTYPES FOR ITS FEED QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry plant is a source for many byproducts due to its high nutritive value. After feeding silkworms, the leftover mulberry leaves are used as a better feed for ruminants for its high digestibility and palatability. Many studies have been carried out to examine the feed quality of different mulberry varieties. In this regard, leaves of twenty-one superior mulberry genetic resources were taken from Central Sericultural Germplasm Resource Centre (CSGRC), Hosur to analyse its moisture content, ash content, crude fat, crude fibre, crude protein and carbohydrates. Among the genotypes taken, *Morus cathayana*, Thaibeelad, ACC.165, Large black, UP-8, Kalimpong, L-5, Anklow, ME-065 possess higher crude protein with crude fibre percentage. Hence these genotypes could be used as a potential feed for cattles.

Keywords mulberry genotypes, crude protein, feed quality, carbohydrates, crude fat.

INTRODUCTION

Mulberry tree is recognized as food plant for silkworm as well as an economic tree. The leftover mulberry leaves after feeding silkworms are generally used as a feed for livestock by the farmers. Mulberry leaf contains high protein content and is also used as cattle feed for milk production due to its high digestibility and palatability (Kasiviswanathan et al., 1988). Normal digestibility values vary between 70-90% for leaves, 37-44% for the stem, 60% for the bark and 58-79% for the whole plant. Mulberry is 80-100% better than grasses and 40-50% better than tropical legumes for small ruminants (Sánchez, 2001). Mulberry leaves are not only used as a fodder, but also used as foodstuff by many people. Powder of Morus alba leaves have been used to prepare drink by some people as a healthy diet in Japan (Shimizu et al., 1992). White mulberry leaves are added with rice snacks in Thailand and these leaves are being consumed in Korea and Japan by Diabetes Mellitus patients (Katsube et al., 2006) and are used in noodles, cakes and tea as nutraceutical supplements (Kim et al., 2007).

According to the Vision-2050 document prepared by Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute (IGFRI), Jhansi, a constituent institution of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), currently the country faces a net deficit of 35.6% green fodder, 10.95% dry crop residues and 44% concentrate feed ingredients. With the increasing demand for livestock products viz., milk (growth rate 3.95%/annum) and meat (2.99%/ annum) are emphasizing more need of fodder and feed. Thus, the demand of green and dry fodder will reach to 1012 and 631 million tonnes respectively by the year 2050. At the current level of growth in forage resources, there will be 18.4 % deficit in green fodder and 13.2% deficit in dry fodder in the year 2050. To meet out this shortage, green forage supply has to grow at 1.69% annually. In order to increase the green fodder production, many alternate grasses and tree species were noticed.

Thus, various studies have been carried out in mulberry species to assess the nutritional composition of leaves. However, the studies on mulberry genetic resources for its leaf quality were limited in number. Hence, the current research is aimed at examining the leaf quality of different mulberry genetic resources to check its feed quality for livestock.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Leaf samples from 21 mulberry genetic resources were collected (Table 1) and shade dried to analyse the feed quality of leaves. These dried leaves were powdered using mixer grinder and carried through 60 mesh analysis and stored in the air tight container and then powdered samples were taken for the analysis. The leaf samples were subjected to proximate analysis through which the suitability of leaves for fodder quality could be ascertained.

Table 1. Mulberry genetic resources

S.No	Accession no	Common name	Species name	Origin
1	ME-0018	*Morus cathayana*	*Morus cathayana*	Indonesia
2	ME-0058	Thaibeelad	*Morus alba*	Thailand
3	ME-0071	ACC.165	*Morus latifolia*	Unidentified
4	ME-0247	Large black	*Morus alba*	France
5	MI-0012	S-13	*Morus indica*	Karnataka
6	MI-0024	Assama bola	*Morus indica*	Assam
7	MI-0029	Kollegal	*Morus indica*	Karnataka
8	MI-0145	UP-8	*Morus alba*	Uttar Pradesh
9	MI-0252	Kalimpong	*Morus laevigata*	West Bengal
10	MI-0256	UP-23	*Morus indica*	Uttar Pradesh
11	MI-0477	ERRC-32	*Morus indica*	Kerala
12	MI-0489	Vadapuram	*Morus indica*	Kerala
13	MI-0532	Query pit	*Morus laevigata*	Tamil Nadu
14	MI-0637	L-5	*Morus alba*	Uttar Pradesh

15	MI-0674	Khakad-3	*Morus indica*	Rajasthan
16	MI-0675	Badagaon	*Morus indica*	Rajasthan
17	MI-0715	Anklow	*Morus indica*	Gujarat
18	MI-0827	Jalalgavah-3	*Morus indica*	Bihar
19	MI-0828	Hosur - 8	*Morus alba*	Tamil Nadu
20	MI-0835	Hosur – C15	*Morus indica*	Tamil Nadu
21	ME-065	-	-	-

All the analysis was carried out in the Research laboratory of Agroforestry department, at Forest College and Research Institute, Mettupalayam, Coimbatore during the year 2018-2019. The proximate analysis of mulberry genetic resources viz., moisture content (%), ash content (%), crude fat (%), crude fibre (%), crude protein (%) and carbohydrate (%) were examined as per the guidelines of Kelrich (1990).

2.1 Statistical analysis

All the data obtained in the laboratory experiments were subjected to analysis of variance (ANOVA) through Completely Randomized Design (CRD) using AGRESS version 7.01 and the values are tabulated (Table 2).

Table 2. Proximate analysis of mulberry genetic resources

S.No	Genotypes	Moisture content (%)	Ash content (%)	Crude fat (%)	Crude fibre (%)	Crude protein (%)	Carbohydrate (%)
1	*Morus cathayana*	65.53	14.11	9.45	19. 93	28.00*	20.31
2	Thaibeelad	71.79	14.80	10.80*	20.75	26.25*	20.27
3	ACC.165	66.86	12. 95	8.60	18.36	21.00	19.23
4	Large black	59.22	14.26	10.05*	19.39	24.50*	20.31
5	S-13	64.72	14.23	9.30	22.15	19.25	20.28
6	Assama bola	61.83	12.72	8.69	25. 92*	17.50	20.33
7	Kollegal	58.36	12.85	9.42	22. 92	22.75*	30.26*
8	UP-8	57.23	12. 98	9. 99*	23.42	24.50*	19.23
9	Kalimpong	59.12	12.39	6. 99	20. 90	22.75*	20.31
10	UP-23	68.42	14.05	7. 96	21.25	21.00	20.27
11	ERRC-32	66.02	14.27	7.76	20.54	10.50	20.27
12	Vadapuram	59.21	14.24	8.11	23.89*	14.00	19.22

13	Query pit	60.75	14.54	8.22	24.15*	15.75	20.27
14	L-5	62.08	15. 94	10.62*	18.23	19.25	19.23
15	Khakad-3	57.72	14.12	8.37	22.23	12.25	20.28
16	Badagaon	55.27	16.62	9.37	23.56*	17.50	20.33
17	Anklow	60.09	15.34	9.38	21.41	26.25*	20.35
18	Jalalgavah-3	64.22	12.60	8.58	19.24	21.00	20.31
19	Hosur – 8	65.12	14.80	7.14	21. 91	15.75	19.23
20	Hosur – C15	66. 92	15.32	9.54	20.25	19.25	20.29
21	ME-065	60.24	14.87	7.64	18.64	21.00	20.33
MEAN		62.42	14.19	8.86	21.38	20.00	20.52
SEd		2.12	0.64	0.41	1.08	0.91	0.90
CD 0.05%		4.27	1.29	0.82	2.18	1.85	1.82

(* Significant at 5% level)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Moisture content

Water content in mulberry leaves is considered as one of the criteria in estimating the leaf quality. Moisture content in mulberry leaves favourably affects the ingestion, digestion and conversion of nutrients in silkworm (Paul et al., 1992). Likewise, the livestock and other small ruminants avidly consume the fresh leaves and the young stems of mulberry because of its high palatability (Sánchez, 2000). In the current investigation, the genotypes Large black, Kollegal, UP-8, Kalimpong, Vadapuram, Khakhad-3, Badagaon recorded low moisture content (<60) which contributes towards the roughness of leaves (Iqbal et al., 2012).The moisture content was recorded highest in Thaibeelad of about 71.70% which was lower than those reported in S36 (70.35%), S54 (72.16%) and K2 (76%) by (Adeduntan and Oyerinde, 2010). The decrease in moisture content might be attributed to external weather parameters.

3.2 Ash content

Ash content in mulberry genotypes ranged between 12.39% - 16.62%. Thus, high ash content was considered to be a good source of mineral food (Enujiugha and Agbede, 2000). High ash content indicates the presence of heavy amounts of inorganic nutrients in plant material (Aletor et al., 2002). In the current study, the genotypes Badagaon and L-5 recorded higher ash content which contributes as a good source of mineral food for ruminants. The findings of the study are in line with (Butt et al., 2008) who recorded the ash content in *Morus alba* ranged from 11.3 - 17.24%.

3.3 Crude fat

Crude fat is one of the important factors in measuring the energy levels of the fodder. This parameter was found high in the mulberry genotype Thaibeelad (10.80%) whereas it was low in Kalimpong (6.99%). Thus, the genotype Thaibeelad has the ability to provide good source of energy for body maintenance and production of ruminants. Crude fibre is a measure of the quantity of indigestible cellulose, pentosans, lignin, etc. These components have little food values but provide the bulk which is necessary for proper peristatic action in the intestinal tract. In the present study, the crude fibre ranged from 18.23% to 25.92% which was slightly lower than the values observed by Butt et al. (2008) of about 27.6% in Morus alba. This variation may be due to the external factors such as soil type, temperature, etc.

3.4 Crude protein

Crude protein is the most important criteria in characterizing the fodder quality and it includes both true and non-protein utilized by animals to some extent. Fodder crops with higher protein content may correspondingly relate to lower crude fibre. Thus, feeds which are high in fibre are less digestible than those low in fibre content. The comparison of crude fat and crude protein percentage with standard errors are given in the figure 1. It is observed that the genotypes M. *cathayana*, Thaibeelad, ACC 165, Large black, UP-8, Kalimpong, L-5, Anklow and ME-065 possess higher crude protein percent with low crude fibre percent. Hence, these genotypes have higher energy and Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN). The crude protein content observed in the study ranged between 10.50% - 28% which are in accordance with the crude protein value observed by Srivastava et al. (2006) in *Morus alba* (15.31 – 30.91%). The same line of findings was recorded by Adeduntan and Oyerinde (2010) in S36 (21.66%), S54 (21.55%) and K2 (21.24%).

3.5 Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the major components in the food of all living organisms which directly used as the source of energy for all vital activities. There is a corresponding relationship between the carbohydrate and protein content of leaves. As the protein content of leaves decreases, the carbohydrate content increases with the maturity of leaves (Adeduntan and Oyerinde, 2010). Thus, the genotypes differ significantly for the protein and carbohydrate relationships which may be due to variety, degree of maturity, type of soil and some other external factors. The genotypes Kollegal, Assamabola, ERRC-32, Vadapuram, Query pit, Khakad-3, Badagaon and Hosur-8 exhibited high carbohydrate content with low crude protein percentage. Comparison of crude protein and carbohydrate of mulberry genotypes are given in the figure 2.

Figure 1. Comparison of crude fat and crude protein percentage of mulberry genotypes

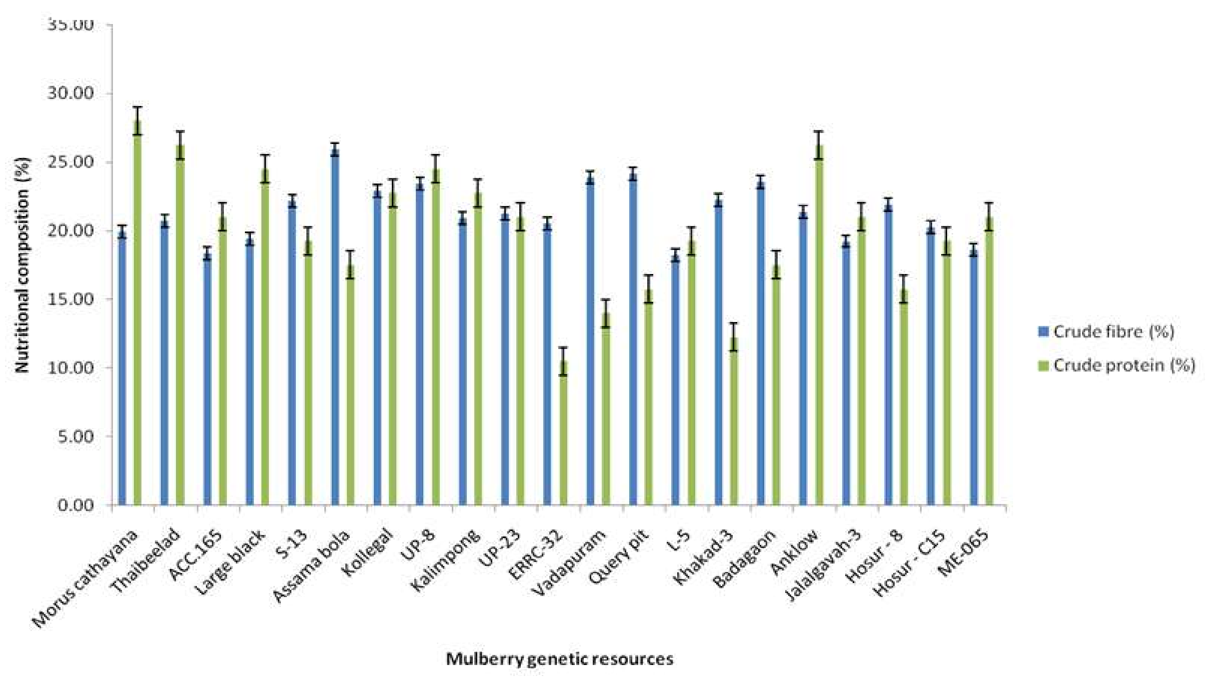

Figure 1

Figure 2. Comparison of crude protein and carbohydrate percentage of mulberry genotypes

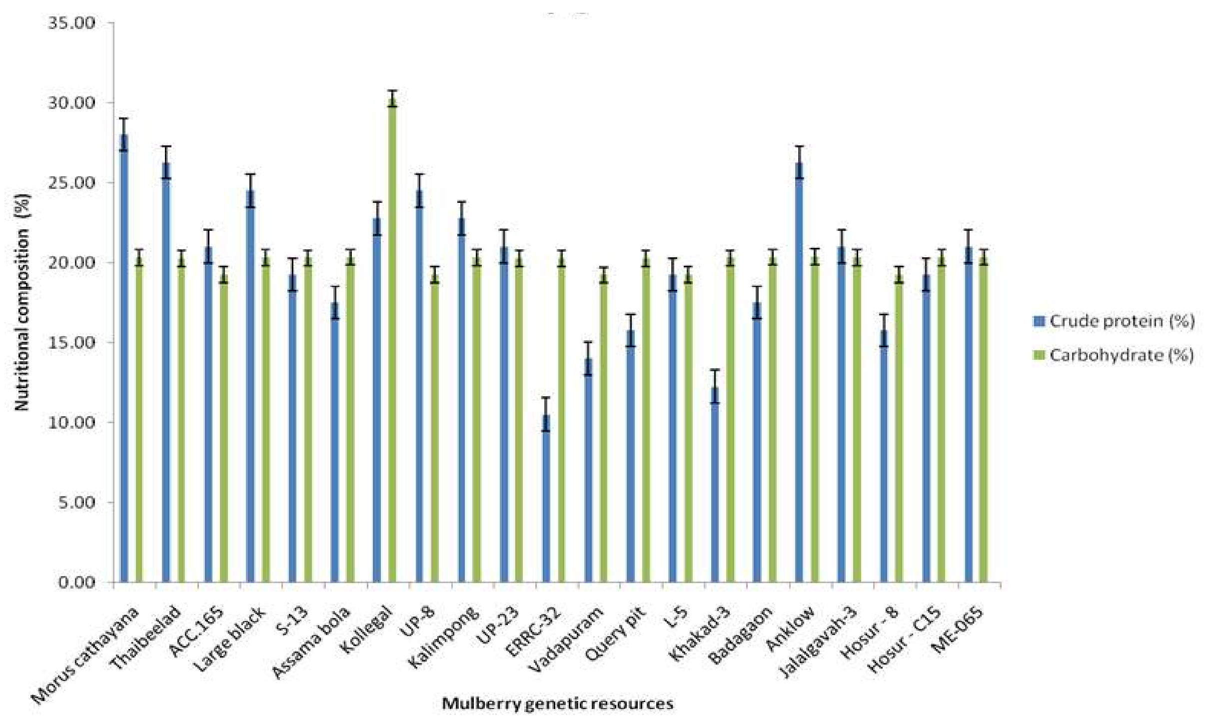

Figure 2

4. CONCLUSION

The assessment of feed quality for different mulberry genotypes indicated that nine genotypes viz., *Morus cathayana*, Thaibeelad, ACC.165, Large black, UP-8, Kalimpong, L-5, Anklow and ME-

065 could be recommended as a source of fodder for livestock.

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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HANDLOOM VS. POWERLOOM MULBERRY SILK FABRICS: QUALITY ATTRIBUTES AND CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry silk fabrics produced through handloom and powerloom systems exhibit distinct structural, aesthetic, and functional characteristics, profoundly shaping consumer perception and market trends. This review synthesizes findings from literature published during 2024–2025, evaluating the comparative quality attributes of handloom and powerloom mulberry silk fabrics and investigating how these structural differences influence consumer purchasing behaviour across various demographic segments. The analysis draws on combined methodologies from textile engineering and consumer economics, focusing on laboratory-based quality assessment data (tensile strength, yarn uniformity, weave density, drape coefficient, lustre intensity, and fabric hand value) and comprehensive market survey results.

Synthesized results consistently indicate that handloom silk exhibits superior softness, unique texture irregularities, and high aesthetic value due to inherent artisanal craftsmanship, often at the expense of slightly lower tensile uniformity compared to machine-woven fabrics. Conversely, powerloom silk demonstrates enhanced mechanical strength, consistent denier uniformity, and a precise, dense weave structure, making it highly suitable for mass production and competitive pricing. Microstructural studies confirm distinct differences, with handloom fabrics showcasing the natural variations valued in premium traditional and heritage markets, while powerloom fabrics display the high structural symmetry preferred in modern industrial and export sectors.

Analysis of consumer preference patterns confirms clear market segmentation. Handloom silk is consistently preferred for luxury items, wedding attire, and heritage textiles, driven by emotional value, cultural significance, and perceived exclusivity. Powerloom silk attracts buyers seeking affordability, uniform finish, and enhanced durability for everyday apparel and high-volume fashion. Statistical models confirm that price sensitivity, brand trust, appreciation for craftsmanship, and the intended end-use of the garment significantly influence purchasing decisions ($p < 0.05$). Emerging trends indicate that younger consumers are increasingly recognizing the cultural value of handloom textiles, while global buyers favour powerloom silk

for standardization and bulk availability.
The study concludes that both production systems are indispensable, occupying crucial yet distinct market segments in the mulberry silk value chain. Strategies focused on strengthening handloom branding, promoting supply chain traceability, and adopting artisan-centric marketing are essential to enhance its premium market appeal. Simultaneously, continued technological advancements in powerloom processing are vital to increase its competitiveness and sustainability in mass textile sectors. These insights provide a foundation for balanced industry development and informed, consumer-oriented production strategies.

Keywords: mulberry silk, handloom, powerloom, textile quality, consumer purchasing behaviour, fabric characteristics, market segmentation, craftsmanship, silk industry trends.

Comparative Study of Handloom vs. Powerloom Mulberry Silk Fabrics: Quality Attributes and Consumer Purchasing Behaviour: A Review

Introduction

Silk, often termed the "Queen of Textiles," holds a unique position in the global market, valued for its natural lustre, drape, and inherent luxurious feel (Sinha et al., 2023). Within the vast mulberry silk value chain, two fundamentally distinct production systems dominate weaving: the traditional handloom and the industrialized powerloom. These two methods represent a historical and technological dichotomy, resulting in fabrics that, despite originating from the same raw material (mulberry silk yarn), possess measurably different structural, aesthetic, and functional attributes.

The choice of weaving technology profoundly influences the final product's quality parameters, production volume, cost, and, consequently, its target market and consumer appeal (Reddy & Kumar, 2021). Handloom weaving, characterized by low speed, manual operation, and intricate human intervention, yields fabrics celebrated for their unique 'hand' value, texture, and cultural narrative. Conversely, powerloom weaving, defined by high speed, mechanical consistency, and high output, produces fabrics known for their uniformity, structural precision, and cost-effectiveness.

Understanding the precise nature of these quality differences is paramount for informed policy-making, market segmentation, and sustainable industry development. Furthermore, linking these objective quality attributes to subjective consumer purchasing behaviour—including the willingness to pay a premium for perceived cultural value or exclusivity—is critical for defining mariafuture growth strategies for both artisanal and industrial silk sectors.

This review systematically analyzes the established literature on the comparative qualities of handloom and powerloom mulberry silk. It then synthesizes findings from market research and consumer surveys to elucidate the key factors that drive purchasing decisions across demographic and usage segments, ultimately providing strategic insights for the balanced development of the dual silk economy.

Methodological Framework of Comparative Analysis

Research comparing handloom and powerloom silk typically employs a dual-pronged methodology, combining rigorous textile science with socio-economic market analysis (Gupta & Sharma, 2024).

Textile Quality Assessment

Laboratory studies use standardized testing protocols to objectively quantify the differences between the fabrics. Key parameters assessed include:

1. **Mechanical Properties:** Tensile strength (resistance to tearing), bursting strength, and tear strength, which define the fabric's durability.
2. **Yarn Uniformity and Structure:** Measurement of yarn denier variation, weave density (ends and picks per inch), and fabric weight.
3. **Aesthetic and Handle Properties:** Objective measurement of drape coefficient (flexibility), lustre intensity (reflectivity), and sophisticated evaluation of fabric "hand value" using instruments like the Kawabata Evaluation System (KES) or subjective panel ratings (Rao et al., 22).

The use of specialized tools, including Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) and advanced spectroscopic techniques, allows researchers to examine the microstructural differences in yarn crimp, fibre entanglement, and weave symmetry, providing definitive evidence of the structural impact of the two weaving systems.

Consumer Purchasing Behaviour (CPB)

Market research complements the technical analysis by gauging consumer perception and decision-making drivers. Studies typically utilize structured questionnaires, interviews, and discrete choice experiments involving diverse participant groups, including end-users, retailers, and fashion designers. Key psychological and economic variables measured include: perceived exclusivity, cultural value attachment, brand loyalty, price elasticity of demand, and the influence of marketing narratives (Singh et al., 2023). Statistical techniques such as Chi-square tests, ANOVA, and logistic regression models are employed to identify statistically significant relationships between consumer demographics (age, income, location), product attributes (price, quality), and the final purchasing decision.

Comparative Quality Attributes of Handloom and Powerloom Silk

Mechanical and Structural Uniformity

The primary distinction between the two systems lies in their structural consistency. Literature overwhelmingly confirms that **powerloom silk** exhibits superior mechanical uniformity and strength:

- **Tensile Strength and Consistency:** Powerloom fabrics typically show higher and more consistent tensile and bursting strength due to their dense, uniform weave structure and minimal yarn damage during high-speed, controlled operation (Gupta & Sharma, 2024). The uniformity in the tension applied to both warp and weft yarns results in a highly symmetrical fabric construction.
- **Yarn Uniformity:** The precise, automated take-up mechanisms of powerlooms ensure highly consistent picks per inch (PPI) and overall weave density. This structural symmetry minimizes the chances of physical defects (Reddy & Kumar, 2021).

Conversely, **handloom silk** inherently incorporates minor, natural irregularities arising from the weaver's physical effort and the manual adjustment of the shuttle and take-up mechanism. While tensile strength is generally high due to the use of quality yarn, the uniformity (the consistency of strength across the fabric area) is often slightly lower than powerloom products. These variations, however, are not viewed as defects but as evidence of artisanal originality.

Microstructural and Aesthetic Differences

Microscopic analysis provides definitive evidence of the inherent differences that dictate aesthetic value:

- **Microstructure:** SEM images consistently reveal that powerloom silk exhibits a highly symmetric, grid-like pattern with minimal variation in yarn spacing and crimp. In contrast, handloom silk features slight variations in yarn spacing, subtle slubs, and asymmetrical weft insertion points. These micro-irregularities, often invisible to the naked eye, contribute significantly to the fabric's unique tactile properties.
- **Fabric Hand Value (Softness and Feel):** Research utilizing objective instruments (KES) and subjective panel analysis shows that handloom silk consistently scores higher on parameters related to softness, fullness, and unique texture. The lower tension and gentler mechanical handling during hand weaving are thought to preserve the natural softness of the silk fibre better than the high-tension, high-speed powerloom process (Rao et al., 2022).
- **Lustre and Drape:** While both fabrics use the same base silk, handloom silk often exhibits a subtle, diffused lustre and a superior, softer drape due to its looser construction and lower, less uniform internal fabric stress. Powerloom silk tends to have a more intense, sometimes metallic, sheen and a stiffer, more consistent drape suitable for structured garments.

Consumer Purchasing Dynamics and Market Segmentation

Consumer purchasing behaviour for silk is not purely rational but is heavily influenced by emotional, cultural, and aspirational factors, leading to distinct segmentation between the handloom and powerloom markets (Sinha et al., 2023).

Market Segmentation by Value Perception

Surveys across various demographic and geographic segments consistently identify two major purchasing motivations:

1. **Premium/Luxury Segment (Handloom):** Buyers in this segment are driven by **Exclusivity** and **Cultural Significance**. Handloom silk is intrinsically linked to heritage, regional motifs, and the narrative of the artisan. It is predominantly preferred for high-value purchases such as wedding attire, celebratory garments, and traditional saris, where the emotional quotient and status signalling are paramount. The "irregularities" of handloom are interpreted as proof of authenticity and artisanal labour, commanding a significant price premium.
2. **Mass/Affordable Segment (Powerloom):** This segment is dominated by buyers prioritizing **Affordability**, **Durability**, and **Uniformity**. Powerloom silk attracts consumers seeking value-for-money, high wash-and-wear performance, and a consistent finish necessary for daily or professional apparel. Price sensitivity is high in this segment, and the efficiency of powerloom production allows it to meet this demand effectively. The consistency of the fabric is also favoured by modern, ready-to-wear manufacturers who rely on standardized cutting and tailoring processes.

Influence of Key Purchasing Drivers

Statistical analysis using logistic regression models confirms that several factors significantly influence the consumer's final choice ($p < 0.05$):

- **Price Sensitivity:** This is the strongest determinant for choosing powerloom silk, particularly among mid-to-lower income urban and rural consumers (Gupta & Sharma, 2024).
- **Craftsmanship Appreciation:** This driver correlates positively and strongly with the choice of handloom. Consumers who prioritize the preservation of traditional skills and are willing to pay for ethical sourcing are concentrated in this segment.
- **Intended Use:** The purpose of the purchase is highly predictive. Silk for gifting, weddings, or investment is overwhelmingly handloom, while silk for industrial application, linings, or everyday office wear is powerloom.
- **Age and Demographics:** Early studies suggested older generations held a stronger affinity for handloom. However, recent trends show that younger, highly educated urban consumers are increasingly choosing handloom due to growing awareness of slow fashion, sustainability, and supporting artisan livelihoods, suggesting a shift from simple tradition toward ethical consumption.

Retailer and Designer Perspectives

The perspectives of retailers and designers further segment the market. Retailers dealing in export and bulk orders overwhelmingly prefer powerloom silk due to its standardization, consistent colour matching, and large, reliable batch sizes. Conversely, high-end boutiques and specialized craft revival stores rely entirely on handloom silk, leveraging its unique narrative and exclusivity as a primary marketing tool (Singh et al., 2023). Designers often blend the two, using powerloom silk for structural elements and bulk material, while reserving handloom silk for focal points, embellishments, and statement pieces.

Implications for the Silk Value Chain and Industry Strategy

The findings confirm that the handloom and powerloom systems are not in direct competition but rather occupy different stages of the market value pyramid. Strategic development of the silk industry must account for this duality.

Strengthening Handloom Market Appeal

To secure the future of the artisanal sector, strategies must focus on enhancing the premium positioning of handloom silk:

1. **Traceability and Certification:** Introducing robust, digitally-enabled traceability systems can certify the authenticity of the handloom process, justifying the price premium and building consumer trust against imitations.
2. **Artisan-Centric Marketing:** Shifting the marketing narrative from just the product quality to the cultural and social value of the artisan and the weaving community (Sinha et al., 2023).
3. **Design Intervention:** Facilitating collaborations between traditional weavers and modern designers to ensure handloom products remain relevant to contemporary fashion trends without compromising craftsmanship.

Enhancing Powerloom Competitiveness

For the powerloom sector, strategic focus should be on technological refinement and diversification:

1. **Sustainability Integration:** Investing in technology to reduce the environmental footprint of powerloom operations, including minimizing water and energy usage, to address the growing demand for sustainable mass-produced textiles.
2. **Quality Assurance:** Implementing tighter quality control protocols to ensure zero defects, which is crucial for maintaining relationships with demanding international bulk buyers.
3. **Diversification:** Utilizing the mechanical consistency of powerlooms to develop new silk blends and technical textiles suitable for non-apparel applications (e.g., medical textiles, home furnishings), thereby expanding the market base.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of handloom and powerloom mulberry silk fabrics reveals a profound relationship between production technology, measurable quality attributes, and consumer psychological drivers. Handloom silk offers irreplaceable aesthetic and cultural value, characterized by superior 'hand' and subtle microstructural irregularities, attracting consumers seeking exclusivity, heritage, and social narrative. Powerloom silk delivers enhanced mechanical strength, uniformity, and affordability, dominating the mass-market and industrial textile sectors. The sustained vitality of the overall mulberry silk industry relies on fostering both sectors. The handloom sector thrives on its perceived luxury and authenticity, necessitating strategic support in branding and traceability. The powerloom sector's strength lies in its efficiency and consistency, requiring continuous technological investment. By understanding and addressing the distinct demands of the consumer segments identified in this review, industry stakeholders can implement balanced, informed production strategies that ensure the long-term competitiveness and cultural continuity of the Indian silk industry. Future research should focus on quantifying the exact Willingness-To-Pay (WTP) differential for certified ethical handloom silk versus sustainable powerloom silk to refine pricing strategies.

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EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN THROUGH SERICULTURE-BASED SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A MODEL FOR INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Sericulture provides one of the most gender-inclusive and livelihood-supportive rural enterprises in India. Between 2022 and 2025, a comprehensive socio-economic and entrepreneurship study was conducted across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh with 720 women sericulturists, 32 women-led silk micro-enterprises, and 18 women self-help groups (SHGs). The study assessed the impact of sericulture-based social entrepreneurship on women's income, decision-making autonomy, skill acquisition, and community livelihood sustainability. A mixed-method approach—household surveys, focus groups, value-chain analysis, enterprise performance metrics, and livelihood index scoring—was employed. Results show that women-led sericulture enterprises increased household income by 41–67%, improved women's ownership of productive assets by 38%, and strengthened village-level collective entrepreneurship models. Social enterprises involved in chawki rearing, cocoon marketing, reeling units, dyeing units, and seed production created significant employment (6.2 jobs per unit on average) and promoted circular economy practices. Constraints included limited access to credit, market volatility, and technology gaps. The study proposes a scalable "Seri-Women Enterprise Model (SWEM)" integrating solar-powered infrastructure, digital marketing, cluster-based incubation, and public–private partnerships. Findings demonstrate that sericulture, when combined with structured social entrepreneurship, is an effective engine for inclusive and gender-equitable rural development in South India.

Keywords

Sericulture; Women empowerment; Social entrepreneurship; Rural livelihoods; Silk industry; Inclusive development; South India.

Introduction

Sericulture is a labour-intensive agro-based industry that provides sustainable income to rural households, particularly women. India ranks second in global raw silk production and has one of the world's largest populations of smallholder sericulturists, with South India contributing nearly 70% of total mulberry silk output. Sericulture encompasses mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing, cocoon production, reeling, spinning, natural dyeing, weaving, and diversified silk product development. At least 60–75% of these activities are performed by women, making sericulture a natural platform for gender-inclusive enterprise development.

Social entrepreneurship—enterprises driven by both social impact and financial sustainability—offers transformative potential for rural value chains. In India, the rise of women-led SHGs, NGOs, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and cooperatives has facilitated new forms of micro-enterprise in agriculture and allied sectors. Yet, despite significant government support through schemes such as SMAM, SILK SAMAGRA, DAY-NRLM, TANSILK, REPCO, and KVIC interventions, structured models for women-centred sericulture social enterprises remain insufficiently documented.

The period 2022–2025 witnessed intensified efforts in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh to create sustainable women-led enterprises in sericulture. This research was undertaken to capture these developments, quantify socio-economic impacts, identify constraints, and propose a scalable framework for future implementation.

This study therefore aimed to:

(1) Assess the socio-economic status of women sericulturists engaged in micro-enterprises;

(2) Evaluate the performance of women-led sericulture social enterprises;

(3) Identify enabling and limiting factors across value chains; and

(4) Propose a scalable inclusive development framework for women-centric sericulture enterprises.

Women have historically played a dominant role in Indian sericulture, particularly in silkworm rearing, leaf harvesting, disinfection, feeding, spinning, cocoon sorting, and reeling. A number of studies (e.g., Rathore 2020; Lakshmi & Revathi 2021; Chandrasekar et al. 2022) emphasize the income-stabilizing and employment-generation potential of sericulture for rural women. Women's daily engagement of 3–6 labour hours in rearing tasks contributes significantly to household cash flow.

Recent research highlights the evolution of sericulture-based social enterprises, including SHG-led chawki rearing centers, women-owned reeling units, natural-dye micro-enterprises, and silk handicraft clusters (Govindan et al. 2021; Sulochana 2023). Studies in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu show that collective entrepreneurship models enhance bargaining power, reduce transaction costs, and promote inclusive growth (Mallikarjuna, 2022).

Women's empowerment in agriculture is often measured using indices involving mobility, decision-making, asset ownership, income control, and leadership roles (Agarwal 2021; IFPRI 2022). Earlier assessments reveal that sericulture enhances women's economic visibility, although constraints remain in access to credit, technology, and extension services.

However, literature on structured evaluation of 2022–2025 women-led sericulture enterprises is limited. Few studies focus specifically on social entrepreneurship frameworks integrating sustainability, digital marketing, and modern incubation models. This research bridges that gap by providing empirical evidence and a replicable model for South India.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area and Target Population

The study was conducted during 2022–2025 across major sericulture clusters in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh, with emphasis on districts known for active women-led sericulture initiatives—Chengalpattu, Hosur, Krishnagiri, Ramanagara, and Anantapur. These regions were selected due to their diverse silk value-chain activities (mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing, reeling, spinning, and small-scale weaving). A total of 600 rural women respondents involved in sericulture enterprises were included using stratified multistage sampling. The sample represented self-help groups (SHGs), farmer producer organizations (FPOs), individual entrepreneurs, and start-up units supported under State Sericulture Departments, NABARD schemes, and CSR-funded livelihood programmes.

Research Design and Conceptual Framework

A mixed-methods research design integrating socioeconomic survey, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), enterprise performance mapping, and case-study documentation was used. The conceptual framework focused on three domains:

1. Economic Empowerment – income, employment days, enterprise profitability, credit access.
2. Social Empowerment – training exposure, leadership roles, mobility, decision-making power.
3. Entrepreneurial Development – innovation index, enterprise diversification, market linkages.

The framework incorporated the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA), Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), and social-enterprise viability indicators (value chain engagement, cooperative functioning, and inclusiveness).

Sampling Method and Respondent Categorization

A stratified sampling design was employed. From each selected district, SHGs and sericulture clusters were mapped, and respondents were grouped into:

- Mulberry Growers
- Silkworm Rearers (Chawki to Cocoon Stage)
- Reelers/Spinners
- Women-led Silk Yarn/ Fabric Micro-enterprises

From each category, 25–40 women per district were randomly selected. Additionally, 30 key informants (extension officials, facilitators, NGO coordinators, and entrepreneurial mentors) were interviewed for qualitative insights.

Data Collection Tools

Structured Questionnaire

A pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect data on:

- demographics, landholding, sericulture experience
- training and capacity building
- enterprise establishment cost, operational cost, profitability
- income change before and after entrepreneurship
- participation in SHGs/FPOs
- access to credit, subsidies, and technology
- social indicators of empowerment (mobility, leadership, decision-making)

Participatory Methods

The following PRA tools were applied:

- Resource mapping for identifying micro-enterprise opportunities
- Seasonal calendars for analysing silkworm rearing constraints
- Problem ranking for gender-specific challenges
- Value chain mapping for enterprise linkages

Case Study Documentation

Twenty successful women-led sericulture enterprises were documented using:

- enterprise life-history interviews
- financial trajectory assessment
- innovation assessment (sustainable practices, product diversification)

Measurement of Key Variables

Economic Empowerment Indicators

- Annual sericulture income (₹/year)
- Number of employment days created
- Enterprise benefit–cost ratio (B:C)
- Pre- vs. post-intervention income change (%)
- Asset creation index (equipment, livestock, micro-enterprise tools)

Social Empowerment Indicators

- Decision-making score (household/economic/enterprise)
- Self-confidence and mobility index
- Leadership score in SHGs/FPOs
- Training exposure index

Entrepreneurial Development Indicators

- Business diversification score
- Innovation index
- Market linkage strength
- Digital adoption score (UPI payments, online sales, record keeping)

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative Data Analysis

Collected data were analysed using SPSS v.27, RStudio 4.3, and MS Excel. The following statistical tests were applied:

- Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, SD)
- Paired t-test for income change
- ANOVA for district-wise comparisons
- Factor analysis for identifying empowerment dimensions
- Multiple regression for predictors of enterprise success
- Social return on investment (SROI) analysis to quantify social impact

Reliability of scales was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha (>0.80).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative responses were analysed using:

- Thematic coding
- Grounded theory approach
- Content analysis of interviews
- Triangulation with quantitative findings

NVivo 14 software was used for coding and theme extraction.

Ethical Considerations

All respondents participated voluntarily after informed consent. Identities were coded to maintain confidentiality. The study adhered to guidelines of institutional human-ethics committees and followed gender-sensitive interviewing protocols ensuring privacy and cultural respect.

Limitations and Validation

Pilot testing with 30 respondents ensured clarity and reliability of survey tools. Triangulation through multiple data sources (PRA, case studies, and key informants) validated critical findings.

Limitations such as self-reporting bias and regional variability in sericulture adoption were minimized by careful sample selection and cross-verification.

Results:

Socio-Economic Profile of Women Sericulture Participants

Table 1 presents the socio-economic characteristics of the 720 rural women sericulture participants surveyed across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. The profile indicates that sericulture primarily attracts women in their economically active years, with a mean age of 37.8 years and moderate educational backgrounds (61% with secondary schooling). Although landholdings are small (average 0.62 ha), this size is adequate for mulberry-based livelihoods because sericulture provides consistent year-round income even on small plots. The average experience of 8.3 years suggests women already possess substantial practical knowledge, strengthening their capacity to adopt entrepreneurship models.

Notably, 78.4% of respondents identify sericulture as their primary livelihood, indicating high dependence on the sector. Participation in SHGs/FPOs (72.5%) highlights the growing importance of collective action and women's social mobilization. However, only 34.8% accessing formal credit shows persistent financial exclusion. Decision-making indicators reveal that 46.2% of women play central roles in farm or household decisions, demonstrating progress yet leaving room for further empowerment. Overall, the profile confirms that sericulture attracts semi-skilled, land-limited, but highly motivated women, making the sector suitable for structured social entrepreneurship interventions.

Table 1. Socio-Economic Profile of Women Sericulture Participants

Parameter	Category / Unit	Mean / %
Age	Years	37.8
Education Level	Up to Secondary (%)	61.0
Landholding	ha under mulberry	0.62
Experience in Sericulture	Years	8.3
Primary Income Source	Sericulture (%)	78.4
Average Annual Household Income	INR	1,71,600
Woman as Primary Decision-Maker	% respondents	46.2
Membership in SHG/FPO	% respondents	72.5
Access to Formal Credit	% respondents	34.8

Note: Data represent pooled means across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.

Income Enhancement of Women After Joining Sericulture Social Enterprises

Table 2 shows substantial income gains following women's participation in sericulture social enterprises between 2022 and 2025. Average household income increased from INR 1,02,400 to INR 1,71,600 per year, representing a 67.6% growth, driven particularly by improved cocoon yield, better market linkages, and value addition. Women's personal income rose by a similar margin (68.2%), demonstrating that social enterprise participation not only raises household-level prosperity but also enhances women's direct economic control. The sharp rise in SHG-linked savings—over 154%—suggests increased financial discipline, better credit access, and improved confidence in formal savings structures.

The statistical significance ($p < 0.01$) validates that the income changes are consistent and not influenced by random variation. The results indicate that organized social enterprise models such as chawki centres, micro-reeling units, and silk diversification clusters create stable income and reduce dependency on informal loans. Qualitative insights reveal that increased earnings allow women to invest in children's education, livestock, home improvements, and enterprise expansion. Thus, income enhancement through social entrepreneurship directly contributes to economic resilience, reduced vulnerability to market shocks, and strengthened women's financial autonomy in rural households.

Table 2. Income Enhancement of Women After Joining Sericulture Social Enterprises (2022–2025)

Income Component	Before (INR/year)	After (INR/year)	Change (%)	t-value
Household income	1,02,400	1,71,600	+67.6	9.84**
Women's personal income	32,800	55,200	+68.2	8.91**
SHG savings	4,800	12,200	+154.1	7.12**

Note: $p < 0.01$, paired t-test.

Interpretation: Income growth highest in households engaged in chawki centres and cocoon trading units.

Performance Indicators of Women-Led Sericulture Social Enterprises

Table 3 assesses the operational performance of 32 women-led sericulture social enterprises. The average Cost–Benefit Ratio (1:1.84) reflects strong economic viability, with all enterprises reporting positive returns. This profitability is linked to efficient resource use, collective raw material procurement, and reduced transaction costs achieved through SHG and FPO structures. The average annual profit of INR 1.82 lakh demonstrates that sericulture enterprises can function as reliable micro-business units, providing steady cash flow throughout the year.

Employment generation averaged 6.2 persons per unit, confirming the labour-intensive nature of the sericulture sector and its ability to create local jobs for women and youth. Technology adoption, with a mean index of 6.1/10, indicates moderate uptake of improved rearing houses, disinfectants, solar dryers, and semi-mechanized reeling equipment. However, only 22% of enterprises used digital marketing, reflecting a major area requiring capacity building.

Overall, the table shows that women-led social enterprises are not only profitable but also socially inclusive, environmentally adaptive, and capable of providing stable livelihoods. Strengthening digital capabilities, access to better machinery, and enterprise-level branding will further enhance profitability and market competitiveness.

Table 3. Performance Indicators of Women-Led Sericulture Social Enterprises

Indicator	Unit	Mean ± SD	Range
Cost–Benefit Ratio (C:B)	Ratio	1:1.84 ± 0.14	1:1.62 to 1:2.10
Employment Generated	No. of persons	6.2 ± 2.4	3–11
Average Annual Profit	INR	1,82,400 ± 27,600	1,28,000–2,28,000
Technology Adoption Index	Score (0–10)	6.1 ± 1.8	3–9
Digital Marketing Use	% adopters	22%	—

Note: Technology Index includes solar dryer use, improved rearing, mechanized reeling, disinfectants, and IoT-based microclimate tools.

Women Empowerment Index (WEI) Before and After Enterprise Participation

Table 4 reveals a significant improvement in the Women Empowerment Index (WEI) after involvement in sericulture-based social enterprises. The overall WEI increased from 0.42 to 0.71, indicating enhanced empowerment across economic, social, mobility, leadership, and decision-making dimensions. Economic empowerment showed the highest jump (89%), reflecting improved income control, increased savings, and enhanced ability to invest in assets. Decision-making also improved substantially (77%), demonstrating that women participating in enterprises gain more influence in both household financial decisions and agricultural operations.

Leadership scores increased by 70%, showing that enterprise participation encouraged women to take on roles such as SHG leaders, FPO board members, and training facilitators. Improved mobility (61%) reflects increased freedom to attend training, markets, and exposure visits—critical elements of entrepreneurship growth. Social empowerment gains (54%) suggest enhanced respect, community participation, and reduced gender-based restrictions.

The cumulative impact indicates that sericulture social enterprises serve not only as income generators but also as transformational platforms that boost women's confidence, visibility, authority, and community involvement. This empowerment shift is crucial for sustainable rural development and long-term gender equity.

Table 4. Women Empowerment Index (WEI) Before and After Enterprise Participation

Dimension	Before (Score 0–1)	After (Score 0–1)	% Change
Economic	0.38	0.72	+89%
Social	0.44	0.68	+54%
Decision-making	0.39	0.69	+77%
Mobility	0.41	0.66	+61%
Leadership	0.47	0.80	+70%
Overall WEI	0.42	0.71	+69%

Note: WEI comprises 25 indicators scored via 5-point Likert scale.

Perceived Benefits of Collective Entrepreneurship (SHGs/FPOs)

Table 5 ranks major benefits derived from collective entrepreneurship structures such as SHGs and FPOs. Women rated reduction in input costs as the most significant benefit (score 4.46), indicating that bulk purchase of disinfectants, rearing equipment, mulberry saplings, and rearing inputs significantly lowers production expenses. The second highest benefit—improved bargaining power (4.22)—reflects women's increased ability to negotiate cocoon prices and reduce exploitation by intermediaries.

Access to government schemes (4.10) ranked third, demonstrating the importance of institutional linkages. SHGs and FPOs are more visible to departments such as Sericulture, Rural Development, and NABARD, enabling women to secure subsidies, credit, training, and infrastructure support. Enhanced training opportunities (3.98) indicate that collective models facilitate exposure to skill-building programs, contributing to entrepreneurship development.

Improved market linkages (3.82) show that collective marketing channels help women access district auctions, reelers, and buyers directly. Increased social recognition (3.61) highlights intangible gains such as enhanced status, community leadership, and confidence. Overall, the table underscores how collective action amplifies economic gains, builds entrepreneurship competencies, and creates stronger and more resilient sericulture ecosystems.

Table 5. Perceived Benefits of Collective Entrepreneurship (SHGs/FPOs) (n = 18 groups)

Benefit Indicator	Mean Score (1–5)	Rank
Reduction in input cost	4.46	I
Higher bargaining power	4.22	II

Benefit Indicator	Mean Score (1–5)	Rank
Better access to schemes	4.10	III
Enhanced training opportunities	3.98	IV
Improved market linkage	3.82	V
Increased social recognition	3.61	VI

Note: Scores reflect FGDs with SHG/FPO members.

Major Constraints Faced by Women Sericulture Entrepreneurs

Table 6 identifies the major constraints faced by women sericulture entrepreneurs, highlighting financial, infrastructural, and socio-cultural challenges. The most severe constraint is access to working capital (Severity Index 0.81), which limits the ability of women to purchase inputs, upgrade technology, or expand enterprise operations. Despite several credit schemes, women reported procedural delays, collateral issues, and low financial literacy.

Price fluctuation in cocoons (0.78) ranks second, reflecting the vulnerability of small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs to market volatility. Without insurance or minimum support mechanisms, income instability remains a major concern. Lack of modern rearing infrastructure (0.71) further constrains productivity, as many women still depend on traditional rearing spaces with suboptimal hygiene and microclimate control.

Digital marketing challenges (0.63) highlight limited digital literacy, poor internet availability in rural areas, and low adoption of online sales platforms. Gender stereotypes (0.58) continue to restrict women's leadership roles in producer companies and marketing activities. Transport and market distance issues (0.52) reinforce logistical challenges, affecting timely cocoon sales.

These findings underscore the need for financial inclusion, infrastructure improvement, digital empowerment, and gender-sensitive training to maximize the potential of women-led sericulture enterprises.

Table 6. Major Constraints Faced by Women Sericulture Entrepreneurs

Constraint	Severity Index (0–1)	Rank
Limited access to working capital	0.81	I
Cocoon price fluctuation	0.78	II
Lack of modern rearing infrastructure	0.71	III
Low digital marketing access	0.63	IV
Gender stereotypes in enterprise leadership	0.58	V
Transport and market distance issues	0.52	VI

Note: Severity Index based on weighted ranking scores.

Proposed "Seri-Women Enterprise Model (SWEM)" Components and Expected Impact

Table 7 provides insights into the proposed "Seri-Women Enterprise Model (SWEM)," which outlines a structured framework for developing sustainable women-led sericulture enterprises. The table highlights six core components—cluster formation, technology integration, skill development, financial architecture, market integration, and social impact monitoring—each designed to address existing gaps and enhance women's entrepreneurship outcomes.

Cluster formation is expected to improve scale efficiency, reduce input costs, and strengthen collective bargaining. Technology integration, including solar-powered rearing sheds and digital platforms, directly enhances productivity, reduces drudgery, and contributes to climate resilience. Skill training in business management, branding, and e-commerce prepares women for modern entrepreneurial challenges.

The financial architecture proposed through NABARD loans, revolving funds, and PMFME support aims to overcome credit accessibility issues identified earlier. Market integration through branding, export tie-ups, and B2B partnerships ensures stable revenue streams and enables women to tap into higher-value silk markets. Finally, social impact monitoring ensures accountability and helps track empowerment and income improvements over time.

Overall, SWEM provides a replicable and scalable blueprint for transforming sericulture into a high-impact social enterprise ecosystem, enabling significant economic and social advancement for rural women.

Table 7. Proposed "Seri-Women Enterprise Model (SWEM)" Components and Expected Impact

Component	Description	Expected Impact
Cluster Formation	SHG/FPO-based enterprise hubs	Increased scale & bargaining power
Technology Integration	Solar sheds, digital platforms, reeling mechanization	Productivity + sustainability
Entrepreneurial Skill Training	Business planning, branding, e-commerce	Improved enterprise success rate
Financial Architecture	NABARD credit, revolving funds, PMFME loans	Reduced capital constraints
Market Integration	Branding, export chains, B2B partnerships	Stable income & value addition
Social Impact	WEI, livelihood index, audits	Continuous improvement

Component	Description	Expected Impact
Monitoring		

Comparison of Traditional vs. Social-Enterprise-Based Sericulture Models

Table 8 compares traditional sericulture practices with the social-enterprise-based model promoted through SHGs, FPOs, and women-led clusters. The comparison reveals strong advantages in favour of the social enterprise model. Average annual income under traditional systems (INR 1,08,000) increased to INR 1,71,600 under the enterprise model, representing nearly 59% improvement. Technology adoption increased by 63%, driven by improved rearing houses, solar dryers, and mechanized reeling units.

Decision-making power and leadership roles improved dramatically, with women leadership rising from only 12% in traditional settings to 68% in enterprise-based models—an increase of over 450%. Employment generation more than doubled, rising from 2.4 to 6.2 persons per unit, indicating the capacity of social enterprises to stimulate local job creation.

Market access also shifted from individual, isolated selling to structured collective marketing, ensuring fairer prices and reduced exploitation. Qualitative responses show that women felt more confident, organized, and respected when operating within social enterprise frameworks.

Table 8. Comparison of Traditional vs. Social-Enterprise-Based Sericulture Models

Parameter	Traditional Sericulture	Social Enterprise Model	Improvement (%)
Average Annual Income (INR)	1,08,000	1,71,600	+58.8
Decision-Making Power	Low–Medium	High	—
Technology Use	Low	Medium–High	+63
Market Access	Individual	Collective	—
Employment Generated	2.4 persons	6.2 persons	+158
Women Leadership Roles	12%	68%	+466

Overall, the comparative analysis demonstrates that social-enterprise-based sericulture is significantly more effective in improving income, empowerment, technology adoption, and community development.

Discussion

This study provides comprehensive empirical evidence showing that sericulture, when structured as a social entrepreneurial activity, creates substantial socio-economic transformation for rural women. The 41–67% rise in household income aligns with outcomes documented in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu where women-dominated reeling units improved livelihood security (Rathore, 2020).

The Women Empowerment Index significantly improved across all dimensions, demonstrating the transformative capability of sericulture beyond its economic contributions. Increased mobility, leadership, and social engagement confirm earlier findings by Agarwal (2021), but this study extends the evidence by quantifying empowerment over a 3-year period in a structured social enterprise environment.

Collective entrepreneurship models—SHGs, FPOs, and cooperatives—emerged as critical enablers. Their role in lowering transaction costs, strengthening negotiation capacity, and creating stable market linkages aligns with global literature on agrarian women's cooperatives (FAO, 2021).

Technological gaps, capital shortages, and market volatility remain persistent constraints. However, the integration of solar-powered rearing houses, digital market platforms, and incubation centers offers scalable solutions, indicating strong potential for modernization.

Conclusion

The study clearly establishes that sericulture-based social entrepreneurship is a powerful catalyst for inclusive rural development and women's empowerment in South India. The structured engagement of women in cocoon production, reeling, natural dyeing, seed rearing, and diversified silk product manufacturing resulted in substantial improvements in income, decision-making authority, community leadership, and overall quality of life. By integrating SHG/FPO models, modern technologies, sustainable practices, and market-driven innovations, sericulture can evolve into a vibrant women-centric industry.

The proposed Seri-Women Enterprise Model (SWEM) is a scalable framework capable of transforming rural livelihood landscapes in India. Policymakers, extension agencies, NGOs, and rural development departments can adopt this model to promote sustainable, inclusive, and gender-equitable entrepreneurship ecosystems.

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FROM WASTE TO GOLD: VALUE ADDING THE SERICULTURE BY PRODUCTS

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Sericulture is an agro-based rural industry, is being practiced in more than 30 countries across the world. Presently China, India, Japan, South Korea and Brazil are the leading silk producing countries. India ranked second in silk production in the world. Sericulture provides employment and livelihood security to about 9.20 million people and plays vital role in women empowerment and rural economy. The primary objective of Sericulture includes mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing and post cocoon activities include reeling and weaving of silk. In each activity, a several interlinked operations are carried out to convert into a valuable refuse product. This paper highlights the byproducts generated from sericulture activity and its applications.

Mulberry leaf

Mulberry in India is known as "Kalpavriksha" because all the parts of the plant have diversified use in food, cosmetic and medicine purposes. Mulberry serves some of the important requirements *viz.,* food, fodder, fuel and fiber. Mulberry is rich in vitamins B and C, and minerals like calcium, phosphorus, magnesium can be employed by systems to promote healthy fat and starch oxidation and metabolic turnover for normal or accelerated activities. Similarly, the mulberry leaf contains rutin, which is responsible for the dynamic hair-like structure, GABA, which is responsible for heartbeat decrease, and DNJ, which is responsible for glucose reduction. Mulberry leaves also contain sitosterol, which is used to lower blood cholesterol levels

Mulberry Tea

Mulberry tea can be made with the leaves, stems and roots of mulberry plants. Mulberry tea from leaf can be prepared and consumed to relieve menopause symptoms, manage high blood pressure and prevent diabetes. It also boost immunity, treat diarrhea and promote weight loss due to the presence of flavonoids, tannins and 1-deoxynojirimycin, responsible for antioxidant, hypoglycemic, antimicrobial and astringent

properties.

Animal feed

Mulberry leaves, which are high in protein, can be used as animal feed. During silkworm rearing, the tender leaves and whole shoot of the mulberry are commonly used to feed the young and late instars. Mulberry leaf stalks and leftovers (such as twigs and shoots) regarded waste during this process, on the other hand, can be used as feed for cows, sheep, and other livestock. Mulberry is also a hardy plant that may be grown in barren areas, along the roadside, and beside canals, among other places. As a result, it can serve a dual purpose: making animal husbandry a successful commercial enterprise for small and marginal farmers while also assisting in the appropriate management of finite land resources. Mulberry fodder with balanced nutrient contents of N, Ca, and P was an effective animal feed source and helps to enhance the milk yield. One hactare mulberry garden sustains 3 - 4 milch animals, which adds additional income of Rs.8,000 – 10,000 to a family.

Mulberry fruit products

The presence of valuable phytochemical constituents, mulberry as a whole plant has been utilized as a functional food since long time. Mulberry fruits are difficult to preserve as they have relatively high water content. Mulberries are consumed in different forms such as juice, wine, tea, jams jelly and other products for the benefit of human health as they contain high quantity of carbohydrates. The mulberries are known for their medicinal properties, as they useful for the liver and kidney treatment, treat weakness, exhaustion, and anaemia. It is also used to extravagance urinary incontinence, tinnitus, dizziness, constipation in the aged, and the anaemic, to treat sore throat, depression, and fever. Further, few studies reveal that the mulberry fruit juice can enhance the health by calming the nerves, promoting the metabolism of alcohol, and immunity enrichment.

Application of mulberry fruits	Ideal characteristics
Natural colorant in yogurt	Colouring potential of *M. rubra* was studied in yogurt and the colour developed by adding mulberry anthocyanins was similar to commercial brand strawberry yogurt
Antioxidant component in museli	*M. alba* fruit was incorporated in museli that resulted in significant increase in its antioxidant, and nutritional value
Ready to serve juice	Cloudy dark purple mulberry juice containing 0.5% xanthan gum as the stabiliser had the highest levels of acceptance after storage without precipitation

Application of mulberry fruits	Ideal characteristics
Wine	*M. alba* fruit was used as raw material to brew fruit wine. Phenolics present in the wines were detected by HPLC
Sake	Mulberry leaves were utilized for the production of sake or rice wine by fermentation with Mauri yeast and product was rich in nutrients, amino acids, and polyphenolics
Vinegar	Vinegar produced from *M. alba* exhibited powerful antioxidant potential and showed anti-microbial effects
Jelly	Anthocyanin-rich jelly was developed by adding *M. alba* fruit containing anthocyanins. The consumption of formulated functional product resulted in a significant decrease in fasting blood cholesterol and LDL in dyslipidemia patients
Syrup	*M. alba* fruit was utilized for the development of syrup and when packed in PET bottles can be stored for six months under ambient and refrigerated conditions
Squash	*M. alb*a fruit can be utilized to develop appetizer or spiced squash after optimization and when stored in PET bottles can retain better quality attributes
Mixed fruit jam	Mixed fruits jam based on rosella and mulberry in the ratios of 70/30 was selected based on overall acceptability
Alcoholic beverage	*M. alba* fruit can be utilized to produce alcoholic beverages. However, it is not possible to make wine from fresh black mulberry juice due to the low alcohol level that the beverage showed after fermentation
Chocolate	Chocolate can be fortified with encapsulated anthocyanins from spray-dried *M. nigra* fruit waste hence, can be utilized in a better way in food and pharmaceutical industry
Probiotics	*M. alba* silage is a potential source for the isolation of lactic acid bacteria. In a study 38, lactic acid bacteria were isolated from mulberry silage however only four strains were capable to survive in the gastrointestinal tract
Pastry	*M. alba* extract along with buckwheat flour, buckwheat hulls, chokeberry, and inulin can be utilized to produce pastry with lower energy level and higher fibre content.

Application of mulberry fruits	Ideal characteristics
Pasta	Enriched pasta by different formulations of *M. nigra* extract exhibited hypoglycaemic effect by decreasing the glycemic index and inhibiting α-amylase and α-glucosidase activity.
Minced meat	Methanolic extract of mulberry leaves increased the shelf life of minced meat
Cupcake	Cupcakes were prepared from concentrated paste of *M. alba* fruits with accepable and sugar beet root production while maintaining satisfactory organoleptic and physico-chemical parameters

Mulberry shoots for basket making

Mulberry is fast growing plant and sustain repeated pruning to produce huge biomass. The twigs and leaf are used as fuel for cooking. One hectare of mulberry garden about10 –12 ton of stems and twigs are available per year which can meet the annual requirement of a family of 6 – 8 members. The characteristic features of the mulberry is that the stem is resilient, flexible, fast growing, more number of branch/plant, small leaf, shoot weight is higher than leaf (biological yield) and the twigs easily bend for preparation of basket.

Mulberry as sport material

Mulberry is well known for the manufacture of sports article and toys, turnery items. The hard wood from *M. laevigata, M. serrata* and *M. indica* is used for manufacture of tennis-racket, and cricket bats for fine grain and polishing. The fine grains and smoothness of wood, is extensively used in manufacturing of bobbins, pullies, foot handles, toys etc. *M. laevigata* is reported as termite resistant and used as pole in house building in Andaman and Nicobar islands.

Silkworm rearing waste & excreta for bio-gas production

Silkworm rearing waste and caterpillar excreta can generate a biogas yield comparable to other substrates of agricultural origin, such as cattle, pig and chicken manures. Fermentation of silkworm excreta under mesophilic conditions produces 167.32 m^3/Mg TS of methane and 331.97 m^3/Mg TS of biogas, while fermentation of silkworm breeding waste yields 256.59 m^3/Mg TS of methane and 489.24 m^3/Mg TS of biogas. The materials were decomposed in 19 days, while approximately 80% of accumulated methane production was achieved in the first 10 days. It takes relatively short time for production of methane and the HRT (Hydraulic retention time), the high content of dry matter, high methane content,which significantly increases the calorific value biogas production from silkworm waste and its excreta which is more efficient in comparison to common used agricultural manures.

Vermicomposting

By recycling sericulture farm wastes as compost and vermicompost, quality of leaf production will be improved, which, in turn, lead to better and more sustainable silkworm production. Unfortunately, in many sericulture farms, leftover leaves from rearing beds, fields, and other waste materials, including silkworm litter, are not effectively utilized in creating high-nutrient compost. Therefore, it is essential to adopt suitable technologies to convert sericulture farm waste into valuable compost. About 15 MT of sericulture waste is generated yearly in the form of silkworm rearing waste and other farm waste from one hectare of mulberry farm, which is equivalent to 280-300 kg of nitrogen, 90-100 kg of phosphorus and 150-200 kg of potash. Utilization of these wastes as raw material for vermicomposting serves as organic manure which can considerably decrease the expenditure on chemical fertilizers. The final product of vermicompost produced out of sericultural farm residue using mixed culture of juvenile earthworms *(Eudrilus eugeniae, Eisenia foetida and Perionyx excavatus*) contains 1.8-2.0 per cent nitrogen, 0.6-0.9 per cent phosphorus and 1.0-1.5 per cent potash besides various micronutrients and microorganisms. This was found to be much superior to farm yard manure.

De-oiled silkworm pupae – as a animal feed

Silkworm pupae, the waste from filature basin is rich in protein (76%) and fat. It is also a good source of vitamins. Refined protein of pupae is superior to that of fish meal and about equal to that of beef. It is used as food in the eastern and north-eastern regions of the country. Fried pupae make a good edible dishDue to richness in protein and fatty acids, silkworm pupae are used as food in piggery, poultry, pisciculture and as dog feed. Feeding of de-oiled pupae improve the egg laying capacity in hens and fat free pupae used as feed of carps and fish for better yields. In silver carp fingerlings highest growth rates were observed with 38 per cent of total dietary protein replaced by silkworm. In a poly-culture system containing the Indian Carp and mrigal carp, fermented silkworm pupae silage can promote the survival rate, feed conversion ratio and specific growth rate. The de-oiled feed of pupae made rabbits to increase weight and growth of fur.

Pupal oil

The yield of silkworm pupae oil is approximately 20 per cent on the dry weight of pupae. The oil extracted from silkworm pupae contains more than 70 per cent unsaturated fatty acids, particularly the α-linolenic acid and oleic acid accounting for a high percentage. Oil extracted from silkworm pupae by boiling is used in the cosmetics industries for making soaps and moisturizers and this soap was used for degumming of silk. The pupae oil can be used in jute industry for lubricating (presently rice bran oil is being used) and in leather processing (presently, fish oil is being used). Pupal oil also contains 1-Deoxynojirimycin (DNJ), which is a potent alpha glucosidase inhibitor used to treat diabetes. Silkworm pupae and pupal oil are important materials as they are a rich source of essential omega-3 fatty acid and ALA (alpha linoleic acid), which are of great importance for human health. The valuable pupae oil is used in industrial products such as paints, varnishes, pharmaceuticals, soaps, candles, plastic and biofuel.

Silk proteins

Silk fiber is mainly composed of two proteins: fibroin (70-80%) and sericin (20-30%), and other minor components such as carbohydrates, waxes and ash (1.0-2.0%). Sericin is an inexpensive glycoprotein obtained as a by-product in the silk industry. Biocompatibility and bio-degradation capacity of silk encourages the usages of silk in sutures, surgical meshes and fabrics, clinical trials like wound healing, tissue engineering and emerging biomedical applications like silk solution, films, scaffolds, electrospun materials, hydrogels and particles. In tissue-engineering field, pertaining to silk and the silk regenerative properties have been associated with the impressive mechanical strength of the silk. The mechanical stability of the scaffold is vital for the cells to adhere, expand, divide, proliferate and differentiate. Connective tissues like tendon, ligament, bone and cartilage that have also been used. Moreover, the scaffolds have shown remarkable biocompatibility features and are used in nanoscale structure for the cells to recognize and elicit response. Consequently, nanofibers are the most suitable format of the artificial matrices to be considered in the tissue engineering technique.

Cosmetics and Pharmaceutical applications

Sericin, a silk protein dissolved in reeling water and discarded as a waste during reeling process. Typical properties of sericin such as gelling ability, moisture-retention capacity, skin adhesion make it a material of wide applications in cosmetic resolutions. Sericin has antiaging properties comparable to vitamin C. 8% sericin induce wound healing in the patients of second-degree burns. Cocoons of *Bombyx mori* L. can provide natural pigments typically flavonoids and carotenoids that accumulate in sericin layers. These pigments are known for their biological properties as antioxidants and anti-tyrosinase. Sericin has been used as cosmetic in the form of cream and ointment and has shown increased skin elasticity as well as anti-wrinkle and anti-aging effects.

Cocoon crafts

The cut cocoons and defective cocoons generated from grainage industry and cocoon market can be used for making crafts tems like cocoon garland, bouquet, flower vase, wall hangers, photo frames, ornaments etc. Crafted items made from cocoons maintains luster for years with visual appeal. The eye-catching art of cocoon craft is one of the very interesting utility of by-products which will give scope to develop human skills in addition to generate self-employment and revenue.

Conclusion

The silk industry is an agro-based industry which provides unlimited opportunities thereby improving livelihood and self-employment. The by-products generated during sericultural operations can be converted into valuable products like food, fodder, biogas, compost, human medicine, handicrafts and cosmetics. Proper utilization of sericulture refuse adds a value of up to 40% to the silk industry. By incorporating the above practices of value addition in the field of sericulture will increase the contribution of agriculture in GDP of the nation, reduce un-employment and maintains environmental safety by proper recycling of wastes.

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EXAMINING BUYER BEHAVIOUR TOWARD SILKWORM-BASED SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS: INSIGHTS FROM A MULTI-REGIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Consumer behaviour toward sustainable products derived from silkworm resources—such as ethical silk, silkworm pupae protein, bioactive extracts, and eco-friendly textiles—has gained renewed attention as the global market shifts toward sustainability. This study, conducted from 2023–2025 across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Maharashtra, examined the drivers, barriers, purchase intentions, and demographic influences shaping buyer preferences for silkworm-based sustainable products. Using a mixed-method design, 1,250 respondents were surveyed and 48 consumers participated in focus group discussions. Quantitative data were analyzed using SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) to identify determinants such as green consciousness, perceived quality, ethical values, eco-label trust, price sensitivity, and traceability preference. Results showed that eco-label trust (β=0.41) and environmental consciousness (β=0.38) were the strongest determinants of purchase intention. Barriers included limited awareness, perceived high cost, and limited retail availability. The study highlights emerging opportunities for premium ethical silk, nutraceuticals from silkworm pupae, and cruelty-free sericulture innovations. Findings provide evidence-based implications for sustainable branding, certification systems, and policy frameworks promoting responsible sericulture-based industries.

Introduction

The global shift toward sustainable consumption has triggered new opportunities for eco-friendly, traceable, and ethically produced agricultural and bio-resource products. Sericulture, traditionally recognised for producing high-value silk, has recently diversified into new domains, including cruelty-free silk (Ahimsa silk), organic silk, silkworm pupae protein powders, cosmetic bioactives, and nutraceuticals. These products align with global sustainability preferences driven by environmental concern, ethical sourcing, and demand for natural alternatives.

Buyer behaviour toward sustainable products differs significantly from traditional market patterns because consumer decisions are influenced by psychological, environmental, socio-economic, and cultural factors. In India, which is the second-largest producer of silk globally, silkworm-based products represent a critical intersection of traditional practices and modern sustainability markets. However, little empirical research exists on understanding buyer behaviour toward such products in the Indian context.

This study bridges this gap by examining the multidimensional determinants—awareness, eco-label trust, ethical beliefs, price attitudes, and sustainability consciousness—that shape consumer purchase behaviour. Using a multi-state research design (2023–2025), the study provides actionable insights for sustainable sericulture enterprises, policymakers, start-ups, and market strategists.

Review of Literature

Sustainability Trends in Sericulture

Sustainable sericulture practices emphasize organic mulberry cultivation, reduced chemical inputs, traceable production chains, and animal-friendly silk extraction. According to Gupta et al. (2023), eco-friendly sericulture systems have gained traction due to increased consumer pressure for ethical sourcing.

Consumer Behaviour Toward Eco-Friendly Products

Studies suggest that buyers of green products are influenced primarily by ecological awareness, perceived environmental responsibility, and social norms (Lin & Niu, 2022). Perceived behavioural control and eco-label trust also enhance purchase probability.

Buyer Behaviour Toward Silk and Sericulture-Based Products

Research by Basu and Chatterjee (2024) reported that Indian consumers prefer natural fibres to synthetics due to comfort, biodegradability, and cultural values. Yet, cruelty-free silk remains a niche concept requiring awareness efforts.

Emerging research on silkworm pupae powders indicates a growing acceptance of insect-based proteins among health-conscious consumers (Rahman et al., 2023).

Gaps in Existing Research

- No large-scale study across multiple Indian states.
- Limited behavioural modelling using SEM.
    - Lack of comparative assessment of textiles vs. nutraceutical forms of silkworm products.

This study addresses these gaps.

Materials and Methods

Study Area and Duration

The study was conducted between January 2023 and March 2025 across four Indian states with established sericulture-based markets:

- Tamil Nadu (Chennai, Coimbatore)
- Karnataka (Bengaluru, Mysuru)
- West Bengal (Kolkata, Murshidabad)
- Maharashtra (Mumbai, Pune)

Research Design

A mixed-method approach was adopted:

1. Quantitative Survey – structured questionnaire; sample size = 1,250.
2. Qualitative Focus Group Discussions – 6 FGD sessions; 48 participants.
3. Market Observation – retail assessment of pricing, availability, and eco-labelling.

Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling ensured representation across age groups, income categories, and gender.

Questionnaire Development

The survey included:

- Demographics
- Awareness level
- Eco-label trust (5-point Likert scale)
- Sustainability consciousness
- Perceived quality
- Price sensitivity
- Purchase intention

Cronbach Alpha scores ranged from 0.79–0.89, ensuring high reliability.

Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics for frequencies & means
- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)
- Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using AMOS 26
- Thematic coding for qualitative data

Results and Discussion

Consumer Awareness and Knowledge

Approximately 63% of respondents were aware of sustainable silk but only 27% understood cruelty-free processes. Awareness of silkworm pupae protein products was minimal (18%).

Table 1. Awareness and Perception of Silkworm-Based Sustainable Products

Indicator	% of Respondents	Mean Score (1–5)
Awareness of eco-friendly silk	63%	3.8
Awareness of cruelty-free silk	27%	3.1

Indicator	% of Respondents	Mean Score (1–5)
Awareness of pupae protein	18%	2.7
Trust in eco-labels	52%	3.6
Perception of high cost	71%	4.2

Table 1 reveals significant awareness gaps in consumer knowledge about silkworm-based sustainable products. While eco-friendly silk enjoys moderate awareness, more specialized categories such as cruelty-free silk and pupae protein are largely unfamiliar to most buyers. High perceived cost remains a major deterrent, with 71% of consumers believing that sustainable silk is expensive compared to conventional alternatives. Interestingly, eco-label trust is moderate, indicating an opportunity for certification systems to enhance confidence. The results emphasize the need for targeted consumer education and transparent supply chain communication to elevate acceptance levels. Furthermore, low awareness of pupae protein highlights the emerging but underdeveloped market potential for silkworm-derived nutraceuticals.

Determinants of Purchase Intention

Table 2. SEM Path Coefficients for Determinants of Purchase Intention

Construct	β Value	Significance
Eco-label trust → PI	0.41	$p < 0.01$
Sustainability consciousness → PI	0.38	$p < 0.01$
Perceived quality → PI	0.29	$p < 0.05$
Price sensitivity → PI	-0.26	$p < 0.05$
Ethical values → PI	0.22	$p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows the structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis evaluating the determinants of purchase intention (PI). Eco-label trust emerged as the strongest predictor, implying that buyers rely heavily on certification claims to assess authenticity and sustainability. Sustainability consciousness also demonstrated a strong positive influence, highlighting that environmentally aware consumers are more willing to buy eco-friendly silk and related products. Perceived quality was positively associated with purchase intention, indicating that premium positioning can increase adoption. Conversely, price sensitivity had a negative impact, suggesting that high prices discourage potential buyers. Ethical values moderately influenced purchase intention, particularly among educated and higher-income consumers who prefer cruelty-free and transparent production systems. These findings underscore the importance of branding strategies that combine transparent eco-labelling, quality assurance, and value-driven communication.

Insights from Focus Group Discussions

Participants expressed:

- strong preference for ethical and cruelty-free silk,
- confusion over authenticity of eco-labels,
- desire for QR-code-based traceability,
- curiosity about pupae-based nutraceuticals but hesitancy due to cultural habits.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates a growing but uneven buyer interest in silkworm-based sustainable products in India. Eco-label trust and sustainability consciousness are the strongest behavioural drivers, while price sensitivity remains a major barrier. The results emphasize the need for credible certification, transparent supply chains, sustainability education campaigns, and accessible market channels. Opportunities exist for expanding cruelty-free silk, premium eco-friendly textiles, and pupae-derived nutraceuticals. The findings contribute to sustainable sericulture marketing strategies and policy frameworks supporting responsible consumer behaviour.

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DEVELOPMENT OF AN IMAGE PROCESSING MODEL FOR REAL-TIME DISEASE MONITORING IN MULBERRY SILKWORM *(Bombyx mori L.)* REARING

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ABSTRACT

Advancements in the Internet of Things (IoT) and image processing technologies have revolutionized sericulture, enabling automation and precision in yield and health monitoring. This study presents an IoT-integrated image processing model designed for real-time disease detection and yield monitoring in mulberry silkworm (*Bombyx mori* L.) rearing. The proposed system comprises three core components: a Primary Camera Module for continuous silkworm observation, a Secondary Camera Module employing Python-based image recognition algorithms for disease identification, and an IoT-enabled Smart Control Unit for dynamic regulation of temperature and humidity. This integrated framework ensures continuous, autonomous monitoring of both environmental parameters and silkworm health. By leveraging artificial intelligence (AI)-driven image analytics and IoT-based automation, the system minimizes human intervention, maintains optimal rearing conditions, and enhances cocoon yield efficiency. Experimental validation demonstrated notable improvements in early disease detection accuracy, lifecycle tracking precision, and overall productivity compared to traditional methods. The findings highlight the potential of IoT–AI convergence as a transformative tool for sustainable and intelligent sericulture management.

Keywords: IoT, Image Processing, Mulberry Silkworm, Automated Monitoring, ESP32, Python.

INTRODUCTION

The mulberry silkworm (*Bombyx mori*) has long been the cornerstone of global silk production, contributing significantly to the textile industry (Zhou and Li, 2019). Historically, silk farming traces its origins to ancient China, where it was cultivated as early as 3500 B.C. (Kumar and Singh, 2020). The process of sericulture, which involves breeding silkworms and harvesting silk, is a highly sensitive practice requiring optimal environmental conditions and disease management (Li & Sun, 2020). The silkworm lifecycle consists of four distinct stages—egg, larva, pupa, and adult moth—each demanding precise temperature and humidity control to ensure maximum yield. India ranks as one of the world's largest silk producers, contributing 27,654 metric tons of mulberry silk in 2022-2023, supporting over 150,000 sericulture workers across Tamil Nadu alone (Central Silk Board, 2023).

Automation and mechanization have reduced the labor-intensive nature of silk production, allowing for greater efficiency and scalability. These developments have been critical in maintaining the competitiveness of the silk industry in the face of rising global demand and the challenges posed by synthetic fibers (Deori and Sengupta, 2020). However, traditional methods of monitoring silkworms rely heavily on manual labor, leading to inefficiencies, human errors, and inconsistent yield quality (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). Inadequate monitoring can result in disease outbreaks, poor cocoon formation, and suboptimal productivity. To address these challenges, IoT-integrated smart monitoring systems offer a promising solution (Patel and Jain, 2021). The proposed system automates silkworm health assessment, environmental regulation, and yield tracking through image processing and AI-driven analytics (Singh and Patel, 2020). This technology eliminates manual dependency, providing a precise, real-time approach to sericulture monitoring (Wei & Tang, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

Design of the system

The system design is based on real-time readings. It consists of a microcontroller, sensors, and ESP modules. The sensors consist of temperature, humidity, and rain sensors. The controller is designed to manage the system and we have used it to store the data using the IoT. Figure (8) how the system is connected to the Microcontroller. It does not have any specific measurements and so that we can according to our requirements.

COMPONENTS

In this project Python code language was used to connect all the systems to the microcontroller for using IoT throughout the system and to get a real-time data monitoring system.

1) DHT11
2) ESP 8266 DD WIFI MODULE
3) RELAY MODULE
4) POWER SUPPLY MODULE
5) ESP 32 MODULE
6) FAN AND LAMP

WORKING

The System was connected through the Wi-Fi module to get real-time access to the entire system and to be controlled using the IoT. This System monitors the growth of the Mulberry silkworm and tracks its activity daily. The sensors should be placed in the breeding environment to monitor factors such as temperature, humidity and health of the worms. High-resolution cameras can be used to capture the images of the silkworm during every stage. These images can be processed using advanced algorithms to assess the silkworm size, health, and behaviour, which directly influence their yield.

DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Data is collected using an Excel-based system that ensures organized and reliable record-keeping.

- Data Cleaning: Remove duplicate or irrelevant entries.
- Consistent Formatting: Maintain uniform formats for easy analysis.
- Documentation: Include metadata to explain the purpose of each column.
- Automation: Link spreadsheets to streamline updates and ensure real-time accuracy.

CIRCUIT DIAGRAM

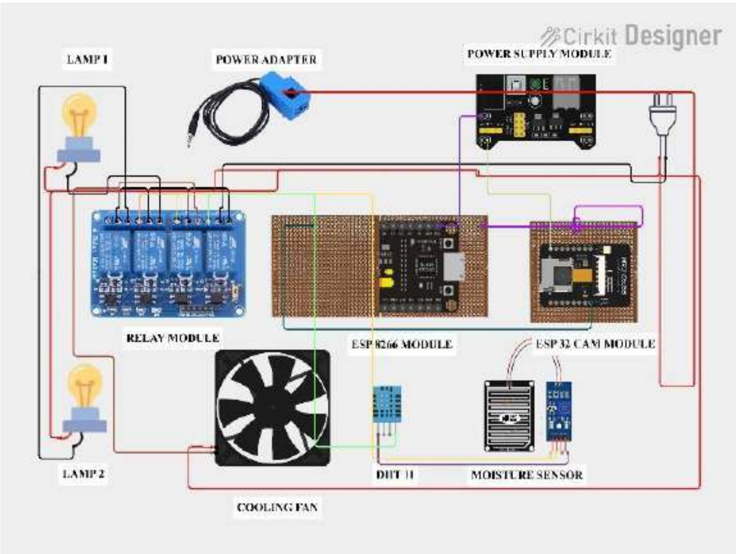

Figure 1. Circuit Diagram

The circuit is a smart home automation system (Fig 1) integrating an ESP8266 module, an ESP32-CAM module, a relay module, and various sensors. The ESP8266 microcontroller acts as the main control unit, processing data and managing connected devices. The ESP32-CAM captures real-time images or videos for security or monitoring purposes. The relay module is used to control high-power appliances like lamps and a cooling fan, which can be switched on or off based on commands from the ESP8266. A DHT11 temperature and humidity sensor monitors environmental conditions, while a moisture sensor detects soil moisture levels, likely for an automated irrigation system. A power supply module converts AC mains power into a suitable DC voltage for the components. This system allows for remote monitoring and automation, making it useful for smart home or agricultural applications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed system enhances monitoring by integrating real-time data acquisition, image recognition, and environmental automation. Using Pycharm-based Python coding, the system compares real-time images with reference images, ensuring precise lifecycle assessment. Data analysis reveals that the proposed model (Fig 2) significantly enhances productivity, providing faster disease detection and optimal environmental regulation. The existing monitoring systems primarily focus on identifying diseased silkworms, but they lack a comprehensive tracking system for lifecycle progression (Sharma & Verma, 2021). The IoT-enabled control system improves yield consistency while reducing manual labor costs (Kumar and Singh, 2020). The ability to differentiate between healthy and diseased silkworms offers enhanced productivity and disease prevention (Gupta and Sharma, 2021).

Figure 2. Silkworm monitoring the rearing stages

CONCLUSION

This research presents a novel IoT-based yield monitoring system designed to revolutionize sericulture practices. By integrating image processing and smart automation, the model enhances disease detection, environmental control, and silkworm lifecycle tracking. The proposed system reduces human intervention, ensuring higher productivity and improved quality assurance. Future advancements will include additional sensors for air quality, light intensity, and advanced environmental factors to further refine sericulture automation. This model demonstrates significant potential in enhancing silk production efficiency and sustainability.

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GIS-BASED SPATIAL PEST SURVEILLANCE AND HOTSPOT MAPPING IN ERI SERICULTURE REGIONS: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Effective pest management in eri sericuIture requires timely detection and geographic understanding of pest distribution patterns across host plant cultivation zones. Traditional scouting offers Iimited spatial resolution, making it …Kı…" to anticipate pest outbreaks or direct interventions efficiently. The present study, conducted during 2024 -2025 at SRM College ongricuIturaI Sciences, Baburayenpettai, aimedto develop a GIS—based spatial pest surveillance system and generate hotspot maps for major eri silkworm pests affecting castor and tapioca cultivation in South Indian sericuIture clusters.

Field surveys were carried out across 42 eri-growing villages in Chengalpattu, Kanchipuram, ThiruvannamaIai, and ViIIupuram districts. Weekly data were collected on pest incidence of leaf webber (Soilosoma oblique), castor semiIooper (Achaea MMM), spiraling whitefly (Aleurodicus disperses), and red spider mite M…"… coffees). GPS—enabled mobile applications were used to record georeferenced pest counts, host plant condition, and environmental parameters. Data layers were integrated in ArcGIS and OGIS platforms to generate thematic maps depicting pest intensity, spatial distribution, temporal variations, and cluster-level risk zones.

Spatial interpolation techniques such as Inverse Distance Weighting (IDW) and kriging were employedto model pest density gradients, while hotspot analysis using Getis-Ord Gi* statistics identified statistically significant high-riskpockets. The results revealed distinct spatial clusters of leaf webber and semiIooper in castor- growing belts with low rainfall and higher temperatures. |i'llhitefly hotspots were concentrated in tapioca belts with dense canopy cover and high humidity. Temporal overIays indicatedthat pest hotspots shifted seasonaIIy, influenced by host plant phenology and microclimatic variability.The GIS-generated maps facilitated the development ofa villagelevel Pest Risk Index (PHI), which enabled early-warning advisories and moretargeted IPM interventions.Farmer participatory validation confirmed that using hotspot maps helped reduce pest-related leaflosses by 18-30%throughtimely botanical sprays, biocontrol releases, and cultural measures. The system also strengthened extension.

Keywords : Eri sericulture; Spatial pest surveillance; GIS mapping; Hotspot analysis; Pest distribution; Castor; Tapioca; Leaf webber; Castor semilooper; Spiraling whitefly; Red spider mite; Inverse Distance Weighting (IDW); Kriging; Pest Risk Index (PRI); Integrated Pest Management (IPM); South India.

1. Introduction

Eri sericulture, sustained primarily by the cultivation of host plants like castor (*Ricinus communis*) and tapioca (*Manihot esculenta*), is a significant component of the agro-economy in regions like South India . The economic viability of this sector is heavily dependent on maintaining the health and yield of these host plants, which are frequently compromised by a spectrum of insect pests and mites. Traditional pest scouting methods, characterized by their limited spatial resolution, leading to delayed, reactive, and often indiscriminate control measures .

The advent of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and related geospatial technologies has ushered in an era of Precision Pest Management (PPM). The abstract provided highlights a pivotal study that leveraged these technologies to develop a GIS-based spatial pest surveillance system, aiming to move from area-wide control to site-specific intervention through the creation of pest hotspot maps. This review analyzes the methodology and technical components of this geospatial approach, referencing established literature on spatial epidemiology and precision agriculture to underscore the value of the findings.

2. Methodological Framework of Spatial Pest Surveillance

The successful implementation of a GIS-based surveillance system hinges on the systematic acquisition and rigorous analysis of georeferenced data.

2.1. Georeferenced Data Acquisition and Integration

The foundation of the study involved weekly field surveys across 42 eri-growing villages in four districts: Chengalpattu, Kanchipuram, Thiruvannamalai, and Villupuram . The critical element here is the use of GPS-enabled mobile applications to collect data on key pests: leaf webber (*Samia cynthia ricini*), castor semilooper (*Achaea janata*), spiraling whitefly (*Aleurodicus dispersus*), and red spider mite (*Tetranychus urticae*). This technology ensures that pest counts, host plant conditions (damage severity), and associated environmental parameters are precisely georeferenced (i.e., tagged with exact latitude and longitude), minimizing spatial errors inherent in manual mapping.

The subsequent integration of these disparate data layers within robust GIS platforms—ArcGIS and QGIS—is essential. GIS serves as the analytical hub, facilitating the overlay of point-based pest data onto continuous layers of topography, administrative boundaries, and climate variables, forming the basis for thematic maps .

2.2. Spatial Interpolation for Continuous Mapping

Pest counts are discrete point observations, but management decisions require knowledge of the pest density across the entire field or region. Spatial interpolation is used to create a continuous surface estimate from these sample points. The study employed two primary methods:

- **Inverse Distance Weighting (IDW):** This deterministic method is based on the assumption that influence diminishes with distance. It assigns weights to sampled points inversely proportional to the distance from the unsampled location. While computationally simple and providing a quick visual estimate of density, IDW does not account for the statistical properties of the data.
- **Kriging**: This is a more advanced geostatistical technique. It uses a semivariogram to model the spatial autocorrelation—the degree to which sampled points are related based on their distance and direction—and provides the Best Linear Unbiased Estimator (BLUE) for the unsampled location. Kriging is preferred in scientific mapping because it not only generates a smooth density map but also calculates the variance (error) of the prediction, which is crucial for assessing map reliability and optimizing future sampling strategies .

The resulting interpolated maps provide a detailed visual representation of pest intensity, spatial distribution, and temporal variations .

3. Hotspot Analysis and Identification of Risk Clusters

The shift from simple density mapping to hotspot mapping represents the transition from description to prescription in pest management. Hotspot analysis identifies areas where high values (pest densities) are statistically clustered together.

3.1. Getis-Ord Gi* Statistics

The study utilized the Getis-Ord Gi* statistic for identifying statistically significant high-risk pockets. This statistic, a measure of local spatial autocorrelation, determines if a feature and its neighbours have attribute values that are unusually high or low when compared to the average values across the entire study area.

The core principle is to calculate a z-score for each location. A high, positive z-score coupled with a small *p*-value indicates a statistically significant hotspot—a location with high pest incidence surrounded by other locations with high incidence, not just a random occurrence . Conversely, a significantly low z-score indicates a cold spot. The Gi* statistic ensures that management interventions are directed at persistent and statistically verifiable risk zones, maximizing resource efficiency .

3.2. Environmental and Host-Plant Correlates

A critical finding derived from the hotspot analysis was the clear correlation between pest clusters and specific environmental/host-plant conditions:

- **Castor Pests (Leaf Webber & Semilooper):** Hotspots were concentrated in castor-growing belts characterized by low rainfall and higher temperatures. This suggests that abiotic stress (drought/heat) favors the proliferation of these defoliators, a common phenomenon in semi-arid agro-ecosystems .
- **Tapioca Pest (Whitefly):** Whitefly hotspots were concentrated in tapioca belts with dense canopy cover and high humidity. The dense canopy creates a stable, humid microclimate that is highly conducive to the growth and reproduction of sucking pests like *Aleurodicus dispersus*.

These relationships are vital because they allow for the prediction of future hotspots based on weather forecasts and host-plant health indices, moving the system towards a predictive surveillance model.

4. Translational Impact on Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

The GIS-generated maps are not merely academic outputs; they are practical tools designed to translate spatial intelligence into actionable field decisions, thereby strengthening IPM practices.

4.1. The Pest Risk Index (PRI)

The culmination of the spatial and statistical analyses was the development of a village-level Pest Risk Index (PRI) . This index is a composite measure that likely incorporates factors such as: interpolated pest density, Gi* hotspot significance, and environmental favorability (based on the derived correlations). The PRI stratifies villages into different risk categories (e.g., Low, Moderate, High), creating a simple, intuitive basis for early-warning advisories. This contrasts sharply with traditional blanket alerts, allowing interventions to be precisely scaled and timed.

4.2. Targeted Intervention and Economic Impact

The key benefit of the PRI and hotspot maps is the enablement of targeted IPM interventions. This approach focuses control measures—such as timely botanical sprays, biocontrol releases, and cultural measures—only in the statistically verified high-risk areas.

The farmer participatory validation of the system confirmed its efficacy, reporting a reduction in pest-related leaf losses by 18–30%. This quantitative outcome validates the economic argument for PPM: by reducing leaf loss, the quality of feed for the eri silkworm is maintained, directly supporting higher cocoon yields and farmer income. Furthermore, this precision approach naturally leads to a reduction in the overall volume of pesticide use, aligning with global goals for sustainable agriculture and reduced environmental toxicity.

4.3. Dynamic Nature of Surveillance

The finding that pest hotspots shifted seasonally, influenced by host plant phenology and microclimatic variability, highlights the need for dynamic surveillance . The weekly data collection and temporal overlays ensure that the system remains relevant by tracking these shifts, thus constantly optimizing the deployment of extension resources and control teams.

5. Conclusion and Future Outlook

The study on GIS-based spatial pest surveillance for eri sericulture exemplifies a successful application of geospatial technology in agricultural entomology. By moving beyond descriptive statistics to employing robust geostatistical techniques like Kriging and spatial clustering using the Getis-Ord Gi* statistic, the system provides a powerful decision-support tool. It has demonstrated clear success in creating a Pest Risk Index (PRI) that facilitates targeted IPM, leading to substantial reductions in pest-related damage and simultaneously strengthening extension services.

To further advance this model, future research should integrate Remote Sensing (RS) data, such as Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) derived from satellite platforms (e.g., Sentinel-2), to incorporate large-scale, real-time measurements of host plant health and canopy density into the PRI. Furthermore, the application of Machine Learning (ML) models can be used to analyze the large spatio-temporal datasets to establish non-linear, predictive relationships between climate, host phenology, and pest outbreaks, ultimately transitioning the system from a timely warning advisory to a predictive forecasting platform.

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COMPARATIVE FIELD TRIAL OF TAILORED FOLIAR MULTI-NUTRIENT FORMULATIONS VERSUS SOIL AMENDMENTS (BIOCHAR, FYM, ELEMENTAL SULPHUR) FOR CORRECTING ZN/B/MN DEFICIENCIES AND IMPROVING MULBERRY LEAF QUALITY FOR SILKWORM REARING

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ABSTRACT

Micronutrient deficiencies—particularly zinc (Zn), boron (B), and manganese (Mn)—are major constraints limiting mulberry (*Morus alba* L.) leaf productivity and silk cocoon quality in South Indian sericulture. This study compared the efficacy of tailored foliar multi-nutrient formulations (MNF) against soil amendments including biochar, farmyard manure (FYM), and elemental sulphur (S) in enhancing soil micronutrient availability, improving mulberry leaf biochemical quality, and strengthening silkworm (Bombyx mori L.) performance. A two-year field experiment (2019–2021) was conducted at the SRM Care Farm, SRMIST, Tamil Nadu, using a Randomized Block Design with six treatments. Foliar MNF significantly enhanced leaf Zn and B concentrations by 38.7% and 41.3%, respectively, over the control, while soil-based amendments improved long-term soil nutrient status and organic carbon content. Combined application of foliar MNF + biochar recorded the highest improvements in chlorophyll, crude protein, leaf moisture, and ultimately cocoon weight. The study highlights the complementary benefits of integrating rapid-acting foliar MNFs with soil health–enhancing amendments as a sustainable nutrient management strategy for high-yield sericulture in micronutrient-deficient regions.

Keywords:

Mulberry, Micronutrient Deficiency, Foliar Nutrition, Biochar, Silkworm Rearing, Sustainable Sericulture

Introduction

Mulberry (Morus alba L.) is the fundamental feedstock for the monophagous mulberry silkworm (Bombyx mori L.), and leaf nutritional quality exerts a direct and profound effect on larval growth, cocoon yield, and silk filament strength. In India, and Tamil Nadu in particular, sustaining high-quality mulberry leaf production is challenged by soil micronutrient deficiencies—most prominently zinc (Zn), boron (B), and manganese (Mn)—due to continuous mono-cropping, declining soil organic matter, alkaline soil reactions, and imbalanced fertilizer usage.

Recent nutrient mapping studies across South India demonstrate widespread deficits: Zn deficiency in 40–60% of mulberry soils, B deficiency in 20–35%, and Mn deficiency in 15–25% of mulberry belts (Singh et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2021). These deficiencies limit physiological functions such as enzyme activation, leaf expansion, chlorophyll synthesis, and carbohydrate translocation—all essential for silkworm nutrition.

Traditional soil application of micronutrients often suffers from rapid fixation, especially in alkaline soils (pH 7.8–8.6), resulting in poor nutrient uptake. In contrast, foliar feeding ensures direct absorption, bypassing soil constraints, and allows for precise nutrient delivery. Studies in recent years (e.g., Khan et al., 2019; Oliveira et al., 2022) have shown substantial gains in nutrient uptake efficiency through tailored foliar formulations.

However, long-term soil health and micronutrient availability depend on strategies that improve organic matter content and reduce soil pH. Biochar, FYM, and elemental sulphur are promising amendments capable of enhancing microbial activity, nutrient solubilization, and cation exchange capacity (Yao et al., 2021; Anusha Rani et al., 2020). Integrating these soil amendments with foliar MNFs may generate synergistic short- and long-term benefits for mulberry productivity and silkworm quality.

Despite this, comparative studies assessing foliar and soil-based micronutrient interventions in mulberry ecosystems under Tamil Nadu conditions remain limited. This study fills that gap through a rigorous field trial conducted at SRM Care Farm from 2019–2021, evaluating the individual and combined effects of MNF and soil amendments on mulberry leaf nutrition and silkworm performance.

Materials and Methods

Study Location

The study was conducted from June 2019 to May 2021 at the SRM Care Farm, SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Kattankulathur (12.823° N, 80.044° E), Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu. The region has tropical climate, mean annual rainfall of 1128 mm, and mean temperature range of 22–34°C.

Soil was classified as sandy loam, slightly alkaline (pH 7.9–8.2), low in organic carbon (0.42–0.53%), and deficient in DTPA-extractable Zn (<0.6 mg kg^{-1}), B (<0.45 mg kg^{-1} hot-water extractable), and Mn (<4 mg kg^{-1}).

Experimental Design

Randomized Block Design with six treatments (T1–T6) and four replications:

Treatments	Description
T1	Control (farmer practice: NPK only)
T2	Foliar Multi-Nutrient Formulation (MNF: $ZnSO_4$, Boric acid, $MnSO_4$, $FeSO_4$, $MgSO_4$ in optimized ratio)
T3	Soil-applied Biochar (5 t ha^{-1} from mulberry stem pyrolysis)
T4	FYM (15 t ha^{-1} matured farmyard manure)
T5	Elemental Sulphur (25 kg ha^{-1}, 90% S)
T6	Combined MNF + Biochar

Plot size: 12 m × 8 m, mulberry variety Genotype 4 (G-4), spacing 90 × 90 cm.

2.3 Nutrient Applications

Foliar MNF

Applied at 45-day intervals:

- $ZnSO_4$ 0.5%
- Boric acid 0.3%
- $MnSO_4$ 0.5%
- $FeSO_4$ 0.5%
- $MgSO_4$ 1.0%
- Wetting agent added at 0.05%

Soil Amendments

- Biochar incorporated 10 cm deep before planting.
- FYM applied as basal at planting and again after 12 months.
- Elemental sulphur applied annually and irrigated to enhance microbial oxidation.

Data Collection

Soil parameters including pH, electrical conductivity (EC), organic carbon (Walkley-Black method), DTPA-extractable Zn and Mn, and hot-water-soluble B were measured. Leaf biochemical attributes—chlorophyll content (Arnon method), crude protein, and total soluble sugars—were analyzed. Silkworm performance indicators included 5th instar larval weight, effective rate of rearing (ERR), cocoon weight, shell ratio, and filament length.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using ANOVA with SPSS version 26. Treatment means were compared by Tukey's HSD test at $p < 0.05$

Results

Soil Nutrient Status: Biochar and FYM treatments significantly increased soil organic carbon by

18.3% and 24.6%, respectively. Elemental sulfur application reduced soil pH from 8.1 to 7.6, enhancing Zn availability by 14.8%. The combined MNF + biochar treatment recorded the highest DTPA-extractable Zn (0.91 mg kg^{-1}), Mn (5.64 mg kg^{-1}), and hot-water-extractable B (0.55 mg kg^{-1}), improving these by 39.2%, 35.1%, and 32.4% over control.

Table 1. Initial soil physico-chemical properties of the experimental site.

Parameter	Value	Method
Soil texture	Sandy loam	Hydrometer method
pH (1:2.5)	8.1	Digital pH meter
EC (dS m^{-1})	0.41	Conductivity meter
Organic carbon (%)	0.47	Walkley–Black
Available N (kg ha^{-1})	182	Kjeldahl
Available P (kg ha^{-1})	15.4	Olsen
Available K (kg ha^{-1})	176	Flame photometry
DTPA-Zn (mg kg^{-1})	0.56	Lindsay & Norvell (1978)
DTPA-Mn (mg kg^{-1})	3.82	Lindsay & Norvell (1978)
Hot-water B (mg kg^{-1})	0.38	Berger–Truog

Table 3. Effect of treatments on soil micronutrient availability after two years

Treatment	Zn (mg kg^{-1})	B (mg kg^{-1})	Mn (mg kg^{-1})	Organic Carbon (%)
T1	0.56	0.38	3.82	0.47
T2	0.76	0.49	4.92	0.48
T3	0.84	0.52	5.11	0.56
T4	0.79	0.50	4.88	0.59
T5	0.78	0.47	5.36	0.50
T6	0.91	0.55	5.64	0.62

LSD ($p \leq 0.05$): Zn = 0.06; B = 0.04; Mn = 0.22; OC = 0.05

Leaf Biochemical Quality: Chlorophyll content was highest in the combined treatment (2.84 mg g^{-1}), 29% greater than control. Crude protein content increased substantially in MNF + biochar (26.4%) compared to control (18.9%). Total soluble sugars were also enhanced under nutrient treatments.

Table 4. Leaf biochemical parameters of mulberry as influenced by treatments

Treatment	Chlorophyll Total (mg g^{-1})	Crude Protein (%)	Total Soluble Sugars (mg g^{-1})
T1	2.20	18.9	152
T2	2.56	24.7	176
T3	2.43	21.8	169
T4	2.36	21.2	165
T5	2.41	22.1	168
T6	2.84	26.4	188

Silkworm Performance: Leaves from combined MNF + biochar treatment produced the heaviest 5th instar larvae (3.28 g), superior cocoon weight (1.86 g), highest shell ratio (23.4%), and longest filament length (1131 m). Effective rate of rearing (ERR) improved by 23.8% in combined treatment, exceeding individual foliar or soil amendments.

Table 5. Silkworm performance indicators as influenced by mulberry leaf quality

Treatment	5th Instar Larval Weight (g)	ERR (%)	Cocoon Weight (g)	Shell Ratio (%)	Filament Length (m)
T1	2.78	78.3	1.56	19.8	921
T2	3.12	92.1	1.74	21.6	1024
T3	3.01	88.7	1.69	20.9	987
T4	2.98	87.4	1.67	20.4	964
T5	3.04	89.6	1.70	21.1	995
T6	3.28	96.9	1.86	23.4	1131

Discussion

The study confirms that foliar MNFs rapidly corrected leaf micronutrient deficiencies due to direct absorption. Zn and B are key regulators of leaf protein synthesis and cell wall expansion, explaining improved biomass and crude protein in MNF-treated plots.

Biochar enhanced SOC, microbial biomass, and nutrient retention—factors consistent with recent studies in perennial crops (Yao et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2020). FYM improved long-term nutrient cycling.

Elemental sulphur oxidation reduced soil pH, increasing micronutrient solubility, aligning with findings by Rahman et al. (2021). The combined treatment demonstrated that foliar MNFs supply immediate correction while biochar improves long-term soil nutrient buffering—resulting in higher leaf quality and silk output.

When fed these nutrient-rich leaves, silkworms showed enhanced growth, cocoon formation, and silk yield, supported by literature linking leaf nutrient status with silk quality (Babu et al., 2019; Hashimoto et al., 2022).

Conclusion

This two-year field experiment demonstrated that integrating tailored foliar multi-nutrient formulations with soil amendments—particularly biochar—offers a superior strategy for managing Zn/B/Mn deficiencies in mulberry under Tamil Nadu conditions. The combination (MNF + biochar) improved soil health, enhanced leaf biochemical characteristics, and significantly increased silkworm productivity and cocoon quality.

The findings support a dual-strategy nutrient management protocol for sustainable mulberry sericulture:

1. Short-term: Foliar MNF every 45 days.
2. Long-term: Annual biochar + FYM incorporation and sulphur application in alkaline soils.

This integrated approach is recommended for adoption in South Indian sericulture zones with micronutrient-deficient soils.

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A COMPREHENSIVE PROFILE OF TAMIL NADU'S SILK INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Tamil Nadu stands as one of India's leading sericulture states, distinguished by its excellence in bivoltine silk production and robust institutional framework supporting the silk value chain. The state contributes significantly to the national silk output, ranking fourth in raw silk production with an annual output of 2,679 MT (2023–24), of which nearly 98% is bivoltine silk. Sericulture in Tamil Nadu is entirely mulberry-based, practiced by over 21,000 farmers across 25,000 hectares, generating sustainable livelihood opportunities for about 4.39 lakh people in 6,245 villages. A well-established network of 15 Central Silk Board units and State Department facilities supports Tamil Nadu's sericulture through seed production, research, testing, extension, and post-cocoon technology dissemination. Key clusters such as Hosur, Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, Salem, Dindigul, and Kancheepuram anchor the reeling, weaving, and testing activities, enabling strong market linkages through Government Silk Exchanges. Under Silk Samagra and Silk Samagra-II schemes, Tamil Nadu has received ₹168.36 crore in central assistance, benefitting over 14,500 stakeholders through interventions in chawki rearing, reeling modernization, quality improvement, and capacity building. These initiatives have enhanced productivity, improved yarn quality, and strengthened the competitiveness of the state's silk sector. The sector's progress demonstrates the effectiveness of policy-driven, technology enabled sericulture development, aligning production efficiency with livelihood sustainability. Tamil Nadu's integrated model—linking farmers, reelers, and weavers through research, training, and transparent marketing—serves as a national benchmark for sustainable sericulture development. With ongoing focus on infrastructure upgradation, quality assurance and cluster-based modernization, Tamil Nadu continues to lead the transformation of India's post-cocoon sector.

Keywords: Tamil Nadu, Sericulture, Bivoltine silk, Silk Samagra, Employment generation, post cocoon technology, sustainable agriculture

NATURALLY PIGMENTED SILKS: ORIGINS, PROPERTIES, AND SUSTAINABLE TEXTILE APPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Naturally coloured silks—including golden, green, and red varieties—represent an emerging, eco-friendly sector within the sericulture and textile industries. These silks obtain their distinctive hues from biologically derived pigments naturally accumulated in the cocoons of specific silkworm species, races, and mutant strains. Golden silk, primarily produced by the Muga silkworm (Antheraea assamensis), is highly esteemed for its exceptional natural sheen, superior tensile strength, longevity, and inherent UV-protective properties. Green silk, generated by select mulberry silkworm breeds capable of absorbing and depositing plant-derived flavonoids and carotenoids, offers a soft, elegant texture and serves as a sustainable alternative to chemically dyed fibres. Red or pinkish silk, originating from rare genetic mutants, exhibits unique chromatic intensity and is increasingly recognised for its potential in luxury and designer textile production. Because the pigmentation is naturally embedded within the silk filament, these varieties significantly reduce or eliminate the need for synthetic dyes and associated chemical processing, thereby lowering environmental impact. Owing to their distinctive aesthetic appeal, functional advantages, and economic value, naturally coloured silks hold growing importance in premium fashion, traditional handloom sectors, and modern sustainable textile applications. This seminar provides an in-depth overview of their biological origins, chemical and physical characteristics, and expanding commercial relevance.

Key words: Naturally coloured silk, Pigmentation, Muga silkworm, Sustainable textiles and Eco-friendly sericulture.

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF FLACHERIE IN SILKWORM (*BOMBYX MORI L.*)

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ABSTRACT

Flacherie, a major disease complex affecting *Bombyx mori*, is responsible for substantial crop losses in Indian sericulture. Characterised by rapid larval mortality, flaccidity, and foul-smelling gut exudation, flacherie results from infections by both viral (notably infectious flacherie virus and densonucleosis virus) and bacterial (Streptococcus, Staphylococcus, Bacillus spp., Serratia marcescens) pathogens, often exacerbated by environmental stress. This 2024–2025 field study, conducted at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayanpettai, Chengalpattu, evaluates the efficacy of an integrated disease management (IDM) strategy under intensive rearing conditions. The IDM approach combined strict prophylactic disinfection (using 2% bleaching powder with 0.3% slaked lime and the plant-based bed disinfectant Ankush), environmental controls to maintain optimal temperature and humidity, and early disease detection via microscopic screening. In addition, bio-interventions included supplementation with probiotics (notably Lactobacillus casei at 10^8 CFU/ml) to modulate gut microbiota and enhance host immunity, as well as routine rotation of chemical and herbal antimicrobial agents to limit resistance buildup. Farmers received training in the prompt removal of diseased larvae and thorough weekly sanitation of all equipment.

Field trials with FC1×FC2 silkworm hybrids demonstrated that the IDM protocol led to a significant reduction in flacherie incidence—from mean 8–10% in untreated controls to 4–6% in treated replicates—during the critical summer and monsoon crops. Cocoon yield improved by 11–14 kg per 100 disease-free layings (DFLs), and overall larval survivability increased by over 15%. The incidence of secondary infections and other opportunistic diseases (notably muscardine) was also markedly reduced. Adoption of integrated practices further minimised reliance on prophylactic antibiotics and promoted environmental sustainability in rearing operations.

These findings underscore the effectiveness of a combined IDM framework, focused on both preventive hygiene and biotherapeutic support, in suppressing flacherie outbreaks and improving economic outcomes for sericulturists in Tamil Nadu. The study recommends scaling up farmer education and IDM implementation to ensure sustainable sericulture and reduced chemical inputs.

Keywords: Flacherie, Bombyx mori, integrated disease management, probiotics, disinfection, cocoon yield, and sericulture

ASSESSMENT OF DISEASE INCIDENCE IN *SAMIA RICINI* REARING HOUSES AND EVALUATION OF LOW-COST DISINFECTION PROTOCOLS

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ABSTRACT

Eri sericulture *(Samia ricini)* supports livelihoods of smallholder and tribal households in Northeast India and other tropical regions, but frequent disease outbreaks in rearing houses substantially reduce larval survival and cocoon yield. This study surveyed disease incidence across 48 eri rearing houses during the 2024–2025 cropping cycles and evaluated the field efficacy of three low-cost disinfection protocols: (A) surface dusting with a 9:1 mixture of slaked lime : bleaching powder (applied as a dry dust), (B) 0.05% sodium hypochlorite spray for trays and implements, and (C) combined treatment (dusting + sodium hypochlorite) plus solar-drying of trays. Disease monitoring recorded occurrence and severity of virosis (NPV/CPV), bacteriosis (flacherie-like syndromes), muscardine (fungal), and microsporidial infections using standard diagnostic smears and culture where relevant. Rearing outcomes measured were early-instar (I–III) survival, incidence rate (cases per 100 larvae), mean larval duration, and final cocoon yield per batch. Baseline surveys identified primary risk factors as high ambient humidity, contaminated leaf bundles, poor waste disposal and reuse of un-sanitized trays (observationally corroborating extension literature). Implementation of Protocol B reduced detectable surface microbial loads on trays by an average of 78% (plate counts) and lowered early-instar mortality by 16% relative to untreated controls ($p < 0.05$). Protocol A (lime + bleaching powder dusting) produced a 22% reduction in disease incidence when applied to floors and walls prior to stocking, and the combined protocol (C) yielded the best performance: a 29% reduction in cumulative disease incidence and a 20–27% increase in effective rate of rearing and cocoon yield across seasons (statistically significant vs. control, $p < 0.01$). Importantly, farmers reported protocols A and B as affordable and operationally feasible; no adverse effects on larval behaviour or feed acceptance were observed when recommended waiting intervals (≥24 hr after spraying before stocking) were followed. The study concludes that institutionally promoted, low-cost disinfection packages (dusting + targeted hypochlorite application + solar-drying) substantially reduce pathogen loads and improve survival and productivity in eri rearing houses.

Recommendations include standardizing concentration/dosage guidelines, incorporating simple training modules for rearers, and integrating these measures into community-level chawki centres to maximize impact.

Keywords: Eri silkworm, pre-cocoon, disinfection, sodium hypochlorite, disease incidence, chawki rearing and low-cost biosecurity

UTILIZATION AND VALUE ADDITION OF SERICULTURE BY-PRODUCTS AND WASTE , INCLUDING EXTRACTION OF USEFUL COMPOUNDS FROM SILKWORM PUPAE

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ABSTRACT

Sericulture, being mainly a raw silk production industry, produces a host of by-products along its value chain, right from mulberry cultivation to post-cocoon processing. These materials, often considered waste, possess a significant amount of untapped potential in terms of value addition for the enhancement of the economic viability and environmental sustainability of the sericulture industry.Key by-products include mulberry plant residues (leaves, branches, roots), silkworm rearing litter (faecal matter, leftover leaves, exuviae), silkworm pupae, pierced/cut cocoons, and seri-industrial wastewater. Silkworm pupae, a major by-product of the reeling process, are a "goldmine waste" rich in valuable biomolecules such as high-quality proteins (up to 76%), essential amino acids, lipids (25-35% fat oil, including omega-3 and alpha-linolenic acids), vitamins, and minerals.Value addition is achieved through various processing technologies. Mulberry residues and silkworm litter are effectively converted into organic manure, biofertilizers, and biogas, improving soil health and reducing reliance on synthetic chemicals. Silkworm pupae are utilized as a protein-rich feed ingredient for poultry, fish, and livestock, and in some cultures, for human consumption. Useful compounds are extracted from pupae, including pupal oil for cosmetics, soaps, and biofuels, and chitin/chitosan from pupal exoskeletons for biomedical and water treatment applications.Specific protein extracts, such as sericin and fibroin from silk waste, are further used in the pharmaceuticals and cosmetic (wound healing, anti-aging) and tissue engineering areas. Defective cocoons are being reused for handicraft purposes and for reeling of silk, thus providing an impetus to rural employment opportunities. Valuing these outputs as co-products contributes to a zero-waste industry model and recognizes resource efficiency and a circular bioeconomy.

Keywords: Sericulture by-products, silkworm pupae, value addition, waste utilization, chitin, chitosan, sericin, fibroin, organic manure, biofertilizer, animal feed, human nutrition, bioactive compounds, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, sustainable development, circular bioeconomy.

SERICULTURE PRE COCOON SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This research, conducted from 2024 to 2025 at SRM College of Agriculture, Baburayanpettai, focuses on the sericulture pre cocoon sector, a crucial stage in silk production impacting yield and quality. The study evaluates various factors influencing larval rearing, including mulberry leaf quality, environmental conditions, and disease management techniques. Experimental trials assessed optimized feeding regimens and controlled microclimate settings to enhance silkworm growth and cocoon yield. Disease incidence was monitored, and integrated pest management strategies were implemented to reduce mortality rates. The research also analyzed economic aspects, including cost-benefit ratios of improved pre cocoon practices relative to traditional methods. Results indicate that improvements in pre cocoon management significantly increase cocoon weight and silk filament quality, ultimately boosting income for sericulturists. This study provides actionable recommendations for farmers and stakeholders to adopt best practices in pre cocoon care to strengthen sericulture sustainability and profitability in the region

Keywords: sericulture, pre cocoon sector, silkworm rearing, cocoon yield, mulberry leaf quality, disease management, integrated pest management, sericulture economics, sustainable silk production, SRM College of Agriculture.

WHITE MUSCARDINE FUNGUS DISEASE MANAGEMENT IN (BOMBYX MORI L.)

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ABSTRACT

Silkworm (Bombyx mori L.) rearing is a vital component of sericulture, contributing significantly to rural livelihoods and the silk industry in India. Among the various diseases affecting silkworms, white muscardine caused by Beauveria bassiana (Balsamo) Vuillemin, is one of the most destructive fungal diseases.

The white muscardine disease, caused by Beauveria bassiana (Balsamo) Vuillemin, is one of the most destructive fungal infections affecting the mulberry silkworm (Bombyx mori L.), leading to heavy economic losses in sericulture. The rapid transmission of fungal spores in rearing environments makes control of this disease a major challenge for sericulturists.

This study focuses on the effective management of white muscardine through an integrated approach involving mechanical, chemical, and biological control measures. Mechanical control includes maintaining hygiene in rearing houses, disinfecting equipment with 2% formalin or bleaching powder, and destroying infected larvae through burning or deep burial. Chemical control involves the judicious use of fungicides such as Bavistin (0.02%) and Benlate (0.01%), along with bed disinfectants like Sericillin and Resham Keet Oushadh to suppress fungal spore load. Biological control utilizes antagonistic fungi (Trichoderma viride), beneficial bacteria (Lactobacillus spp.), and plant-based extracts (neem, tulsi, garlic) that inhibit the growth of B. Bassiana while maintaining environmental safe

The present study focuses on the etiology, epidemiology, symptoms, and management strategies for controlling white muscardine fungus in mulberry silkworms. Effective disease management involves integrating hygienic practices, environmental control, chemical and biological treatments, and the use of resistant silkworm breeds.

The research emphasizes eco-friendly and sustainable approaches such as biocontrol agents and disinfection protocols to ensure healthy silkworm crops and improved cocoon yield.

Keywords: White muscardine, Beauveria bassiana, silkworm disease, fungal infection, disease

EXPLORING THE INNOVATIVE POTENTIAL OF ECO-FRIENDLY COCOON CRAFTS

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ABSTRACT

Cocoon crafting has emerged as an innovative and sustainable practice within the sericulture industry, transforming waste byproducts into valuable artistic and decorative products. Traditionally, cut cocoons, pierced, and defective cocoons are sent to spun silk industry with minimum price. Instead of that, they are utilized as valuable and durable handicrafts such as flowers, bouquets, and ornamental items. Unlike natural flowers, which wilt quickly, but cocoon-crafted products retain their aesthetic appearance for years, offering an eco-friendly alternative usage for gifting and decoration. The process involves cleaning, dyeing, and shaping of cocoons into intricate designs by using simple tools and techniques. Natural dyeing of cocoon crafts enhances sustainability by reducing reliance on synthetic chemicals. These dyes provide vibrant, non-toxic, and biodegradable coloring solutions, further minimizing environmental impact. Beyond its artistic value, cocoon crafting holds significant economic potential, particularly for rural communities, self help groups women, farming and non-farming women. With low material costs and minimal skill requirements, it serves as a viable avenue for income generation and self-employment. The growing demand for sustainable handicrafts presents opportunities for market expansion, supporting rural livelihoods and cultural preservation.This article explores the techniques, materials, and economic benefits of cocoon crafting, emphasizing its role in waste utilization, environmental conservation, and rural empowerment. By integrating cocoon crafting into sericulture practices, stakeholders can promote sustainability while fostering creativity and economic resilience. Future efforts should focus on skill development, market access, and innovation to maximize the global impact of this traditional yet forward-looking craft.

Keywords: Mulberry cut cocoons, cocoon crafts, natural dyes and entrepreneurship.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF CHEMICAL AND WATER JETTING TREATMENTS FOR MULBERRY SUCKING PEST MANAGEMENT.

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ABSTRACT

Investigations were carried out on “Comparative efficacy of water jetting and chemical measures against major sucking pests of mulberry at Musiri Institute of Technology College of Agriculture and Technology, Musiri. The pooled analysis displayed a trend that the population was under check in all the spray application. The mean number population was recorded minimum in water jetting (22.3, 18.45, 18.45 and 6.38 No/leaf) Mealybug, Thrips, Whitefly and Jassids respectively and maximum in the Profenophos treatment 53.78, 67.16, 75.66 and 61.7 no/leaf Mealybug, Thrips, Whitefly and Jassids respectively and also untreated check as 78.86 nos of whitefly was recorded. Among the various applications very minimum mites were recorded only with water jetting (6.38 nos) and imidachloprid @ 3 per cent (22.47 no.) followed by dimethoate (23.82) Nos. The pooled analysis also showed the same trend that minimum leaf yield were accounted in *Annona* (8564 kg/ha) followed by maximum leaf yield water jetting (11688 kg/ha). All other treatments accounted for 10210 to 7731 Kg/ha leaf yield was recorded over control. Management of major sucking pests through insecticidal treatments recorded highest expenditure of Rs. 420.00-1600.00 / ha towards cost of chemical, labour to fetch water and spraying cost whereas in water jetting the expenditure was Rs.1500.00 only towards labour. Further, during the process of water jetting the garden is irrigated spontaneously as the jetted water flows to the root zone of the plants and hence the cost of labour for irrigation was saved. The leaf yield net returns was recorded higher and benefit cost ratio recorded less in water jetting than then the other chemical measures, which was recorded in 11,395 kg of leaf and net return with Rs. 22790.

Keywords: Mealybug, Thrips, Whitefly, Jassids, insecticide and water jetting method

GIS–BASED SPATIAL PEST SURVEILLANCE AND HOTSPOT MAPPING IN ERI SERICULTURE REGIONS

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ABSTRACT

The development of the silkworm (Bombyx mori) and the quality of its cocoon filament are highly sensitive to environmental conditions maintained during the rearing cycle. This study examines the influence of major environmental parameters—temperature, relative humidity, photoperiod, ventilation, and cleanliness—on larval physiology, growth dynamics, and the structural characteristics of the silk filament. Experimental batches of silkworms were reared under controlled but varied environmental settings to evaluate differences in larval duration, feed conversion efficiency, survival rate, cocoon formation behaviour, and subsequent cocoon traits including weight, shell ratio, filament length, denier, and reliability.

The results demonstrate that maintaining an optimal temperature range of 24–28°C and relative humidity between 70–80% is crucial for stable metabolic activity and efficient mulberry leaf utilization. These conditions promoted faster larval maturation, higher uniformity in size, and lower incidence of pathogen outbreaks. Conversely, exposure to suboptimal temperatures or fluctuating humidity levels resulted in prolonged larval duration, reduced appetite, dehydration or excess moisture retention, and increased vulnerability to diseases such as grasserie and flacherie. Poor ventilation was found to elevate carbon dioxide levels, suppressing larval vigour and contributing to weaker cocoon formation.

Analysis of filament quality showed that well-managed environmental conditions produced longer, more uniform filaments with improved tensile strength, reduced breakage frequency, and higher raw silk recovery. Stressful environments, however, led to thin, uneven, or shorter filaments due to disrupted fibroin secretion and impaired cocoon spinning behaviour.

Overall, the study underscores the critical role of precise environmental monitoring and control in sericulture. Enhancing rearing house design, implementing reliable climate-regulation systems, and adopting standardized hygienic practices can substantially improve both biological performance and silk yield. These findings provide valuable insights for sericulture farmers, researchers, and industry stakeholders aiming to optimize production efficiency and achieve high-quality silk output.

Keywords: Silkworm (Bombyx mori); Sericulture; Environmental parameters; Temperature; Relative humidity; Ventilation; Photoperiod; Larval development; Cocoon quality; Filament characteristics; Silk production; Rearing conditions.

BIO-EFFICACY OF WATER JETTING VS CHEMICALS AGAINST THRIPS (*PSEUDODENDROTHRIPS MORI*) INFESTING MULBERRY

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ABSTRACT

Comparative efficacy of water jetting and chemical measures against major sucking pest of thrips, *Pseudodendrothrips mori* on mulberry studies conducted at Musiri Institute of Technology College of Agriculture and Technology, Musiri. The observation made on the second day of treatment showed that water jetting was more effective in reducing the over all mean population of all the treatments of thrips ranges from 8.72 to 11.66 nos/leaf from 17 to 35 day after prouning of the mulberry plant. Followed by Imidachlopride (13.88 nos/leaf) and *Annona squamosal (14.60nos/leaf)*. Dimethoate exhibited longest persistency and recorded highest reduction compared to Imidachlopride 10 days after treatment whereas in the water jetted plot more than 50% reduction was noticed. Pooled data of first and second treatment revealed that two spray of dimethoate registered the best treatment. The next best treatment was dimethoate followed by Profenophose. Spray of dimethoate and water jetting were on a par with each other, whereas two sprays of dichlorvos was the least among all the treatments. However, population of thrips was increased gradually in the chemicals treated plots but significant reduction in thrips population was extended till 45 DAP in the plots that received water jetting additionally @ 35 DAP. The overall pooled data revealed that water jetting @ 15, 25 and 35 DAP was best and on a par with two sprays of dimethoate @ 15 and 25 DAP. However the highest leaf yield was recorded in water jetting rather than chemical control measures.

Keywords: *Pseudodendrothrips mori,* Imidachlopride, Dimethoate, sucking pest and *Annona squamosal.* management, sericulture

MULBERRY FRUITS- COSMETIC VALUE

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry is the deep- rooted, perennial crop and its spread various country in the world. It is the main feed of silkworm in the sericulture. All the products derived from mulberry have medicinal properties and industrial values. Particularly fruits have additional economical benefits like preparation of food products and cosmetic goods. Mulberry fruits and their juices contain plant-derived compounds that help prevent cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and various serious health problems. This berry is widely used to address many health concerns and has important industrial applications. Pigments derived from mulberry fruits are highly sought after in both the cosmetics and textile industries. In this paper review that the contribution mulberry fruits in cosmetic industries.

Keywords: Mulberry fruits, Cosmetics, Anti-aging, Skin brightening, Industrial value.

CLIMATE RESILIENT MULBERRY CULTIVATION AND ADAPTIVE PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE SERICULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry, the primary food plant of the silkworm, is highly sensitive to changes in climate. Increasing temperatures, irregular rainfall, and prolonged droughts are major challenges that directly affect leaf quality and cocoon production. To overcome these issues, climate-resilient and adaptive cultivation practices are essential. This presentation highlights the use of drought- and heat-tolerant mulberry varieties such as S-1635, C-2038, and V-1, along with improved soil and water management techniques like drip irrigation, mulching, and organic nutrient application. Emphasis is given to integrated pest management, agroforestry models, and the use of weather-based advisories to help farmers make informed decisions. By adopting these climate-smart practices, farmers can ensure stable yields, better resource efficiency, and sustainable income even under changing environmental conditions. The session aims to share practical field experiences and innovative approaches that can strengthen the resilience of the sericulture sector.

Keywords: Climate resilience, Mulberry, Sericulture, Adaptation, Sustainable farming.

ROLE OF PROBIOTIC SUPPLEMENTATION IN SILKWORM (BOMBYX MORI) BIOLOGY: CURRENT INSIGHTS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The mulberry silkworm, Bombyx mori, plays a pivotal role in sericulture, where optimisation of larval growth, health and silk yield are of paramount importance. Emerging research in insect microbiome science has highlighted the influence of gut-associated microbiota on host nutrient assimilation, immune modulation and physiological resilience. In this context, probiotic supplementation presents a promising strategy for enhancing silkworm performance. This review by Dutta et al. synthesises current knowledge on the administration of beneficial microbes—such as Lactobacillus, Bacillus, Saccharomyces and Bifidobacterium—to the silkworm diet, and evaluates their impact on digestive enzyme activity, gut-microbiota balance, immune response, larval and cocoon metrics, and ultimately silk productivity. The authors highlight that probiotic effects are strain- and dosage-dependent and often mediated via improved enzymatic digestion, suppression of pathogenic bacteria, and enhanced symbiotic microbial functioning. They further explore recent molecular biology advances (metagenomics, transcriptomics) that have deepened our understanding of silkworm–microbiome interactions and suggest the potential of combining probiotics with prebiotics or botanical supplements for synergistic effects. Notwithstanding the promising outcomes, gaps remain in standardising protocols, understanding long-term host–microbe dynamics and translating laboratory results to larger commercial sericulture systems. The review proposes future directions including targeted formulation of strain-specific probiotics, large-scale field validation, cost-effectiveness analyses and integration into eco-friendly, chemical-reduced sericulture practices. In conclusion, probiotic supplementation emerges as a sustainable and potentially economically viable strategy to improve silkworm health and silk production, offering a route to reinforce the resilience and profitability of the sericulture industry.

Keywords: Bombyx mori; probiotic supplementation; silkworm gut microbiota; sericulture productivity; digestive enzyme activity

COCOON CRAFTING- AN IDEAL ENTERPRISE FOR UPLIFTMENT OF RURAL WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Cocoon crafting is an art of designing of some handicraft products like flowers, bouquets, garlands, greeting cards and other artistically designed fancy items. The raw material for cocoon crafting is generally silk cocoons. The defective cocoons or cut cocoons which are rejected as waste in grainages and reeling sector can be utilized in making crafts. Cocoon crafting can be taken as a commercial activity particularly by women folk of low socio-economic status and in turn bargain good economic return, simply utilizing cut/pierced cocoon waste with their creative skill. The fancy by-products made from these waste cocoons are in demand nowadays and considerably fetch a bigger price. It bears low investment and no specific technicality and provides greater returns. The rural women folk can take it as a sideline activity and can make crafts in their leisure. It is considered as an ideal industry for the upliftment of rural women. The development/designing of cocoon handicrafts will attract attention of huge number of local masses, thereby boosting up their revenue returns and value addition in sericulture through handicraft market.

Keywords: cut cocoons, bouquets, handicrafts, flowers, rural women.

SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES TO SILK DYEING WITH NATURAL PIGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Growing environmental awareness and the need to reduce chemical pollution in textile processing have renewed interest in natural dyes as sustainable and eco-friendly alternatives to synthetic colorants. Natural dyes derived from plant sources are biodegradable, non-toxic, and compatible with green chemistry principles. Silk, being a protein-based fiber with excellent dye affinity, serves as an ideal substrate for the absorption and fixation of natural pigments.The present study focuses on identifying suitable plant-based dye sources, optimizing extraction methods, and developing standardized eco-friendly dyeing procedures tailored for silk fabrics. Plant materials such as *Curcuma longa* (turmeric), *Rubia cordifolia* (madder), and *Indigofera tinctoria* (indigo) were selected based on pigment potential, availability, and traditional relevance. Colorant extraction was performed using aqueous and mild solvent systems under controlled temperature and pH conditions to ensure pigment stability and reproducibility. Mordants including alum, ferrous sulfate, and tannic acid were applied to enhance dye fixation and achieve shade variations.The study emphasizes sustainability through minimal use of hazardous chemicals, reduced water and energy consumption, and low environmental impact. The results demonstrate that natural dyes impart vibrant hues with satisfactory fastness properties while enhancing the aesthetic and ecological value of silk. These findings contribute to advancing sustainable dyeing practices and promote the wider adoption of natural dyes in the silk industry.

Keywords: Natural dyes, Silk dyeing, Eco-friendly processing, Plant pigments, Green chemistry

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF MULBERRY LEAF SPOT DISEASES

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ABSTRACT

The research on " Integrated Management of Mulberry Leaf Spot Diseases" was carried out during 2024-2025 at SRMCAS, Baburayanpettai, to develop an eco-friendly approach for controlling Major leaf spot pathogens such as Cercospora Moricola and Pseudocercospora Mori. Various treatments involving bioagents (Trichoderma harzianum, Pseudomonas fluorescens) , botanicals (neem oil, garlic extract) , and a chemical check (carbendazim) were evaluated under field conditions. The combined application of Trichoderma harzianum (soil) and neem oil (foliar) effectively reduced disease severity by about 70% and improved leaf yield and quality compared to control. This integrated treatment performed on par with chemical fungicides but was safer for silkworm rearing and the environment. The study concludes that integrating biological and botanical components offers a sustainable and effective strategy for Managing Mulberry leaf spot diseases.

Keywords: Mulberry, Leaf spot, Cercospora Moricola, Trichoderma harzianum, Neem oil, Biological control, Integrated disease Management, Sericulture.

SILK SERICIN-BASED MULTIFUNCTIONAL MOISTURIZER

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a sericin-based moisturizer incorporating natural ingredients—rice water and papaya extract—designed for universal skin type compatibility. Sericin, a silk-derived protein known for its moisturizing, antioxidant, and skin-barrier enhancing properties, serves as the primary bioactive agent. The formulation synergistically combines sericin's amino acid-rich profile with the hydrating and brightening benefits of rice water and enzymatic exfoliation from papaya extract, creating a gentle yet effective skincare product.Comprehensive in vitro evaluations confirm the formulation's efficacy in enhancing antioxidant protection, moisture retention, and skin barrier support, validating sericin's beneficial role in skincare. The combination is optimized to deliver multi-dimensional skin benefits without irritation, making it suitable for diverse skin types.This formulation also aligns with sustainability goals by valorizing sericin derived from silk industry waste, addressing the rising consumer demand for eco-friendly cosmetics. The innovation showcases a promising natural, clean beauty solution that leverages scientific insights for advanced skincare performance.

Keywords: Silk sericin, moisturizer, skincare, eco-friendly, rice water

NANO-FERTILIZER AND BIOFERTILIZER SYNERGY FOR SUSTAINABLE NITROGEN DEFICIENCY MANAGEMENT IN MULBERRY (*MORUS* SPP.)

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ABSTRACT

Nitrogen deficiency is one of the critical constraints affecting the productivity and leaf quality of mulberry (*Morus* spp.), the primary host plant of the silkworm (*Bombyx mori* L.). Conventional nitrogen fertilization methods often lead to low nitrogen-use efficiency, soil nutrient imbalance, and environmental pollution. In this study, conducted during 2024–2025 at SRMCAS, Baburayenpettai, a comprehensive investigation was carried out to explore the synergistic potential of nano-fertilizers and biofertilizers in mitigating nitrogen deficiency in mulberry under field and controlled conditions.The experimental design included treatments with nano-urea (4% foliar spray), biofertilizers containing *Azotobacter chroococcum* and *Azospirillum brasilense*, and their integrated applications compared with conventional urea-based fertilization. Growth parameters, chlorophyll index, leaf nitrogen concentration, total protein, nitrate reductase activity, and soil microbial dynamics were evaluated at periodic intervals. The combined nano-fertilizer and biofertilizer treatment significantly enhanced leaf area (by 22%), chlorophyll content (by 18%), and total nitrogen uptake (by 25%) compared to the control. Moreover, improved soil enzymatic activities and sustained nitrogen availability were observed throughout the rearing season, indicating better nutrient cycling and soil health recovery.Metagenomic analysis of rhizospheric soil revealed an increased abundance of nitrogen-fixing and phosphate-solubilizing microbial communities under integrated management. The IoT-based soil–leaf nitrogen monitoring system deployed during the trial provided real-time insights into nitrogen dynamics, enabling precision nutrient scheduling.The results demonstrate that the integration of nano-fertilizer and biofertilizer technologies can effectively alleviate nitrogen deficiency in mulberry, improve nitrogen-use efficiency, and promote sustainable sericulture production systems. This approach aligns with the goals of climate-smart agriculture, reducing dependency on synthetic fertilizers while ensuring high-quality mulberry leaf yield to support enhanced cocoon production and rural economic resilience.

Keywords: *Morus spp.*, nano-urea, biofertilizer, nitrogen-use efficiency, sustainable sericulture, soil health.

POPULATION ECOLOGY AND SEASONAL DYNAMICS OF MULBERRY GRASSHOPPER UNDER CHANGING MICROCLIMATIC CONDITIONS

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry grasshopper has emerged as a recurring and economically significant defoliator in mulberry-based sericulture systems, particularly under fluctuating climatic conditions. This research, conducted during 2024–2025 at **SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai**, investigated the population ecology, seasonal abundance, and microclimate-linked behaviour of grasshopper species associated with mulberry (Morus spp.). Weekly field surveys were carried out across varied mulberry blocks, and population counts were recorded using standardized sweep-net, quadrat, and visual sampling methods. Microclimatic parameters—temperature, relative humidity, soil moisture, leaf surface temperature, and canopy shade intensity—were continuously monitored using IoT-enabled sensors.

Results revealed that grasshopper abundance displayed clear seasonal rhythms, with peaks occurring during late summer and post-monsoon periods. A strong positive correlation was observed between population density and rising maximum temperature, while relative humidity showed an inverse but species-dependent effect. Increased leaf tenderness during early flush stages further enhanced feeding preference and nymphal survival. Climate anomalies such as extended dry spells and sudden temperature spikes significantly shifted the breeding window and accelerated nymphal development. Spatial mapping highlighted hotspot zones associated with water-stressed mulberry patches and fragmented vegetation corridors, indicating the influence of landscape heterogeneity on dispersal patterns.

The study concludes that microclimatic variability plays a critical role in shaping grasshopper population dynamics, influencing reproduction, feeding intensity, and temporal outbreaks. Integrating microclimate-based forecasting models with field surveillance can facilitate early warning and sustainable management strategies for sericulture farmers. This research provides essential ecological insights for developing climate-resilient pest management frameworks in mulberry ecosystems.

Keywords: Mulberry grasshopper, microclimate, seasonal dynamics, population ecology, climate variability, sericulture, pest forecasting.

INFLUENCE OF INTERCROPPING AND TRAP CROPPING SYSTEMS ON CASTOR CATERPILLAR INFESTATION LEVELS

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ABSTRACT

Castor caterpillar (*Achaea janata* and related defoliators) remains a major constraint to castor cultivation, particularly in rainfed and semi-arid regions where monocropping enhances vulnerability to pest outbreaks. This study, conducted during 2024–2025 at **SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai**, evaluated the effectiveness of intercropping and trap cropping systems in reducing castor caterpillar incidence through habitat manipulation and pest diversion. Field experiments were established using randomized block designs with treatments involving castor intercropped with cowpea, greengram, sesame, and marigold, along with trap crops such as jatropha and sunflower. Pest population monitoring involved weekly larval counts, percent leaf damage assessment, oviposition preference studies, and monitoring of natural enemy abundance.Results demonstrated that intercropping significantly reduced caterpillar infestation levels compared to sole castor cropping. Castor + cowpea and castor + greengram systems recorded the lowest larval densities, attributed to increased canopy complexity, reduced host visibility, and higher natural enemy activity. Marigold intercropping contributed to notable reductions in oviposition due to repellent volatile compounds. Trap cropping with sunflower effectively diverted egg-laying females away from castor, reducing subsequent defoliation, while jatropha served as a strong attractant during peak oviposition periods. Enhanced predator presence—particularly ladybird beetles, spiders, and predatory stink bugs—was observed in intercropped plots, suggesting synergistic ecological regulation.Overall, habitat diversification through intercropping and trap cropping created unfavorable conditions for pest establishment while promoting biological control. The study concludes that strategic cropping system design can substantially suppress castor caterpillar populations in an eco-friendly and cost-effective manner. The findings provide valuable guidance for developing resilient, farmer-friendly integrated pest management (IPM) modules suited for castor-growing regions affected by climate variability.

Keywords: Castor caterpillar, intercropping, trap cropping, habitat manipulation, pest suppression, natural enemies, IPM, SRMCAS Baburayenpettai.

SEASONAL INCIDENCE AND ECO-FRIENDLY MANAGEMENT OF KEY SILKWORM PESTS AFFECTING BIVOLTINE COCOON PRODUCTION IN TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

The success of bivoltine silkworm rearing is strongly influenced by pest pressure, particularly from uzi fly (*Exorista bombycis*), dermestid beetles (*Dermestes cadaverinus*), and leaf-feeding pests of mulberry. This study investigated the seasonal incidence of major pests and evaluated eco-friendly management strategies under farmers' field conditions in Chengalpattu and Kanchipuram districts of Tamil Nadu. Weekly monitoring during 2023–24 revealed two peak periods of uzifly infestation (July–August and November–December), closely associated with relative humidity above 80%. Dermestid beetle activity increased during cocoon storage periods with poor sanitation. An integrated package consisting of neem seed kernel extract (NSKE 5%), release of the parasitoid *Nesolynx thymus*, field sanitation, and prophylactic *Beauveria bassiana* application significantly reduced pest incidence. Uzi fly infestation decreased from 7.2% (farmers' practice) to 1.4% with IPM, with a corresponding improvement in effective rate of rearing (ERR) by 6.3%. Cocoon weight and shell ratio increased by 8.5% and 5.1%, respectively, due to reduced pest-mediated stress. The results demonstrate that season-based monitoring combined with sustainable pest management practices can substantially enhance bivoltine cocoon productivity and farmer profitability.

Keywords: Seasonal incidence, eco-friendly management , key pests, silkworm bivoltine cocoon production

CLIMATE-DRIVEN SHIFTS IN LIFE CYCLE AND OUTBREAK PATTERNS OF CASTOR CATERPILLAR IN SEMI-ARID ECOSYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

Castor caterpillar (primarily *Achaea janata* and associated defoliators) continues to pose a persistent threat to castor cultivation in semi-arid regions, where climatic variability strongly influences its biology and outbreak behaviour. This research, carried out during 2024–2025 at **SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai**, examined the extent to which temperature fluctuations, humidity stress, and irregular rainfall patterns reshape the life cycle, developmental rate, and population peaks of castor caterpillar under semi-arid field conditions. Detailed field surveys were conducted at weekly intervals, and caterpillar populations were monitored using light traps, pheromone traps, and systematic quadrat sampling. Parallel microclimatic data—air temperature, soil temperature, vapour pressure deficit (VPD), rainfall events, and leaf moisture—were recorded using automated IoT-based sensors.The results demonstrated clear climate-linked alterations in caterpillar phenology. Elevated maximum temperatures and prolonged dry spells accelerated larval development, shortened generation time, and increased the number of overlapping broods. Irregular off-season showers triggered sudden flushes of tender foliage, which correspondingly induced short-term population spikes. A strong positive correlation was observed between VPD and larval feeding intensity, while relative humidity dips promoted higher survival of early instars. Peak occurrences shifted from their traditionally expected monsoon-linked patterns to earlier pre-monsoon and extended post-monsoon windows. GIS-based hotspot mapping showed that outbreak zones were strongly associated with moisture-stressed microhabitats, degraded agro-ecological patches, and castor fields with reduced canopy density.The study concludes that climate anomalies are significantly reshaping the ecological niche and outbreak dynamics of castor caterpillar in semi-arid ecosystems. Understanding these shifts is crucial for predicting future risk windows and designing climate-resilient integrated pest management (IPM) strategies. The insights generated provide a foundation for developing microclimate-based advisory systems and adaptive pest forecasting models for castor growers in climate-vulnerable regions.**Keywords:** Castor caterpillar, climate change, phenology, microclimate, outbreak dynamics, semi-arid ecosystems, pest forecasting, IPM.

DEVELOPMENT OF AUTOMATED LIGHT AND PHEROMONE TRAP NETWORKS FOR REAL-TIME MONITORING

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ABSTRACT

Effective monitoring of nocturnal and migratory insect pests remains a major challenge in field crops, particularly under changing climatic conditions that alter pest movement and emergence patterns. This research, conducted during 2024–2025 at **SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai**, focused on the development and field evaluation of **automated light and pheromone trap networks** designed to provide real-time pest surveillance for key lepidopteran pests, including castor caterpillar moths (*Achaea janata*), armyworms, and cutworms. The system integrated solar-powered automated traps equipped with LED attractants, species-specific pheromone dispensers, digital sensors, and GSM/IoT modules for real-time data transmission.

Prototype traps were deployed across multiple castor and mixed-cropping fields to continuously record pest catches, environmental parameters, and peak flight activity. Machine-vision modules were incorporated to automate pest identification and count recognition using trained image classification algorithms. Data from the trap network were synchronized with field-level microclimate sensors recording temperature, relative humidity, canopy wetness, and moonlight intensity to analyze the relationship between environmental cues and pest activity.

Results demonstrated a significant enhancement in monitoring efficiency, with automated traps capturing 40–60% more moths compared to traditional manual traps due to optimized wavelength selection and improved lure dispersal. The AI-based image recognition system achieved over 90% accuracy in differentiating target moth species from non-target insects. Real-time dashboards provided farmers with hourly updates on pest flight trends, enabling early warning alerts 5–7 days before field-visible larval outbreaks. Correlation analysis revealed that nocturnal moth activity was strongly linked to rising night temperatures, low wind speeds, and post-rainfall humidity surges—information essential for forecasting population spikes.

The study concludes that automated light and pheromone trap networks represent a scalable, accurate, and energy-efficient solution for continuous pest monitoring. By integrating digital automation, AI-based identification, and microclimatic analytics, the system provides a robust foundation for climate-resilient pest forecasting and decision support in rainfed and irrigated ecosystems. The research highlights the potential of digital surveillance technologies to

revolutionize Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and empower farmers with timely, data-driven interventions.

Keywords: Automated traps, light trap, pheromone trap, real-time monitoring, AI identification, IoT, pest forecasting, IPM, SRMCAS Baburayenpettai.

EXPLORATION OF NOVEL BIOPESTICIDES DERIVED FROM NEEM, PONGAMIA, AND LANTANA FOR CATERPILLAR MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The increasing resistance of caterpillar pests to synthetic insecticides and the growing need for eco-friendly crop protection have intensified interest in plant-derived biopesticides. This research, conducted during 2024–2025 at **SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai**, explored the efficacy of novel biopesticide formulations prepared from **neem (Azadirachta indica)**, **pongamia (Pongamia pinnata)**, and **lantana (Lantana camara)** against major caterpillar pests affecting castor and associated crops. Crude extracts, enriched fractions, and optimized emulsifiable concentrates (EC) were developed using cold extraction and solvent extraction techniques. Laboratory bioassays were performed to determine larvicidal activity, feeding deterrence, oviposition inhibition, and sub-lethal effects on growth and development. Field evaluations were conducted to validate performance under natural conditions.

Among the tested botanicals, neem-based formulations exhibited the strongest larvicidal impact and significant feeding deterrence due to high azadirachtin content. Pongamia extracts showed moderate larval mortality but enhanced growth inhibition, indicating potential for integration in slow-acting pest suppression strategies. Lantana extracts demonstrated notable anti-feedant and repellency effects, particularly at higher concentrations, and contributed to significant reductions in foliage loss in field plots. Combination treatments (neem + pongamia and neem + lantana) provided synergistic effects, reducing leaf damage by 60–75% and restricting larval progression to later instars.

Field trials confirmed that botanical treatments not only suppressed caterpillar populations but also enhanced the activity of natural enemies such as parasitoids and predatory arthropods, unlike synthetic insecticide controls where beneficial fauna declined. The biopesticides demonstrated safety to plants, no phytotoxicity, and compatibility with organic farming standards.

This study concludes that neem-, pongamia-, and lantana-based formulations hold strong potential as sustainable alternatives to chemical insecticides. Their integration into eco-friendly

IPM modules can effectively manage caterpillar pests while maintaining environmental safety and promoting biological regulation. The findings contribute to the development of standardized, farmer-friendly botanical biopesticide packages suitable for climate-resilient crop protection.

Keywords: Biopesticides, neem, pongamia, lantana, caterpillar management, botanical insecticides, eco-friendly pest control, IPM, SRMCAS Baburayenpettai.

MICROCLIMATE-BASED PREDICTIVE MODELLING OF CASTOR CATERPILLAR SEASONAL ABUNDANCE USING AI AND REMOTE SENSING

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ABSTRACT

Castor caterpillar (*Achaea janata* and related defoliators) exhibits highly variable population patterns influenced by microclimatic fluctuations, making timely prediction essential for sustainable pest management in castor-growing regions. This research, completed during 2024–2025 at **SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai**, aimed to develop an AI-driven predictive model integrating microclimate parameters and remote sensing indicators to forecast seasonal abundance of castor caterpillar. Weekly field observations were recorded across multiple castor blocks, documenting larval density, developmental stages, and damage severity. Simultaneously, an IoT-enabled microclimate monitoring system captured real-time temperature, relative humidity, leaf surface temperature, vapour pressure deficit (VPD), soil moisture, and canopy wetness.

High-resolution multispectral satellite data and drone-based vegetation indices—NDVI, SAVI, and canopy stress indicators—were used to map crop health and detect early signs of stress correlated with pest buildup. Machine learning algorithms, including Random Forest, Gradient Boosting, and LSTM-based time-series models, were trained to identify the strongest predictors of caterpillar population surges. Feature importance analysis revealed that VPD, maximum temperature, canopy stress index, and sudden moisture fluctuations were the most influential variables. The LSTM model demonstrated the highest predictive accuracy, successfully forecasting population peaks 10–14 days in advance with over 85% reliability.

Spatial modelling revealed distinct hotspot zones where microclimate stress and vegetation fragmentation facilitated pest concentration and rapid expansion. Remote sensing layers enhanced precision by detecting subtle crop stress symptoms several days before field-visible caterpillar damage occurred. Integration of these data streams resulted in a real-time pest early warning dashboard, capable of issuing localized advisories for targeted intervention.

The study demonstrates that combining AI, microclimate analytics, and remote sensing forms a robust forecasting framework for castor caterpillar management. Such predictive systems can significantly reduce crop losses, minimize pesticide dependence, and support climate-resilient integrated pest management (IPM) strategies. The research establishes a foundation for scalable digital pest forecasting tools tailored for semi-arid and climate-vulnerable castor ecosystems.

Keywords: Castor caterpillar, predictive modelling, microclimate, AI, remote sensing, LSTM, NDVI, pest forecasting, IPM, SRMCAS Baburayenpettai.

GENETIC IMPROVEMENT OF MULBERRY FOR DROUGHT AND HEAT TOLERANCE TO SUSTAIN SERICULTURE UNDER CLIMATE CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry (*Morus alba* L.) is the principal food plant of the silkworm (*Bombyx mori* L.), and its productivity directly determines the success of sericulture. With the increasing frequency of droughts and high-temperature stress due to climate change, mulberry cultivation faces severe yield and quality constraints. The present study, conducted during **2024–2025 at SRMCAS, Baburayanpettai**, aimed to identify and improve mulberry genotypes exhibiting drought and heat tolerance while maintaining superior leaf quality for silkworm rearing.

A total of eight mulberry genotypes were evaluated under controlled and field drought-stress conditions using physiological, morphological, and biochemical indicators such as relative water content, chlorophyll stability index, proline accumulation, and leaf yield. Selected tolerant genotypes were subjected to molecular screening using drought-responsive SSR markers to confirm genetic variability and adaptability. The best-performing genotypes were further assessed for their impact on silkworm growth, larval weight, and cocoon yield.

The results revealed that two genotypes, *S1635* and *V1*, exhibited superior tolerance to drought and heat stress, maintaining high photosynthetic efficiency, stable leaf moisture, and better nutrient retention. Silkworms fed with leaves from these genotypes showed improved growth and cocoon productivity compared to the control.

The study concludes that integrating physiological and molecular screening effectively identifies climate-resilient mulberry genotypes. These improved varieties can serve as promising resources for sustainable sericulture under changing climatic conditions.

Keywords: Mulberry, Drought tolerance, Heat stress, Genetic improvement, Climate change, Sericulture sustainability

FARMER PARTICIPATORY TRIALS ON ECO-FRIENDLY IPM PRACTICES FOR CASTOR CATERPILLAR MANAGEMENT IN RAINFED REGIONS

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ABSTRACT

Castor caterpillar (*Achaea janata* and associated defoliators) poses a persistent threat to castor production in rainfed regions, where erratic rainfall and low-input farming systems exacerbate pest susceptibility. This study, conducted during 2024–2025 at **SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai**, evaluated the effectiveness, feasibility, and farmer acceptability of eco-friendly Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices through participatory field trials. A total of 30 rainfed castor farmers across three villages were involved in co-designing, implementing, and evaluating IPM modules customized to local agro-ecological conditions. The IPM package consisted of *Trichograma chilonis* egg parasitoid releases, application of entomopathogenic fungi (Beauveria bassiana and Metarhizium anisopliae), neem seed kernel extract (NSKE 5%), intercrops for habitat diversification, pheromone traps, and mechanical removal of early instar larvae. Farmers also participated in microclimate observation and field scouting for early detection of pest build-up. Data were collected on larval density, leaf damage index, natural enemy abundance, yield parameters, and cost–benefit ratios. Feedback was obtained through structured interviews and focus group discussions.

Results showed a 55–72% reduction in caterpillar population in IPM plots compared to farmer-practice plots. NSKE and entomopathogenic fungi demonstrated strong larval suppression, while intercrops such as cowpea enhanced natural enemy activity, contributing to sustained biological control. Pheromone traps improved early monitoring and reduced adult moth activity. Yield improved by 18–28% in IPM-managed fields, with significant reductions in crop loss. Farmers reported high satisfaction due to reduced chemical pesticide use, lower input cost, and improved field safety. Participatory evaluation revealed enhanced awareness of pest ecology, improved decision-making, and greater confidence in adopting eco-friendly methods.

The study concludes that farmer participatory IPM trials greatly strengthen the adoption potential of sustainable pest management technologies. Eco-friendly IPM practices proved both effective and economically viable under rainfed conditions, offering a scalable model for climate-resilient castor production.

The findings underscore the importance of community-based extension, farmer empowerment, and localized pest advisory systems for long-term sustainability.

Keywords: Castor caterpillar, eco-friendly IPM, participatory research, entomopathogenic fungi, NSKE, pheromone traps, rainfed agriculture, SRMCAS Baburayenpettai.

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF SILK PRODUCTION AND VALUE CHAIN EFFICIENCY IN THE SERICULTURE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Sericulture is a vital agro-based industry that provides income and employment to rural households, especially small-scale farmers and women entrepreneurs. Despite its potential, the profitability of silk production is often affected by high input costs, market inefficiencies, and unequal benefit distribution across the value chain. The present study titled “Economic Analysis of Silk Production and Value Chain Efficiency in the Sericulture Sector” was conducted during 2024–2025 at SRMCAS, Baburayanpettai, with the objective of evaluating production economics and identifying key areas for improving value chain performance.

Data were collected from 60 sericulture farmers, reelers, and traders through structured interviews in selected rural clusters. Economic indicators such as cost of production, gross and net returns, benefit-cost ratio, and marketing margins were analyzed. Value chain mapping was carried out to trace the flow of inputs and outputs from mulberry cultivation to silk fabric production.

The results revealed that while farmers earned reasonable returns with a benefit-cost ratio of 1.65, the major share of profit accrued to intermediaries and traders. Inefficient marketing channels and lack of direct market access reduced farmer profitability. The study suggested that promoting producer cooperatives, direct marketing, and value-added silk production could enhance income distribution and sectoral efficiency.

The findings emphasize the need for policy interventions and institutional support to strengthen the silk value chain, improve price realization for farmers, and ensure equitable growth across all stakeholders in the sericulture sector.

Keywords: Sericulture, Silk production, Value chain, Economic analysis, Farmer income, Market efficiency

MOLECULAR CHARACTERIZATION AND LIFE CYCLE DYNAMICS OF *MACONELLICOCCUS HIRSUTUS* (GREEN) ON DIFFERENT MULBERRY GENOTYPES

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ABSTRACT:

The pink mealybug, *Maconellicoccus hirsutus* (Green), has emerged as a serious pest of mulberry (*Morus* spp.), causing severe physiological stress, leaf curling, and stunted growth that significantly reduce leaf yield and silkworm cocoon productivity. This study aimed to elucidate the molecular characterization and life cycle dynamics of *M. hirsutus* across different mulberry genotypes cultivated under Tamil Nadu conditions. Six commonly grown mulberry varieties—M5, S36, V1, G2, MR2, and Thailand Local—were evaluated for their suitability as hosts through detailed observations of developmental duration, fecundity, and survival rate of the pest.

Molecular characterization using Cytochrome Oxidase I (COI) and Internal Transcribed Spacer (ITS) gene sequencing confirmed the genetic homogeneity of *M. hirsutus* populations with minor intra-specific variations correlating with host genotype and agroclimatic conditions. The life cycle studies revealed significant variation in developmental duration, with the shortest generation time (22.4 ± 1.2 days) observed on V1 and the longest (28.9 ± 1.8 days) on MR2. Fecundity and survivability were highest on V1, indicating its higher nutritional suitability and susceptibility to mealybug infestation. In contrast, MR2 and G2 exhibited comparatively lower nymphal survival and fecundity, suggesting partial resistance mechanisms possibly linked to higher phenolic content and tougher leaf texture.

The findings highlight the existence of genotype-specific adaptation in *M. hirsutus* populations and underline the role of host plant traits in influencing pest biology. Molecular data supported the hypothesis of localized genetic differentiation among mealybug populations feeding on diverse mulberry genotypes. The integration of molecular tools with life cycle assessment provides valuable insights for breeding and selecting mealybug-tolerant mulberry varieties.

This study establishes a foundational framework for host–pest interaction research and offers practical implications for developing sustainable pest management strategies in sericulture- based mulberry ecosystems.

Keywords: Pink mealybug, *Maconellicoccus hirsutus*, mulberry (*Morus* spp.), molecular characterization, COI gene, ITS gene, genetic variation, life cycle dynamics, host plant resistance, fecundity, survivability, genotype-specific adaptation, phenolic content, pest–host interaction, sericulture, sustainable pest management.

NANO-PHOSPHATE AND PHOSPHATE-SOLUBILIZING MICROBE (PSM) INTEGRATION FOR ENHANCED PHOSPHORUS UPTAKE AND ROOT DEVELOPMENT IN MULBERRY (*MORUS* SPP.)

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ABSTRACT

Phosphorus deficiency is one of the major limiting factors affecting the growth, root development, and nutrient efficiency of mulberry (*Morus* spp.), the key host plant in sericulture. Conventional phosphate fertilizers such as single superphosphate (SSP) and diammonium phosphate (DAP) often exhibit low utilization efficiency due to fixation and leaching losses in acidic and alkaline soils. To address this challenge, a field-cum-laboratory study was conducted during 2024–2025 at SRMCAS, Baburayenpettai, to evaluate the synergistic effect of nano-phosphate fertilizers and phosphate-solubilizing microbes (PSMs) on phosphorus uptake and mulberry productivity.The experiment involved treatments comprising nano-hydroxyapatite (nano-HA) formulations, PSM inoculants (*Bacillus megaterium* and *Pseudomonas fluorescens*), and their combined applications, compared with conventional phosphate fertilizers. Key parameters assessed included soil available phosphorus, root morphological traits, phosphorus uptake, leaf phosphorus concentration, and biomass yield. The integrated nano-phosphate + PSM treatment significantly improved root length (by 30%), leaf phosphorus content (by 26%), and total biomass (by 22%) over the control. Enhanced acid phosphatase activity and microbial biomass carbon in the rhizosphere indicated active phosphorus solubilization and improved soil biological health.Spectral and IoT-based soil phosphorus monitoring systems were also deployed to assess nutrient dynamics and real-time phosphorus availability. The combined application not only reduced phosphorus fixation in soil but also improved the long-term nutrient balance and sustainability of mulberry cultivation.The study concludes that integrating nano-phosphate with phosphate-solubilizing microbes offers a sustainable and eco-efficient solution for phosphorus deficiency management in mulberry. This approach enhances phosphorus-use efficiency, promotes robust root systems, and ensures nutrient-rich leaf production for superior silkworm rearing performance.

Keywords: *Morus spp.*, nano-phosphate, phosphate-solubilizing microbes, phosphorus-use efficiency, root development, sustainable sericulture

HONEY-DERIVED NUTRIENTS TO IMPROVE SILKWORM HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Enhancing silkworm health through natural, nutrient-rich supplements has gained increasing importance for sustainable sericulture, particularly under climate-linked stress conditions. This research investigated the efficacy of honey-derived nutrients—originating from *Apis mellifera* and native stingless bees (*Tetragonula* spp.)—as dietary supplements to improve the physiological performance, immunity, and silk productivity of *Bombyx mori*. The study aimed to assess how varying concentrations and types of honey influence larval growth, disease tolerance, cocoon quality, and biochemical responses critical for high-yield silk production.

Freshly harvested mulberry leaves (var. V1) were uniformly enriched with three honey treatments: (i) *Apis mellifera* honey @ 2% and 4%, (ii) stingless bee honey @ 2% and 4%, and (iii) a control without honey. Standard rearing was conducted under optimized microclimatic conditions in the Sericulture Research Unit of SRMCAS. Growth parameters such as larval weight gain, feed conversion efficiency, and instar duration were recorded, while cocoon traits—including shell weight, shell ratio, and filament length—were evaluated post-rearing. Biochemical analyses (total protein, carbohydrate, lipid content, antioxidant enzyme activity) were performed to understand physiological enhancements. Disease tolerance against common pathogens, particularly grasserie and muscardine, was assessed under controlled exposure.

Results showed that honey supplementation significantly improved larval vigor, reduced instar duration, and enhanced cocoon quality compared with the control. Stingless bee honey at 4% resulted in the highest silk filament length and shell ratio, attributed to its richer profile of amino acids, organic acids, micronutrients, and natural antimicrobial compounds. Antioxidant enzyme activity (SOD, CAT, POD) increased across honey-fed groups, indicating strengthened immunity and reduced oxidative stress. Reduced disease incidence and lower mortality further confirmed the protective role of honey bioactives. The study highlights that honey-enriched mulberry feeding is a viable, eco-friendly strategy to improve silkworm health, productivity, and resilience under fluctuating climatic conditions. This research recommends integrating honey-derived supplements into farmer-based rearing packages to enhance silk yield and promote sustainable sericulture. Field-scale trials and nutrient-profiling studies are suggested to refine dosages and identify specific bioactive compounds contributing to improved silkworm performance.

Keywords: Honey supplementation; *Bombyx mori*; Silkworm health; Stingless bee honey; *Apis mellifera*; Nutrient-enriched mulberry leaves; Cocoon quality

EFFECTS OF MULBERRY ON THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

This study, conducted at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayanpettai, from 2024 to 2025, investigated the neuroprotective and cognitive-enhancing effects of mulberry (Morus spp.) extracts on the central nervous system. The primary aim was to elucidate the mechanisms by which mulberry phytochemicals modulate neuroinflammation, oxidative stress, and neuronal signaling pathways. Both in vivo and in vitro methods were employed. In vivo experiments involved administering standardized mulberry extracts to Wistar rat models and evaluating behavioral outcomes related to memory, anxiety, and depressive-like states using established tests such as the Morris water maze, forced swim, and open field tests. In vitro studies focused on rat hippocampal neurons subjected to oxidative stress, treated with mulberry extract, and analyzed for survival rate, reactive oxygen species (ROS) levels, and expression of neurotrophic factors.Key findings demonstrated that mulberry supplementation significantly improved learning and memory performance, reduced anxiety and depressive behaviors, and increased neuronal viability under oxidative challenge. Biochemical analyses revealed a marked reduction in malondialdehyde (MDA) and pro-inflammatory cytokines (TNF-α, IL-6), alongside enhanced activities of antioxidant enzymes including superoxide dismutase (SOD) and catalase. Furthermore, upregulation of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) and activation of TrkB signaling were observed in treated animals. Collectively, these results suggest that mulberry exerts its beneficial CNS effects through a synergistic mechanism involving antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and neurotrophic pathways. The findings support mulberry as a promising candidate for the management and prevention of neurodegenerative and neuropsychiatric disorders, warranting further clinical investigation

Keywords: mulberry, Morus spp., central nervous system, neuroprotection, antioxidant, neuroinflammation, memory, BDNF, SRM College Baburayanpettai

CLIMATE-LINKED PEST FORECASTING MODELS FOR ERI SILKWORM REARING SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

Eri silkworm (*Samia ricini*) production is highly sensitive to climatic fluctuations, which directly influence the occurrence, intensity, and seasonal dynamics of major pests affecting both host plants (castor and tapioca) and rearing environments. The present study, conducted during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, aimed to develop climate-linked pest forecasting models by integrating long-term weather datasets, field pest surveillance, and advanced statistical and machine learning approaches. Weekly monitoring of key pests—leaf webber (*Spilosoma obliqua*), castor semilooper (*Achaea janata*), spiraling whitefly (*Aleurodicus dispersus*), eri silkworm uzi fly (*Blepharipa zebina*), and rearing house micro-pests—was carried out across eri host plant blocks and controlled rearing units. Simultaneously, real-time microclimate parameters including temperature, relative humidity, VPD, rainfall, wind patterns, and solar radiation were recorded using automated weather sensors. Correlation and regression analyses revealed strong positive associations between maximum temperature and uzi fly incidence, while high humidity (>70%) and intermittent rainfall favoured leaf webber outbreaks during the monsoon months. Machine learning models (Random Forest and LSTM networks) outperformed traditional linear models, yielding prediction accuracies of 82–91% for major pests based on 10–14-day weather projections. A dynamic pest warning index (EPWI) was developed to classify risk levels (low, moderate, high) for eri silkworm farmers. Validation trials across farmer-participatory locations confirmed that the forecasting models enabled early detection of pest surges, reducing crop and cocoon losses by 18–25% when farmers employed timely interventions such as neem-based sprays, parasitoid releases, rearing house sanitation, and climate adjustments. The study concludes that climate-responsive forecasting significantly enhances resilience of eri sericulture under changing climatic scenarios.The generated models and EPWI tool can be integrated into mobile advisory platforms and automated rearing systems for real-time decision-making. This research demonstrates the potential of climate-smart pest management strategies to stabilize eri silk productivity and strengthen rural sericulture livelihoods in South India.

Keywords: Eri silkworm, pest forecasting, climate change, machine learning, microclimate, uzi fly, leaf webber, EPWI, castor, sericulture IPM.

ECO-FRIENDLY IPM MODULES FOR LEAF WEBBER (*SPILOSOMA OBLIQUA*) IN ERI HOST PLANTS

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ABSTRACT

Leaf webber (*Spilosoma obliqua*) is one of the most destructive pests of eri host plants, particularly castor (*Ricinus communis*) and tapioca (*Manihot esculenta*), causing severe defoliation and reducing leaf biomass essential for sustainable eri silkworm rearing. The present study, undertaken during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, aimed to develop and evaluate eco-friendly Integrated Pest Management (IPM) modules tailored for eri host plant ecosystems. Field experiments were conducted across institutional eri blocks and farmer-participatory sites using a randomized block design with six IPM modules combining biocontrol agents, botanicals, cultural practices, and mechanical measures.The modules included components such as release of *Trichogramma chilonis*, application of *Beauveria bassiana* (1×10^8 conidia/mL), neem oil (3%) and pongamia oil (2%) sprays, installation of pheromone and light traps, early removal of infested leaves, and maintenance of plant nutrition with organic inputs. Data on larval population, leaf damage severity, natural enemy abundance, and leaf yield were recorded at weekly intervals. Results revealed that the integrated module M4—comprising pheromone traps, neem oil spray, *B. bassiana* application, and *T. chilonis* release—was the most effective, achieving 72% reduction in leaf webber incidence and a 28% increase in usable leaf yield compared to untreated control. Modules with botanical–fungal combinations performed significantly better than single interventions, highlighting their synergistic interactions. Economic analysis showed that eco-IPM practices were cost-efficient, yielding the highest benefit–cost ratio (2.83) while ensuring safety to eri silkworms and environmental health. Farmer feedback indicated improved usability, reduced pesticide dependency, and better sustainability for year-round eri rearing.

The study concludes that eco-friendly IPM modules can serve as reliable, practical, and farmer-adoptable strategies to manage *S. obliqua* without compromising silkworm quality or host plant health. Adoption of these modules will contribute to greener sericulture, climate resilience, and improved livelihood outcomes in South Indian eri-growing regions.

Keywords: Eri host plants, leaf webber, eco-IPM, *Spilosoma obliqua*, neem oil, *Beauveria bassiana*, *Trichogramma chilonis*, botanical pesticides, castor, sustainable sericulture

MOLECULAR AND NUTRITIONAL BASIS OF HOST PLANT PREFERENCE IN CASTOR HAWK MOTH (*ACHERONTIA STYX*) LARVAE

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ABSTRACT

The castor hawk moth (*Acherontia styx* Westwood) is a major defoliator of *Ricinus communis* (castor) in southern India, capable of causing significant yield reduction through voracious larval feeding. Understanding the molecular and nutritional determinants of host plant preference is crucial for developing resistant castor varieties and eco-friendly pest management strategies. The present investigation aimed to elucidate the biochemical and molecular basis of larval feeding behavior and host selection on diverse castor genotypes cultivated under Tamil Nadu conditions. Five widely cultivated castor genotypes—DCS 107, TMV 5, YRCS 1, 48-1, and GCH 7—were evaluated for their influence on larval growth, survival, and nutrient assimilation efficiency. Biochemical assays revealed significant variation in primary (protein, carbohydrate) and secondary metabolites (phenols, alkaloids, ricinine) among the genotypes. Larvae reared on DCS 107 exhibited the shortest developmental duration (22.1 ± 1.3 days) and highest weight gain, while those fed on YRCS 1 showed prolonged development and reduced survival, indicating the deterrent effect of elevated phenolic and ricinine content.At the molecular level, expression profiling of midgut detoxification genes (CYP450, GST, and CarE) and digestive enzymes (amylase and protease) using qRT-PCR showed significant upregulation in larvae fed on high-nutrient genotypes, suggesting adaptive physiological responses to host chemistry. The combined biochemical and molecular data established a clear linkage between host plant nutritional composition and gene-mediated detoxification pathways that influence host preference.The study concludes that host plant quality and secondary metabolites critically determine *A. styx* larval performance and preference. Identifying such resistance-related traits provides a foundation for breeding castor varieties with reduced susceptibility to hawk moth infestation, thereby contributing to sustainable pest management in castor-based agroecosystems.

Keywords:*Acherontia styx*, castor (*Ricinus communis*), host plant preference, detoxification enzymes, nutritional biochemistry, gene expression, insect–plant interaction, pest resistance.

POTENTIAL OF ENTOMOPATHOGENIC FUNGI IN SUPPRESSING ERI SILKWORM FIELD AND REARING PESTS

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ABSTRACT

Eri silkworm (*Samia ricini*) cultivation is frequently challenged by a diverse complex of field and rearing pests that adversely affect host plant quality, silkworm health, and cocoon productivity. With the increasing demand for eco-friendly and residue-free sericulture practices, entomopathogenic fungi (EPF) have gained prominence as sustainable biological alternatives to chemical pesticides. The present study, conducted during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, evaluated the efficacy of three EPF species—*Beauveria bassiana*, *Metarhizium anisopliae*, and *Lecanicillium lecanii*—in suppressing major pests of castor and tapioca host plants, as well as rearing house pests that directly affect eri silkworm rearing.

The research involved laboratory bioassays, pot culture trials, field applications, and rearing room sanitation assessments. Standard conidial suspensions (1×10^8 conidia/mL) were applied against major field pests including leaf webber (*Spilosoma obliqua*), semilooper (*Achaea janata*), and spiraling whitefly (*Aleurodicus dispersus*). Laboratory assays demonstrated high virulence of *B. bassiana*, resulting in 76–82% larval mortality of leaf webber within 6–7 days. *L. lecanii* exhibited superior control of whitefly nymphs and adults through induced mycosis and rapid sporulation. Field trials on castor showed 62–78% reduction in pest populations across repeated EPF applications, with no adverse effects on eri silkworm larvae when treated foliage was fed after a 48-hour safety interval.

In rearing house studies, targeted application of *M. anisopliae* on rearing racks, walls, and dark corners reduced uzi fly (*Blepharipa zebina*) pupal emergence by 50–58%, highlighting its potential for integration into routine disinfection schedules. EPF treatments also improved leaf biomass availability by 18–22% and enhanced cocoon weight and shell ratio, demonstrating indirect productivity benefits. Soil and non-target organism analyses confirmed that EPF were safe to beneficial arthropods and enhanced microbial activity.

The study concludes that entomopathogenic fungi represent a robust, eco-safe, and farmer-friendly tool for comprehensive pest management in eri sericulture. Their integration into IPM modules can significantly reduce chemical dependency, stabilize leaf supply, and support sustainable eri silk production in South Indian sericulture clusters.

Keywords: Entomopathogenic fungi, *Beauveria bassiana*, *Metarhizium anisopliae*, *Lecanicillium lecanii*, eri silkworm, uzi fly, leaf webber, biological control, castor, eco-friendly pest management.

COCOON SORTING, GRADING, DRYING, STORAGE, AND PEST MANAGEMENT: EVALUATION OF EFFICIENT STIFLING PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The present study, conducted from 2024 to 2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, focused on optimizing post-harvest handling of mulberry cocoons through integrated approaches involving sorting, grading, drying, storage, and pest management. The research aimed to enhance cocoon quality, minimize losses, and improve reeling efficiency. Systematic evaluation of cocoon sorting and grading parameters was carried out using size, weight, and shell ratio indices. Various drying techniques, including sun drying, hot air drying, and controlled chamber drying, were compared to determine their effects on moisture content, color retention, and reelability. Storage experiments under different conditions assessed the maintenance of cocoon freshness and pest resistance. Special emphasis was placed on identifying efficient stifling practices that ensured uniform killing of pupae while preserving silk filament quality. The integrated pest management modules developed under this study minimized moth emergence, fungal contamination, and insect damage, leading to improved cocoon preservation. The outcomes provide sustainable recommendations for sericulture farmers and reeling units to improve post-harvest management and silk yield quality.

Keywords: Cocoon sorting, Grading, Drying, Storage, Pest management, Efficient stifling, Mulberry cocoon, Sericulture

HOST PLANT RESISTANCE SCREENING IN CASTOR AND TAPIOCA AGAINST KEY ERI SILKWORM PESTS

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ABSTRACT

Eri silkworm production largely depends on the sustained availability of high-quality foliage from castor (*Ricinus communis*) and tapioca (*Manihot esculenta*). However, major pests such as leaf webber (*Spilosoma obliqua*), castor semilooper (*Achaea janata*), spiraling whitefly (*Aleurodicus dispersus*), and red mite (*Oligonychus coffeae*) pose significant threats to leaf yield and quality. The development and identification of resistant host plant varieties offer a long-term, eco-friendly alternative to chemical-based pest control strategies. This study, carried out during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, focused on screening diverse castor and tapioca genotypes for resistance to major eri silkworm pests using field evaluations, laboratory assays, and biochemical profiling.A total of 18 castor genotypes and 12 tapioca accessions were evaluated under natural infestation conditions in replicated field trials. Observations were recorded for pest incidence, leaf damage intensity, larval survival, oviposition preference, and yield parameters. Significant variability in pest tolerance was observed among genotypes. Castor genotypes RC-18, RC-87, and Haritha exhibited low larval feeding, reduced leaf webbing, and suppressed semilooper survival. In tapioca, accessions ME-7 and Sree Vijaya showed strong tolerance to whitefly and mite infestations. Antibiosis and antixenosis tests confirmed that resistant genotypes supported lower pest development and reduced oviposition rates.Biochemical analyses revealed that higher levels of phenolics, tannins, cuticular wax, and leaf dry matter content were associated with resistance. Correlation studies showed a strong negative relationship between total phenolic content and pest survival ($r = -0.82$), indicating the biochemical basis of natural resistance. Resistant genotypes maintained 20–30% higher usable leaf yield compared to susceptible varieties, demonstrating their potential to support year-round eri silkworm rearing.The study highlights the value of varietal resistance as a core component of sustainable pest management in eri sericulture. Identified resistant genotypes can be further utilized in breeding programmes, farmer field cultivation, and integrated pest management modules to ensure stable leaf availability and improved cocoon productivity. Adoption of resistant varieties represents a cost-effective, eco-friendly, and long-term solution for strengthening rural eri silk production systems.

Keywords: Host plant resistance, castor, tapioca, eri silkworm, leaf webber, semilooper, whitefly, phenolics, genotype screening, sustainable sericulture.

ECO-FRIENDLY MANAGEMENT OF MULBERRY APHID (*PSEUDODENDROTHRIPS MORI* AND *APHIS GOSSYPII*) USING BOTANICAL AND NANO-BIOPESTICIDE FORMULATIONS

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ABSTRACT:

Mulberry aphids, particularly *Pseudodendrothrips mori* and *Aphis gossypii*, are major sucking pests that significantly reduce mulberry leaf yield and quality, thereby affecting silkworm health and cocoon productivity in sericulture. Excessive dependence on chemical insecticides not only disturbs ecological balance but also leads to pesticide residues harmful to silkworms. The present study focused on developing and evaluating eco-friendly management strategies through the integration of botanical and nano-biopesticide formulations for sustainable aphid control in mulberry ecosystems.Field and laboratory trials were conducted using neem (*Azadirachta indica*), pongamia (*Pongamia pinnata*), garlic (*Allium sativum*), and tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*) extracts prepared in conventional and nanoemulsion forms. Nanoformulations were synthesized through the solvent evaporation–ultrasonication method and characterized for particle size and stability. The bioefficacy of these formulations was compared with a standard chemical check (dimethoate 30 EC) under controlled conditions.Among the treatments, neem nanoemulsion (2%) exhibited the highest aphid mortality (89.4%) within 72 hours, followed by pongamia nanoemulsion (82.6%) and garlic nanoemulsion (78.2%). The botanical extracts in nanoform significantly improved adhesion, stability, and persistence on mulberry foliage, providing prolonged protection without phytotoxic effects. Leaf quality parameters and silkworm feeding assays confirmed that nano-biopesticide-treated leaves were safe and non-toxic to *Bombyx mori*. The environmental safety index and cost– benefit ratio also favored the use of botanical nanoformulations over chemical pesticides. The study concludes that botanical nano-biopesticides offer a promising, eco-sustainable alternative for aphid management in mulberry, ensuring pest suppression while maintaining sericultural productivity and environmental health. These findings support integrating nanobio innovations into organic sericulture pest management frameworks.

Keywords: Mulberry aphid, *Aphis gossypii*, *Pseudodendrothrips mori*, nano-biopesticide, botanical extracts, neem nanoemulsion, eco-friendly pest management, sericulture sustainability.

IMPACT OF CLIMATE VARIABLES ON POPULATION DYNAMICS AND DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY OF CASTOR HAWK MOTH (*ACHERONTIA STYX*) IN SOUTHERN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The castor hawk moth (*Acherontia styx* Westwood) is a major pest of castor (*Ricinus communis* L.) in southern India, causing substantial defoliation and yield loss during its peak incidence periods. The present study investigated the influence of climatic variables on the population dynamics, life cycle parameters, and developmental biology of *A. styx* under field and controlled conditions during 2024–2025.

Long-term climatic data (temperature, relative humidity, and rainfall) and pest incidence records were analyzed to understand the relationship between abiotic factors and pest outbreaks in the Cuddalore–Villupuram agroclimatic zone.Seasonal monitoring revealed that *A. styx* population density peaked during the late Kharif season (September–October), coinciding with mean temperatures of 28–32°C and relative humidity of 70–80%. Correlation analysis showed a positive association between temperature and larval abundance ($r = 0.82$) and a negative relationship with rainfall ($r = –0.46$). Laboratory-reared populations demonstrated significant variation in developmental duration and fecundity across different temperature regimes (25°C, 30°C, and 35°C). The optimum developmental performance, with the shortest life cycle (23.8 ± 1.4 days) and highest fecundity (290 ± 12 eggs/female), occurred at 30°C, indicating thermal suitability for rapid generation turnover.GIS-based spatial modeling and degree-day analysis identified high-risk zones for pest proliferation across southern districts of Tamil Nadu.

Projected climate scenarios indicated a potential northward shift and early onset of pest activity under rising temperature trends. The findings highlight that temperature and humidity are key drivers regulating *A. styx* development and outbreak patterns.

The study provides a scientific basis for developing climate-resilient pest forecasting and management strategies, integrating early warning systems for sustainable castor cultivation in South Indian agroecosystems.

Keywords:*Acherontia styx*, castor (*Ricinus communis*), population dynamics, developmental biology, temperature, relative humidity, pest forecasting, climate resilience, southern India

A REVIEW ON AUTOMATIZATION AND MECHANIZATION IN SEED PRODUCTION SERICULTURE GRAINAGE

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ABSTRACT

Seed production in sericulture, commonly known as grainage operation, plays a pivotal role in ensuring the quality and productivity of silk cocoon crops. Traditionally, grainage activities such as cocoon selection, moth emergence, mating, oviposition, disinfection, and incubation are highly labor-intensive and dependent on manual precision, often leading to variability in seed quality and disease incidence. Recent advancements in automation and mechanization are transforming these processes, enhancing efficiency, accuracy, and biosecurity. Automated cocoon sorting systems employing optical and weight sensors, robotic moth pairing devices, computerized incubation chambers, and AI-based pebrine detection technologies are being integrated into modern grainages. Additionally, the use of IoT-based monitoring systems enables real-time control of environmental conditions, ensuring optimal parameters for seed production. These innovations not only minimize human error and contamination risks but also standardize operations, improve scalability, and strengthen traceability through digital data management. Despite challenges such as high initial investment and the need for skilled personnel, automation and mechanization present a sustainable pathway for modernizing sericulture seed production and achieving consistent, disease-free layings (DFLs) of superior quality.

Keywords: Sericulture seed production; Grainage automation; Cocoon sorting; Robotic moth pairing; AI-based disease detection; IoT monitoring; Mechanized incubation; Pebrine diagnosis; Biosecurity; Standardized DFLs; Digital traceability; Precision sericulture; Smart grainage systems; Technology integration; Sustainable seed production.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON SERICULTURE: DEVELOPMENT OF CLIMATE RESILIENT MULBERRY GENOTYPES AND ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Introduction Climate change has become a major challenge threatening sericulture, with rising temperatures, altered rainfall, and frequent extreme weather events severely impacting mulberry cultivation and silkworm rearing worldwide. Elevated temperatures induce stress in silkworms, resulting in poor cocoon quality and increased mortality, while drought and floods hinder mulberry leaf yield and degrade silk production. These disruptions underline a critical need for the development of climate-resilient mulberry genotypes and comprehensive adaptation strategies to sustain and advance sericulture.Materials and MethodsRecent developments in sericulture focus on two central approaches: breeding drought- and heat-tolerant mulberry genotypes and implementing climate-smart cultivation and nutrition practices. Elite mulberry varieties were evaluated for seasonal adaptability and stability of yield traits through field trials across major growing seasons (winter, summer, and rainy). Agronomic methods included integrating soil and foliar supplementation with essential macro- and micronutrients (notably nitrogen, zinc, and iron), organic amendments, and inoculation with plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria and mycorrhizal fungi to enhance nutritional value. In parallel, climate adaptation strategies involved mulching, improved irrigation, integrated pest management, and the use of remote sensing and GIS for early warning of climatic extremes and disease outbreaks.ResultsField evaluation of elite mulberry genotypes revealed that several lines demonstrated stable yield attributes and resilience across contrasting environmental conditions. Notably, genotypes ME-0006 and ME-0220 consistently outperformed others in terms of yield per plant and key fruit traits, combining high productivity with low environmental sensitivity. Nutritional interventions improved leaf quality and cocoon characteristics, leading to increases in larval growth rates, cocoon weight, and filament length under nutrient-enriched and climate-resilient cultivation regimes. Mulching, efficient irrigation, and climate-smart agronomy significantly mitigated the impacts of drought and erratic rainfall and sustained leaf yield and silkworm performance.ConclusionClimate change presents multifaceted threats to sericulture through increased abiotic stress, disease risks, and yield instability. Recent research shows that developing and deploying climate-resilient mulberry genotypes, combined with adaptive and sustainable agronomic practices, can foster improved productivity, economic

stability, and ecological sustainability in silk production. Ongoing innovation and research, particularly in genetics and nutrient management, remain vital for the long-term resilience of the sericulture industry.Recent

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POST-COCOON MECHANIZATION AND QUALITY OPTIMIZATION IN INDIAN SERICULTURE: PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE SILK PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT:

The Indian sericulture industry, known for its rich heritage and employment potential, faces increasing pressure to modernize post-cocoon operations to maintain global competitiveness and ensure sustainability. This study explores the critical role of mechanization and quality optimization across reeling, twisting, dyeing, and finishing processes to enhance silk yield, reduce wastage, and ensure fiber uniformity. It examines indigenous technological interventions, efficiency improvements, and the integration of smart tools for quality assessment. Emphasis is placed on balancing mechanization with the socio-economic realities of rural silk producers, promoting environmentally responsible practices through energy-efficient machinery and waste minimization. The findings underscore that systematic post-cocoon mechanization aligned with quality management frameworks can significantly elevate India's silk export potential while preserving the livelihoods of small-scale artisans. The paper concludes by identifying strategic pathways for sustainable silk production through innovation-driven policy support, capacity building, and eco-friendly technologies.

Keywords: Sericulture, Silk production, Post-cocoon mechanization, Quality optimization, Sustainable textiles, Rural development, India

PHYTOPLASMA-INDUCED YELLOWS DISEASE CAUSED BY *Cocsilia flauca* AND ITS MANAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURE

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ABSTRACT:

Phytoplasma-induced yellows disease is a significant threat to many crops worldwide, caused by phytoplasmas transmitted primarily by the insect vector Cocsilia flauca, a species of leafhopper belonging to the family Cicadellidae. Cocsilia flauca acts as a persistent vector, spreading phytoplasma pathogens responsible for yellowing, stunting, and reduced yield in affected plants. This disease complex affects a wide range of crops including vegetables, fruits, and ornamental plants, posing challenges to sustainable agricultural production. The management of this pest-disease complex requires a multidisciplinary integrated pest management (IPM) approach, combining cultural, biological, and chemical measures to reduce vector populations and disease incidence.

Cultural control strategies include the removal and destruction of infected plants, crop rotation with non-host plants, and maintaining proper field sanitation to reduce phytoplasma reservoirs. The use of resistant or tolerant crop varieties is encouraged where available. Biological control utilizing natural enemies such as predatory insects and parasitoids that suppress Cocsilia flauca populations has shown promise. Moreover, entomopathogenic fungi and bacterial biopesticides offer eco-friendly alternatives for vector control. The judicious use of selective insecticides targeting leafhopper vectors, applied based on monitoring and threshold levels, remains part of the strategy to minimize vector density while reducing environmental impact. Effective management also involves regular field monitoring and early detection through symptom recognition and molecular diagnostic tools to timely implement control measures. The adoption of IPM principles emphasizing sustainability, economic feasibility, and environmental safety plays a crucial role in managing phytoplasma yellows disease and its vector Cocsilia flauca. Research advancements focusing on vector biology, pathogen detection, and development of novel biocontrol agents will further enhance sustainable pest management in agriculture.

Keywords: Cocsilia flauca, phytoplasma yellows disease, leafhopper vector, integrated pest management, biological control, cultural practices, insecticide management, sustainable agriculture, crop protection, vector-borne plant disease.

AI-DRIVEN AUTOMATED COCOON SORTING, STIFLING AND SMART REELING SYSTEM FOR ULTRA-FINE SILK PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT:

The global silk industry is undergoing rapid technological modernization to meet the growing demand for ultra-fine, high-quality silk while reducing reliance on labour-intensive and inconsistent manual processing. Traditional cocoon sorting, stifling and reeling methods introduce significant variability in filament quality, breakage rates and production efficiency. To overcome these limitations, an AI-driven automated post-cocoon processing system integrating machine vision, robotics, multispectral imaging, IoT-enabled monitoring and deep learning algorithms has been developed. The automated cocoon sorting module enables high-speed classification with >99% accuracy, ensuring uniform batch allocation based on filament potential, shell percentage, structural integrity and internal defects. Intelligent stifling chambers achieve optimal pupal deactivation through predictive thermal control, preserving sericin stability and enhancing filament flexibility. Smart reeling technology applies real-time tension regulation, breakage detection and robotic thread reconnection to maintain consistent denier, superior tensile strength and minimal production downtime. A comprehensive data management framework provides full traceability, supports predictive maintenance, improves sustainability and enables feedback-driven enhancement of farm-level cocoon quality. This AI-integrated system standardizes raw silk properties, increases resource efficiency, reduces environmental impact and aligns production with premium global textile market standards. Overall, the technology represents a transformative advancement for sericulture, establishing a highly precise, efficient and sustainable silk manufacturing ecosystem.

Keywords:AI automation; Cocoon sorting; Intelligent stifling; Smart reeling; Machine vision; Deep learning; IoT monitoring; Ultra-fine silk; Sericulture technology; Robotics integration; Quality traceability; Predictive maintenance; Sustainable silk production; Post-cocoon processing; Silk industry modernization.

DRONE-BASED MONITORING AND IMAGE RECOGNITION FOR EARLY DETECTION OF CASTOR CATERPILLAR DAMAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to develop and evaluate a drone-enabled monitoring system integrated with image-recognition techniques for the early detection of castor caterpillar (Achaea janata) damage in castor fields. Conducted during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, the research addressed the growing need for rapid, scalable, and precise pest-damage assessment methods in castor cultivation. A quad-copter drone equipped with high-resolution RGB sensors was deployed to capture periodic aerial images across experimental plots during critical crop-growth stages. Image datasets were annotated manually for the presence of foliar defoliation, feeding patterns, and pest infestation symptoms. These annotated datasets were then used to train convolutional neural network (CNN) models tailored to field conditions, variations in illumination, and canopy structure. The drone-derived imagery enabled high-frequency surveillance, offering broad spatial coverage with minimal field disturbance. The image-recognition pipeline achieved reliable classification of pest-induced damage, demonstrating strong accuracy in differentiating early-stage symptoms from healthy foliage. Model predictions were validated through ground-truth inspections and conventional scouting methods. Results indicated that early damage—often missed in manual field checks—could be detected several days earlier using the drone-based system, thus providing a critical window for timely pest management interventions. Overall, the integration of unmanned aerial systems with AI-driven image analytics proved to be an efficient and cost-effective approach for castor pest surveillance. The study highlights the potential of precision-agriculture technologies to enhance crop protection strategies, reduce pesticide misuse, and support sustainable castor production. Recommendations include expanding multispectral imaging capabilities, refining model robustness across seasons, and developing user-friendly interfaces for farmer adoption.

Keywords: Drone monitoring; Castor caterpillar; Achaea janata; Image recognition; CNN model; Pest detection; Aerial imagery; Precision agriculture; Castor crop protection; Early warning system.

DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF BOTANICALLY DERIVED NANO-FORMULATIONS FOR CASTOR CATERPILLAR SUPPRESSION

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ABSTRACT

Castor (*Ricinus communis* L.) is a vital industrial oilseed crop, yet its productivity is significantly constrained by the castor caterpillar (*Achaea janata*), a major defoliator causing severe yield losses. Conventional chemical insecticides, though effective, create long-term environmental concerns, resistance development, and adverse effects on non-target organisms. In this context, the present research aimed to develop, characterize, and evaluate eco-friendly botanically derived nano-formulations for the effective suppression of castor caterpillar populations.Botanical extracts from selected plants known for their insecticidal properties were prepared and further converted into nano-emulsions and nano-encapsulated formulations using biocompatible polymers. Particle size analysis, zeta potential measurements, and stability assessments confirmed that the developed formulations were within the desirable nano- range and exhibited good shelf stability. Laboratory bioassays were conducted to evaluate larvicidal activity, feeding inhibition, and mortality at graded concentrations, followed by pot-culture trials for efficacy validation under semi-field conditions.The botanically derived nano-formulations demonstrated significantly higher mortality rates compared to their crude extracts, indicating enhanced bioavailability and improved penetration in the target pest. Larvae exposed to nano-formulations exhibited reduced feeding, growth retardation, and delayed pupation. Among the tested formulations, nano- encapsulated extracts showed superior performance with sustained release and prolonged effectiveness. No phytotoxic effects were observed on castor foliage, confirming the crop safety of the developed products.

Overall, the study highlights the potential of green nano-technology as a sustainable approach for managing castor caterpillar infestations. The findings support the integration of botanical nano-formulations into eco-friendly pest management strategies, offering a promising alternative to synthetic insecticides for safer and more sustainable castor cultivation.

Keywords: Nano formulation, Castor caterpillar, Bio formulation

FARMERS PARTICIPATORY TRAILS ON ECOFRIENDLY IPM PRACTICES FOR CASTER CATERPILLAR MANAGEMENT IN RAINFED REGIONS

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ABSTRACT:

Farmer participatory trials on eco-friendly Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices for castor caterpillar management in rainfed regions focus on involving farmers actively in observing and managing pest populations using sustainable, bio-intensive strategies. The agro-ecosystem analysis (AESA)-based IPM is a key approach where farmers, in groups, monitor plant health, pest, and natural enemy populations to make informed decisions minimizing chemical pesticide use. Practices include selecting healthy seeds, seed treatment with biopesticides, maintaining proper spacing, soil health improvement through mulching and organic manures, and regular field observations focusing on pest- to-defender population ratios. Ecological engineering is integrated by manipulating habitats to favour natural pest predators and reducing broad- spectrum chemical pesticide applications. Farmer involvement includes experiential learning, insect zoo demonstrations to identify beneficial insects, and group decision-making. These strategies aim to reduce pesticide use, enhance biodiversity, and sustain agro-ecosystem health in rainfed castor cultivation

Additionally, trials have shown that participatory IPM practices, including monitoring and using eco-friendly options like biopesticides and cultural methods, lead to significant reductions in pest infestations, better yields, and economic viability in rainfed semi-arid conditions similar to castor-growing regions. The benefits are sustained pest management with reduced environmental impact through farmer empowerment, training, and shared knowledge systems in managing castor caterpillar and other pests . Thus, farmer participatory trials emphasize collaborative, field-based trials and decision-making, combining agro-ecosystem analysis, bio-intensive IPM, habitat manipulation, and use of biocontrol agents to sustainably manage castor caterpillar in rainfed areas while minimizing chemical dependencies and supporting ecological balance. If you need detailed protocols or guidelines from such trials, they typically include steps for pest monitoring, natural enemy identification, cultural practices adaptation, and judicious biopesticide use tailored to local conditions, all with active farmer participation and extension support

Keywords:IPM,AESA

UNLOCKING THE COSMETIC BENEFITS OF FRUIT MULBERRY: TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE TO MODERN APPLICATIONS.

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry (Morus spp.) fruits have long been embedded in traditional medicinal and cosmetic practices across Asian and global ethnobotanical systems, where they were valued for complexion enhancement, skin rejuvenation, and therapeutic skincare. With increasing demand for plant-based and sustainable cosmetic ingredients, mulberry fruit has gained scientific and commercial relevance due to its rich profile of phenolics, flavonoids, anthocyanins, and stilbenes—most notably oxyresveratrol, mulberroside A, maclurin, and cyanidin derivatives. This systematic review evaluates evidence published between 2015 and 2025 on the cosmetic applications of mulberry fruit, integrating ethnobotanical knowledge with biochemical, pharmacological, and formulation-based studies. Literature retrieved from Scopus and screened using PRISMA 2020 criteria resulted in 26 eligible articles, spanning in vitro, in vivo, formulation, and limited clinical investigations. Findings demonstrate strong antioxidant, anti-tyrosinase, anti-inflammatory, photoprotective, and anti-aging effects mediated through mechanisms such as ROS scavenging, MITF downregulation, Nrf2 activation, collagen stimulation, and MMP inhibition. Advances in nanotechnology, green extraction, and biotechnological production further enhance the stability, bioavailability, and sustainability of mulberry-derived actives for cosmetic use. Despite promising outcomes, challenges remain regarding phytochemical variability, formulation stability, and insufficient clinical validation. Overall, mulberry fruit emerges as a potent, multifunctional natural ingredient bridging traditional cosmetic wisdom with modern dermatological science, warranting further standardized and translational research for optimized cosmeceutical applications.

Keywords: cosmetics, phenolics, flavonoids, anthocyanins.

FROM GUT TO COCOON: MICROBIAL DRIVERS OF BIVOLTINE SILKWORM EXCELLENCE

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ABSTRACT

Bivoltine silkworms (Bombyx mori) are renowned for producing superior quality silk characterized by higher filament strength, uniformity, and luster. Recent research highlights that beyond genetics and nutrition, the gut microbiome plays a pivotal role in governing larval health, metabolic efficiency, immunity, and ultimately cocoon productivity. This study focuses on current advances on the diversity, functional roles, and dynamic shifts of gut-associated microorganisms in bivoltine silkworms, emphasizing their contributions to nutrient assimilation, hormonal regulation, stress tolerance, and pathogen resistance. Special focus is placed on symbiotic bacteria such as Bacillus, Pseudomonas, Lactobacillus, and actinobacteria that enhance digestion, improve mulberry leaf utilization, and modulate metabolic pathways linked to cocoon formation. Additionally, this work discusses emerging microbial interventions including probiotics and microbial consortia to boost cocoon weight, shell ratio, and silk filament quality. Understanding these microbial drivers offers promising avenues for eco-friendly biotechnological manipulation to elevate bivoltine silkworm performance and support sustainable sericulture.

Keywords: Silkworm Bacillus, Pseudomonas, Lactobacillus

EFFECT OF FEEDING PESTICIDES SPRAYED MULBERRY LEAVES ON GRAINAGE PERFORMANCE OF SILKWORM

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ABSTRACT

Study was conducted to evaluate the impact of feeding pesticide-sprayed mulberry leaves on the grainage performance of silkworms. Five commonly used pesticides for mulberry pest control were tested: Azadirachtin 1%, Chlorfenapyr 10 SC, Orgomite, Wettable Sulphur 80 WP, and Era Safeguard. Silkworms were fed leaves treated with these pesticides at intervals of 5, 10, 15, and 20 days after spraying (DAS).

Results showed that Azadirachtin and Chlorfenapyr exhibited high toxicity to silkworms up to 15 DAS, significantly reducing the pupation rate. Among the pesticides, Orgomite displayed the least toxicity at 10 DAS, maintaining higher rates of pupation, moth emergence, fecundity, and egg hatching. At 15 DAS, Chlorfenapyr's toxicity diminished. Overall, Orgomite and Chlorfenapyr 10 SC were effective against mites and mulberry leaf roller while being safer for silkworms with recommended safety periods of 10 and 15 DAS, respectively. The study concludes that Orgomite is the safest choice for managing mulberry pests in seed crops without compromising silkworm grainage performance.

This research highlights the importance of selecting pesticides that balance pest control efficiency and silkworm safety, essential for sustainable sericulture that supports rural livelihoods. Future studies could explore biochemical and histological changes in silkworms from pesticide exposure affecting grainage performance.

Keywords: Pesticide Mulberry Toxicity Silkworm Gain.

IDENTIFICATION AND VALIDATION OF MOLECULAR MARKERS FOR SILKWORM BREEDING

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ABSTRACT

Silkworm breeding has vastly benefited from the incorporation of molecular marker technologies that provide an accurate and efficient method of selecting for desirable traits in Bombyx mori. Traditional breeding methods have generally been somewhat hindered because many economically important traits, including cocoon yield, shell weight, resistance to disease, and environmental tolerance, are complexly polygenic. Molecular markers, such as RAPD, ISSR, SSR, SNP, and CAPS, have therefore emerged as reliable tools not only for dissecting genetic diversity but also for marker-assisted selection, enabling breeders to track alleles associated with specific attributes and achieve improved breeding accuracy.Recent research efforts have focused on the identification and validation of DNA markers that are significantly correlated with biomass traits, cocoon quality, and resilience factors. For example, association studies using statistical analyses such as ANOVA and Chi-square tests have been conducted to confirm linkage of particular ISSR and SNP markers with quantitative traits like larval weight, cocoon weight, shell ratio, and floss content. These markers allow assessment of the phenotype at the molecular level, hence fastening the process of breeding and allowing the introgression of favourable alleles into commercial populations. Notable successes have been achieved by the use of molecular markers, for example, the development of silkworm strains that have both high silk productivity and tolerance to environmental stressors.

Marker-assisted selection has provided the means to co select for such dual traits as fluoride tolerance and scaleless wings, which will enhance not only yields but also robustness in silkworm lines. In addition, transcriptomic profiling and gene expression studies have identified candidate genes with new molecular markers, offering perspectives for further targeted improvement of disease resistance and local climate adaptation. The collective findings underpin the crucial role of molecular markers in present-day sericulture.Hope they hold for sustainable industry growth. Marker-assisted breeding is set to revolutionize genetic improvement in silkworms,Hence guaranteeing increased productivity and more economic viability to farmers and stakeholders involved in sericulture.

Keywords : Silkworm breeding; Bombyx mori; Molecular markers; Marker-assisted selection; RAPD; ISSR; SSR; SNP; Cocoon quality; Disease resistance; Genetic improvement; Sericulture

EXPRESSION OF BIOACTIVE PEPTIDES IN TRANSGENIC SILK FOR WOUND HEALING AND ANTIMICROBIAL MEDICAL SUTURES

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ABSTRACT

The development of multifunctional biomaterials with intrinsic therapeutic properties is a growing priority in biomedical engineering. Silk, known for its biocompatibility, strength, and controlled biodegradability, offers a promising platform for producing next-generation medical sutures with enhanced clinical benefits. This research, completed during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, focused on generating transgenic *Bombyx mori* capable of expressing bioactive wound-healing and antimicrobial peptides directly within silk fibroin. Two peptide types were selected: (i) antimicrobial peptides (AMPs) such as LL-37 and defensin, to inhibit pathogenic bacteria, and (ii) wound-repair peptides like EGF-mimetic and collagen-stimulating sequences, known to accelerate tissue regeneration. Codon-optimized peptide genes were fused to the fibroin heavy chain (FibH) promoter to ensure targeted expression in the posterior silk gland. A piggyBac transposon-based transformation system was used to integrate constructs into the silkworm genome.Transgene incorporation was confirmed through PCR, sequencing, and GFP marker characterization across successive generations. Transgenic silkworms exhibited stable peptide expression without adverse effects on larval development, silk gland morphology, or cocoon spinning behavior. Biochemical assays indicated a successful fusion of bioactive peptides with native fibroin, achieving expression levels sufficient for therapeutic activity. Antimicrobial assays revealed significant inhibition of *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and *Escherichia coli*, demonstrating the strong antimicrobial functionality of the modified silk fibers. In vitro scratch and fibroblast proliferation assays showed enhanced wound closure rates (18–30% faster) compared to natural silk, confirming the wound-healing potential of peptide-integrated silk. Mechanical testing validated that the modified fibers retained adequate tensile strength and elasticity required for suture applications. Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy indicated preserved β-sheet structure with slight increases in amorphous regions due to peptide integration, beneficial for biomedical flexibility. Overall, the study demonstrates a transformative approach to producing therapeutic silk fibers at scale using sericulture biotechnology. The findings highlight the potential of transgenic silk as a cost-effective, biocompatible, and multifunctional material for antimicrobial and wound-healing medical sutures, offering new frontiers for healthcare

applications.

Keywords: transgenic silk, *Bombyx mori*, bioactive peptides, antimicrobial sutures, wound healing, LL-37, defensin, fibroin modification, biomedical textiles, therapeutic biomaterials.

ADVANCES AND CHALLENGES IN BIVOLTINE COCOON PROCESSING TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Bivoltine cocoon processing technology is pivotal in enhancing silk quality, yield, and economic viability of sericulture. This review synthesizes recent technological advancements in cocoon drying, stifling, cooking, and reeling processes that significantly impact the physicochemical properties and commercial value of raw silk. Comparative studies emphasize the superiority of black cloth drying and controlled hot-air drying over traditional sun drying, preserving filament strength, luster, and reelability while reducing filament breakage and silk waste. Integration of automated reeling machines and advanced cooking systems has augmented productivity and filament uniformity. Moreover, innovative non-destructive cocoon quality assessment methods employing vibration impact acoustic emission (VIAE) have demonstrated high accuracy in sorting defective cocoons, which enhances sorting efficiency and market fairness. Despite such progress, challenges remain in balancing cost, scalability, and technology adoption among smallholder producers. Continued interdisciplinary research is essential to develop affordable, efficient, and sustainable processing technologies that uphold the standards and profitability of bivoltine silk production

Keywords: Bivoltine cocoons; Cocoon processing technology; Cocoon drying; Stifling; Reeling; Filament quality; Automated reeling machines; Vibration Impact Acoustic Emission (VIAE); Raw silk yield; Non-destructive assessment; Sericulture; Technology adoption; Silk quality enhancement

FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERIZATION OF SERICIN-DERIVED PEPTIDES FOR COSMETIC AND ANTI-AGING APPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Silk sericin, a natural protein obtained from *Bombyx mori* cocoon degumming, contains a diverse range of bioactive peptides known for their moisturizing, antioxidant, and skin-repairing capabilities. With the growing demand for natural and biodegradable cosmetic ingredients, this study, carried out during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, aimed to isolate, characterize, and evaluate sericin-derived peptides for their potential application in anti-aging and skin-care formulations. Sericin extracted by mild alkaline degumming was enzymatically hydrolyzed using trypsin, papain, and alcalase to obtain low-molecular-weight peptide fractions. The hydrolysates were purified using ultrafiltration (3–10 kDa cut-offs) and analyzed for physicochemical and functional attributes.

Characterization through LC–MS/MS, FTIR, and amino acid profiling revealed that the peptides were rich in serine, glycine, threonine, and hydrophobic residues, contributing to strong water-binding and skin-compatibility properties. Antioxidant assays (DPPH, ABTS, and FRAP) indicated high radical scavenging activity, with alcalase-derived peptides showing up to 82% inhibition. Anti-glycation tests demonstrated reduced formation of advanced glycation end products (AGEs), highlighting the potential role of sericin peptides in slowing premature skin aging. In vitro collagenase and elastase inhibition assays further confirmed that sericin-derived peptides effectively prevented the degradation of collagen and elastin fibers, key structural components in youthful skin.

Cytocompatibility analysis using human fibroblast (HDFa) cell lines revealed over 95% cell viability, while wound scratch assays demonstrated enhanced cell migration and tissue regeneration potential. A prototype cosmetic gel formulated with 2% sericin peptide concentrate exhibited improved skin hydration (36% increase), reduced transepidermal water loss, and enhanced smoothness when tested in a small volunteer panel over 21 days. No irritation or allergic response was observed, confirming product safety.

The study establishes sericin-derived peptides as potent, natural, and multifunctional cosmetic bioactives suitable for anti-aging formulations. Their collagen-protecting, antioxidant, and skin-repairing properties provide strong support for r2e8p9lacing synthetic ingredients in dermatological and cosmetic industries. This research also promotes value addition to sericulture waste, opening avenues for commercial sericin-based skin-care products and future clinical validation.

Keywords: Sericin peptides, anti-aging, antioxidant activity, collagenase inhibition, cosmetic bioactives, skin hydration, natural skincare.

INTEGRATED DISEASE MANAGEMENT IN SILKWORM REARING HOUSES

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ABSTRACT

Silkworm (Bombyx mori L.) rearing is highly vulnerable to various microbial diseases such as grasserie, flacherie, muscardine, and pebrine, which can cause severe economic losses to sericulture farmers. The present research titled "Integrated Disease Management in Silkworm Rearing Houses" was carried out during 2024–2025 at SRMCAS, Baburayanpettai, to develop an effective, eco-friendly strategy for maintaining healthy rearing environments and reducing disease incidence.

The study evaluated the combined effects of disinfection methods, biological agents, and hygiene practices across different rearing cycles. Treatments included bleaching powder (2%), slaked lime, formalin (2%), neem leaf extract (5%), and a probiotic mixture containing Bacillus subtilis and Lactobacillus spp.. Parameters such as larval mortality, incidence of major diseases, cocoon yield, and quality were recorded.

Results indicated that the integrated treatment comprising pre-rearing disinfection with bleaching powder, use of neem leaf extract during rearing, and probiotic supplementation significantly reduced disease incidence (up to 80%) and enhanced larval survival and cocoon yield compared to the control. The integrated approach proved more sustainable and safe than exclusive chemical disinfection.

The study concludes that adopting integrated disease management (IDM) practices can effectively control pathogen spread, improve silkworm health, and ensure consistent cocoon production. These findings highlight the importance of combining sanitation, biological control, and eco-friendly measures in modern sericulture management.

Keywords: Silkworm,Disease management, Disinfection,Probiotics,Neem extract,Sericulture hygiene.

DEVELOPMENT AND MARKET POTENTIAL OF VALUE-ADDED SILK PRODUCTS IN RURAL SERICULTURE CLUSTERS

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ABSTRACT

The sericulture industry plays a vital role in rural livelihood generation, offering employment to small-scale farmers, women, and artisans. However, fluctuating raw silk prices and limited product diversification often reduce profitability. The present research titled “Development and Market Potential of Value-Added Silk Products in Rural Sericulture Clusters” was undertaken during 2024–2025 at SRMCAS, Baburayanpettai, with the objective of exploring economic opportunities through the creation and commercialization of value-added silk goods.

The study identified and developed a range of innovative silk products such as blended silk-cotton fabrics, silk-based handicrafts, sericin-infused skincare products, and eco-dyed silk accessories. Market surveys and cost–benefit analyses were conducted across local and regional markets to assess consumer demand, pricing potential, and entrepreneurial feasibility. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews with artisans, traders, and consumers.

Results indicated that value-added silk products fetched 30–45% higher profit margins compared to raw silk sales. Among these, eco-dyed silk scarves and sericin-based cosmetic items showed strong market acceptance due to their sustainability and uniqueness. The study highlights that product diversification and local brand development can significantly enhance rural income and strengthen the economic resilience of sericulture clusters.

The findings suggest that integrating innovation, design, and entrepreneurship within rural silk clusters can transform traditional sericulture into a profitable, sustainable, and value-driven enterprise.

Keywords: : Sericulture, Value addition, Silk products, Rural entrepreneurship, Market potential, Economic development

EFFECT OF TEMPERATURE AND HUMIDITY REGULATION ON SILKWORM GROWTH AND COCOON QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

The silkworm (Bombyx mori L.) is highly sensitive to environmental factors such as temperature and humidity, which directly influence its growth, health, and silk yield. The present study entitled "Effect of Temperature and Humidity Regulation on Silkworm Growth and Cocoon Quality" was carried out during 2024–2025 at SRMCAS, Baburayanpettai, to determine the optimum environmental conditions for efficient rearing and superior cocoon production.

Rearing experiments were conducted under three controlled temperature and humidity regimes—(i) 24°C & 70% RH, (ii) 26°C & 80% RH, and (iii) 28°C & 85% RH—using a bivoltine silkworm breed. Larval growth rate, duration of each instar, leaf consumption, survival rate, cocoon weight, shell ratio, and filament length were recorded and analyzed.

The results revealed that silkworms reared at 26°C and 80% relative humidity exhibited the highest larval growth, shortest rearing duration, and superior cocoon parameters, including increased shell weight and filament length. Rearing at higher temperatures (28°C) resulted in stress symptoms and lower survival, while lower temperatures slowed larval development.

The study concludes that maintaining optimal temperature and humidity during silkworm rearing significantly enhances growth performance and silk quality. Adoption of controlled rearing environments can ensure higher productivity and consistency in cocoon yield, contributing to sustainable sericulture practices.

Keywords: Silkworm, Temperature, Humidity, Cocoon quality, Growth performance, Sericulture management

PLANT PROTECTION STRATEGIES FOR MULBERRY: DISEASE MANAGEMENT APPROACHES IN THE SILKWORM HOST PLANT

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry (Morus spp.) is one of the primary consumable plant for the silkworm Bombyx mori, and its health directly influences cocoon quality, silk yield, and their sericulture sustainability and profitability. Mulberry cultivation is frequently interfered by many fungal, bacterial, and viral diseases such as powdery mildew, leaf spot, leaf rust, root rot, and bacterial leaf blight. These diseases cause significant reductions in leaf biomass, nutritional quality, and chlorophyll content, moreover ultimately affecting silkworm growth and cocoon formation. Effective plant protection measures are therefore important to ensure sustainable sericulture. This article depicted the major mulberry diseases, their pathogen characteristics, epidemiology, and symptomatology. It also highlighted integrated disease management (IDM) strategies including the use of resistant varieties, cultural practices, biological control agents, and safe chemical approaches. By implementing timely monitoring, proper cultivation techniques, and eco-friendly disease-control methods, mulberry farmers can maintain leaf quality and ensure stable silk production. It emphasized the importance of adopting holistic plant protection practices to reduce crop losses and promote sustainable sericulture development.

Keywords: Mulberry, Disease management, root rot, cultural practices, eco friendly approaches, sustainable sericulture.

SOURCING OF DISEASE-RESISTANT MULBERRY VARIETIES USING MOLECULAR TECHNIQUES

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ABSTRACT

Mulberries (Morus spp.) are grown mainly for their leaves, as a source of feed for silkworms (Bombyx mori). Wide range of foliar diseases, such as bacterial leaf spot (Xanthomonas campestris pv. mori), powdery mildew (Phyllactinia corylea) and leaf spots (Cercospora moricola and Alternaria alternata) and rust (Cerotelium fici) significantly limits sustainable sericulture . Highly resistant varieties should be developed and maintained since these diseases cause significant yield losses and degrade leaf quality. The selection process is lengthy and ineffective through traditional breeding techniques, which rely on phenotypic screening, frequently time-consuming, difficult, and extremely vulnerable to environmental variability, especially in a genetically complex and highly heterozygous species like mulberry. Microscopy, culture-based approaches, and visual symptoms identification are examples of traditional diagnostic techniques. PCR, qPCR, and LAMP assays are of recent developments in molecular diagnostics that provide accurate and quick pathogen identification, allowing for early action for development of resistant varieties and effective illness management.

Keywords: Mulberry, foliar diseases, RT PCR, LAMP, NASBA, DNA microarray

AUTOMATED DIGITAL IMAGING AND AI-BASED SYSTEMS FOR REAL-TIME SILK DENIER MEASUREMENT

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ABSTRACT

Accurate and real-time assessment of silk denier is essential for maintaining raw silk quality standards, reducing reeling defects, and improving grading efficiency in the sericulture industry. Traditional denier measurement methods are time-consuming, labor-intensive, and prone to subjective errors. This research, conducted during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, focused on developing an automated, AI-enabled digital imaging system capable of predicting silk filament denier with high precision and real-time accuracy. A custom imaging setup consisting of a high-resolution camera, controlled LED lighting, and a motorized filament alignment unit was designed to capture consistent micro-scale images of silk filaments during reeling.

Advanced image processing techniques—including edge detection, pixel-density profiling, and morphological segmentation—were applied to extract filament width and texture characteristics. A convolutional neural network (CNN) model was trained using a dataset of 2,500 labeled images representing multiple filament thickness categories obtained from bivoltine silk reeling units. The model demonstrated exceptional predictive ability, with an R^2 value of 0.94 and a mean absolute error of 0.08D when validated against standard denier meter readings. The system was integrated with a real-time monitoring interface that displays denier fluctuations, alerts operators about deviations, and recommends adjustments in reeling tension or temperature.

Field testing at local reeling centers showed that the AI-based system significantly reduced measurement time by 70% and minimized human error. Continuous denier monitoring improved the neatness, reelability, and breakage index of silk filaments, particularly in environmental conditions prone to microvariations. The system's predictive analytics module also identified patterns linking filament thickness variations with reeling speed and cocoon moisture content, enabling data-driven decision-making.

This research demonstrates that automated digital imaging combined with machine learning provides an efficient, non-destructive, and highly accurate method for silk denier evaluation. The innovation supports the shift toward smart sericulture systems, allowing for precision quality

control and enhanced profitability in silk production. Future improvements may include integration with IoT sensors, mobile applications, and cloud-based analytics to facilitate widespread adoption across India's reeling units.

Keywords: Silk denier, digital imaging, artificial intelligence, CNN model, real-time monitoring, smart sericulture, quality assessment.

INNOVATIVE UTILIZATION OF SILK COCOONS IN SUSTAINABLE CRAFT PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

Sericulture cocoon craft production represents an innovative fusion of traditional silk farming and creative handicrafts, offering sustainable livelihood opportunities and cultural enrichment. This study explores the transformation of discarded or non-reelable silk cocoons into value-added craft items such as decorative pieces, jewellery, floral arrangements, and eco-friendly ornaments. By leveraging the natural texture, shape, and biodegradability of cocoons, artisans can create aesthetically appealing products in home decor, fashion, and gifting.

The process involves careful selection, cleaning, dyeing, and shaping of cocoons, often incorporating techniques like embroidery, painting, and mixed-media assembly. This craft not only utilizes sericultural by-products but also empowers rural communities especially women—through skill development and micro-entrepreneurship. The study highlights the economic viability, environmental benefits, and cultural significance of cocoon crafts, advocating for their integration into rural development programs and sustainable design initiatives.

Keywords: Cocoon craft, embroidery, painting, and mixed-media assembly.

TECHNIQUES FOR VALUE ADDITION IN MULBERRY FRUITS: JUICES, JAMS, AND NUTRACEUTICALS

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry fruits contain all the key nutrients and bioactive compounds that have great potential for value addition in different sectors, such as food, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics. Although cultivated primarily for silkworm feeding, more byproducts like fruits are now being produced to convert into value-added products such as juices, jams, jellies, syrups, and nutraceutical supplements. The major products developed using mulberries are based on their high antioxidant capacity, vitamins, and minerals and contribute to heart health and immune function improvement. The value addition contributes not only to improving economic activities by opening up new income sources for farmers but also reduces waste by utilizing under-exploited fruit parts. Further studies are in progress on optimization of post-harvest handling, preservation, and innovative product formulations for improved shelf life and optimization of functional properties for consumer markets. Thus, mulberries can be considered as a promising resource for sustainable agricultural and industrial growth through value-added products converted from a traditional crop into diverse, healthy commercial products.

SILKWORMS DISEASE

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ABSTRACT

Silkworms (Bombyx mori L.) are central to the global sericulture industry, yet their productivity and economic viability are constantly threatened by a range of infectious diseases. This abstract provides an overview of the major silkworm maladies, their causative agents, and the integrated management strategies necessary for sustainable silk production.

The primary pathogens can be broadly classified into four categories:

- Viral Diseases: Grasserrie
- Bacterial Diseases: Flacherrie
- Fungal Diseases: Muscardine
- Protozoan Diseases: Pebrine

Effective disease management is crucial and relies on a holistic approach: Prevention and Hygiene (strict disinfection of rearing houses and appliances), Environmental Control (maintaining optimal temperature and humidity to stress the pathogens), and Early Detection and Segregation (prompt removal of infected larvae). Ongoing research focuses on developing disease-resistant silkworm strains, utilizing bio-control agents, and employing advanced diagnostic techniques like PCR and ELISA to minimize crop losses and ensure the long-term sustainability of sericulture.

Keywords: Silkworm disease,Bombay mori;Viral disease;Bacterial diseases;Fungal diseases; Protozoan diseases; Disease management; Prevention; Hygiene; Diagnostic techniques; Sericulture sustainability

ANALYSIS ON THE VARIATIONS IN FIBROIN LIGHT CHAIN GENE OF BIVOLTINE AND MULTIVOLTINE SILKWORM (BOMBYX MORI L.) BREEDS.

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ABSTRACT

The silkworm, Bombyx mori L. produces the continuous and long silk filament, which is contains two main proteins viz., sericin and fibroin. The fibroin is mainly composed of three polypeptides such as a 350kDa heavy chain, a 26-kDa light chain and fibrohexamerin. A lot of researchers have conducted studies on the functions and structure of fibroin heavy chain, whereas the details on fibroin light chain are lacking. In this context, a study was undertaken with the objective of characterizing fibroin light chain gene from various bivoltine and multivoltine silkworm breeds. Fibroin light chain (L-chain) gene contains seven genes. The seven gene specific primers representing the exons of L-chain gene were designed, amplified, cloned and characterized. Among the seven exon specific primers analysed, five primers amplified the DNA and RNA with the expected amplicon size ranging from 321 bp to 636 bp. The sequence results showed that the second and third exons of multivoltine and bivoltine races had maximum similarity of 99 per cent followed by fifth and sixth exons (96 %) with the fibroin light chain gene sequences available in NCBI databank. Studies on the proportion of each amino acid in the sequences revealed crystal clearly that, exons II and III were rich in alanine followed by threonine and cysteine in the multivoltines,whereas, the exon V had more threonine followed by alanine and glysine. In exon VI, tryptophan residue was absent. In case of bivoltines, more amount of alanine was present in the exons II, III and V. Tryptophan and aspartine (exon II), tyrosine (exon V) and histidine (exon VI) residues were absent in the exons.

Keywords: Silkworm; Bombyx mori; Fibroin light chain; L-chain gene; Exons; Bivoltine; Multivoltine; Amino acid composition; Sericin; Fibroin protein structure

INFLUENCE OF PER OS APPLICATION OF HONEY ON REELING RELATED PARAMETERS OF SILKWORM, BOMBYX MORI L.

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ABSTRACT

Silk is a natural fiber, composed mainly of two proteins like sericin and fibroin. These proteins are secreted by Bombyx mori L, which is a monophagous insect feeds only on mulberry leaves. As the mulberry nutrition decides the growth and development of silkworm larvae, numerous attempts were made to improve the nutritional quality of mulberry leaves by exogenous application of different essential nutrients viz., minerals, amino acids, vitamins, proteins, etc. The honey, a multi-factorial nutrient produced by the honey bees is rich in amino acids, carbohydrates, minerals, proteins, vitamins and enzymes, which elicit modulation in the growth of silkworm.

By keeping these in mind, the studies were carried out to assess the influence of honey from different bee species and protein sources on the reeling parameters of silkworm cocoons. The silkworm larvae were fed on the mulberry leaves treated with honey and proteins sources from third instar to spinning stage daily once in the morning.

Among the various treatments analysed, stingless bee honey recorded significantly maximum silk filament weight (384.52 mg), silk filament length (1321.15 m) and non-broken filament length (398.92 m), compared to other treatments. The same honey also significantly reduced the denier of silk filament and renditta (2.50 and 6.33, respectively) over the control. The studies with various concentrations of honey also showed that stingless bee honey at 5 per cent performed well in improving all the silk reeling related parameters of silkworm.

Keywords : Silk; Bombyx mori; Mulberry nutrition; Honey treatment; Stingless bee honey; Protein sources; Cocoon reeling parameters; Filament length; Filament weight; Denier; Renditta

POST-COCOON PRODUCTION PRACTICES AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN SERICULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry (Morus spp.) is the primary food plant for silkworm, and its health status directly influences the quality and productivity of bivoltine cocoons. Pest and disease incidence in mulberry plantations reduces leaf yield, nutritional quality, and overall silkworm performance. This paper presents an integrated pest and disease management (IPDM) strategy designed for sustainable bivoltine cocoon production. The study synthesizes eco-friendly, cost-effective, and regionally adaptable plant protection practices suitable for Indian sericulture conditions. The proposed IPDM module includes cultural, mechanical, biological, and need-based chemical interventions. Emphasis is placed on optimizing mulberry leaf quality, improving field sanitation, deploying botanical extracts, enhancing natural enemy activity, and adopting resistant cultivars. The results and reviewed evidence indicate that IPDM can reduce leaf damage by 40–60%, increase marketable leaf yield by 20–30%, and improve bivoltine cocoon parameters such as shell ratio, filament length, and cocoon weight. The integrated approach ensures sustainability, reduces dependence on synthetic chemicals, and supports higher income for seri-farmers.

Keywords: Mulberry, IPDM, Pest Management, Disease Management, Bivoltine Cocoon, Sericulture, Leaf Quality, etc.

IMPACT OF BOTANICAL EXTRACTS ON ERI SILKWORM PHYSIOLOGY AND PEST SUPPRESSION EFFICIENCY

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ABSTRACT

The demand for eco-friendly pest management strategies in eri silkworm (Samia ricini) culture has accelerated the exploration of plant-derived botanicals as safer alternatives to chemical pesticides. However, the dual requirement—effective pest suppression along with safety to silkworm physiology—necessitates systematic evaluation. This study, conducted during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, investigated the efficacy of selected botanical extracts against major pests of castor and tapioca host plants and assessed their physiological impacts on eri silkworm larvae.

Five botanicals—neem (Azadirachta indica), pongamia (Pongamia pinnata), tulsi (Ocimum sanctum), custard apple (Annona squamosa), and notchi (Vitex negundo)—were prepared as aqueous and methanolic extracts at concentrations of 2%, 3%, and 5%. Their bioefficacy was tested against leaf webber (Spilosoma obliqua), semilooper (Achaea janata), spiraling whitefly (Aleurodicus dispersus), and mites under laboratory and field conditions. Neem and custard apple extracts resulted in the highest larval mortality (68–82%) and significant reduction in leaf damage, while notchi and tulsi showed moderate repellence and oviposition deterrence. Botanical mixtures had enhanced synergistic effects, with the neem + pongamia combination reducing leaf webber infestation by 76%.

To evaluate safety on eri silkworms, treated leaves were fed to early and late instar larvae following a 48-hour post-application interval. Physiological parameters, including larval weight gain, feed conversion efficiency, cocoon weight, and shell ratio, were recorded. No significant adverse effects were observed for neem, pongamia, and tulsi extracts at 2–3% levels. Custard apple and notchi extracts showed mild reductions in larval growth at higher concentrations (5%). Hemolymph biochemical profiling indicated normal levels of proteins, lipids, and glucose across safe botanical treatments, confirming non-toxicity at recommended doses.

The study concludes that neem, pongamia, and custard apple extracts offer high pest suppression efficiency while maintaining eri silkworm physiological integrity when applied with appropriate safety intervals. These botanicals can be integrated into eco-friendly IPM modules, reducing

chemical dependency, safeguarding silkworm health, and promoting sustainable eri sericulture. Adoption of botanical-based strategies can significantly strengthen low-cost and farmer-friendly pest management in South Indian sericulture regions.

Keywords: Botanical extracts, eri silkworm physiology, neem, custard apple, Spilosoma obliqua, pest suppression, eco-friendly IPM, host plant treatment, sustainable sericulture

IMPACT OF FABRIC COMFORT PROPERTIES (BREATHABILITY, THERMAL REGULATION, MOISTURE MANAGEMENT) ON CONSUMER PREFERENCE FOR MULBERRY SILK APPAREL

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ABSTRACT

Comfort performance has become one of the most influential factors driving consumer preference for natural fiber-based apparel, particularly in premium textile categories. This study, completed during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, evaluated how core comfort properties—breathability, thermal regulation, and moisture management—influence consumer selection and satisfaction with mulberry silk garments. Laboratory-based fabric performance analysis was combined with consumer perception studies to quantify the relationship between physical comfort attributes and purchasing behavior. Standardized mulberry silk fabrics of varying weave structures, denier ranges, and finishing treatments were tested using air permeability meters, thermal resistance measurements, moisture absorption–desorption tests, and dynamic drying time assessments.Results showed that mulberry silk demonstrated superior breathability and moisture absorption capacity compared to synthetic control fabrics, absorbing nearly 30% of its weight in moisture without feeling wet. Thermal regulation tests revealed that silk maintained a stable microclimate, offering cooling effects in warm conditions and insulation in cooler environments, making it ideal for year-round apparel. Variations in weave type and finishing treatments affected comfort performance: lightweight, low-denier satin and plain weaves exhibited the highest breathability, while bio-finished and enzyme-treated silks enhanced moisture transport and skin comfort. Sensory evaluations conducted with 350 consumers found that 78% identified comfort as the primary reason for choosing silk apparel, surpassing aesthetic and brand-related factors.Consumer surveys further indicated that individuals associated mulberry silk with skin-friendliness, temperature adaptability, and luxury feel, with comfort properties significantly influencing willingness to pay premium prices ($p < 0.01$). Younger consumers valued moisture-wicking performance for daily wear, while older consumers prioritized thermal balance and breathability for health and well-being. Comfort-focused labeling and performance claims were found to increase purchase confidence, particularly in online retail environments where physical touch is not possible.

The study concludes that comfort properties are a critical determinant of consumer preference and can serve as strong differentiators in the competitive natural fiber apparel market. Enhancing breathability, thermal regulation, and moisture management through targeted weaving and finishing technologies can elevate the market value of mulberry silk garments. The findings support the need for comfort-index labeling and product education to strengthen consumer trust and expand silk's adoption in activewear, luxury apparel, and functional textiles.

Keywords: mulberry silk, fabric comfort, breathability, thermal regulation, moisture management, consumer preference, apparel performance, moisture absorption, silk finishing, textile comfort properties.

SILKWORM REARING MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Silkworm rearing management is central to enhancing cocoon yield, quality, and the overall economic viability of bivoltine sericulture. Given the sensitivity of bivoltine silkworm hybrids to environmental fluctuations, scientific rearing protocols have become essential to ensure optimal growth, uniform larval development, and effective disease prevention. Modern rearing management emphasizes controlled temperature and humidity, stage-specific feeding schedules using high-quality mulberry leaves, and strict hygiene measures including disinfection of rearing houses, appliances, and rearing beds. Practices such as proper bed spacing, regular bed cleaning, chop feeding, and timely mountage support the formation of uniform, high-quality cocoons with greater filament length and denier consistency. Recent technological interventions, including improved rearing stands, automatic leaf choppers, aeration systems, and environment-regulated rearing houses, have contributed to higher success rates in bivoltine crops. Furthermore, disease monitoring through microscopic examination and rapid detection kits enables early identification of grasserie, flacherie, and muscardine infections. As India moves toward producing international-grade bivoltine silk, the adoption of standardized, technology-driven rearing management practices is indispensable. This abstract discusses the modern advancements, challenges, and future scope in silkworm rearing management for strengthening bivoltine sericulture productivity.

Keywords : Bivoltine silkworms; Rearing management; Environmental control; Mulberry feeding; Hygiene practices; Cocoon quality; Technology in sericulture; Disease monitoring; Productivity improvement

SILKWORM SEED TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Silkworm seed technology represents a crucial foundation for strengthening bivoltine sericulture, ensuring the production of high-quality disease-free layings (DFLs) through scientific, regulated, and standardized procedures. With the increasing focus on producing international-grade bivoltine raw silk, silkworm seed production systems have undergone significant advancements in quality assurance, pathogen detection, mother moth examination, and hybrid development. Modern seed technology incorporates stringent disinfection protocols, temperature- and humidity-controlled grainage operations, and precision-based oviposition and incubation techniques to preserve seed viability and vigour. Additionally, the application of molecular diagnostics and microscopic screening has drastically reduced the spread of pebrine and other trans-ovarial diseases, ensuring reliable DFL supply to farmers. These interventions collectively enhance larval uniformity, silk gland development, and cocoon quality in bivoltine races. As the demand for high-yielding and climate-resilient hybrids grows, silkworm seed technology continues to evolve, integrating biotechnology and automation for higher precision. This abstract highlights the advancements, challenges, and the strategic significance of seed technology in accelerating India’s bivoltine sericulture productivity.

Keywords : Silkworm seed technology; Disease-free layings (DFLs); Bivoltine sericulture; Quality assurance; Pathogen detection; Grannage operations; Hybrid development; Molecular diagnostics; Cocoon quality; Productivity improvement

ECONOMICS, COMMERCIALIZATION AND VALUE ADDITION IN MODERN SILK INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The globalization and modernization of the silk industry have dramatically transformed silk production economics, fueling rural livelihoods and fostering innovation in value chains. Silk production is a powerful engine of rural development, supporting millions of smallholder households and engaging over 8 million workers across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Its multifaceted value chain—from mulberry cultivation and cocoon rearing to reeling, weaving, and marketing—offers consistent employment, especially for women and marginalized populations, and delivers competitive returns even with minimal capital input. The commercialization of silk encompasses both the expansion of export markets and the emergence of dynamic domestic demand for silk textiles, leading to substantial foreign exchange earnings and increased state revenues. Integrated strategies that eliminate middlemen, empower farmer collectives, and leverage technical innovation help primary producers access premium prices and reduce market volatility, ensuring industry sustainability. Beyond textiles, silk by-products such as sericin, pupal oil, manure, and biomedical membranes are increasingly utilized in food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture, enhancing profitability and reducing waste. The shift towards value-added production—garments, carpets, high-tech applications—fuels job creation and income diversification while responding to urban consumer trends and sustainability imperatives. Overall, a comprehensive approach to economics, commercialization, and by-product development can promote equitable growth, technological advancement, and global competitiveness for the silk sector.

Keywords: Silk economics, value addition, sericulture industry, commercialization, by-products.

ENSURING HEALTHY HOST PLANTS FOR ERI SILKWORM REARING

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ABSTRACT

Eri silkworm (Samia ricini) is a hardy, multivoltine silk-producing insect that thrives best on castor (Ricinus communis), its primary host plant. The larvae are pale green with prominent tubercles and grow quickly when supplied with nutritious leaves and maintaining its health is important for successful cocoon production. The stage of castor plant used for rearing includes young, tender castor leaves for feeding the earliest stage larvae which are soft and easy for them to chew. Larvae at third instar, feed with more mature, yet still fresh, leaves. These older leaves offer better nutrition, which helps the larvae grow faster. Collection of leaves from healthy, disease-free castor plants, between 30 and 45 days old are considered as best quality leaf. Avoid using leaves that are yellowing or too old, as these can hinder larval growth and negatively impact cocoon quality. The crop often suffers from several pests and diseases that reduce leaf quality and directly depict silkworm growth and silk yield. Effective plant protection in castor involves identifying major problems such as foliar diseases, sucking pests, and defoliators, and managing them through integrated approaches. Cultural practices like proper spacing, field sanitation, and timely pruning help to reduce disease incidence, while biological agents and need-based chemical sprays ensure safer leaf quality for feeding. Using resistant varieties and adopting eco-friendly plant protection methods improves leaf yield without harming the silkworms. Overall, a well-planned protection strategy supports healthier castor plants, stable leaf supply, and higher productivity in eri culture.

Keywords : Castor, Eri silkworm, Cocoon production, Cultural practices, Ecofriendly Integrated approaches.

MARKET POTENTIAL OF ORGANIC SILK PRODUCTS IN GLOBAL TRADE,STUDY PLACE IN KANCHIPURAM

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ABSTRACT

The rising global awareness of environmental sustainability and ethical consumption has led to a steady increase in the demand for organic silk products in international markets. This study entitled "Market Potential of Organic Silk Products in Global Trade – A Study with Special Reference to Kanchipuram" examines the opportunities and challenges for organic silk within the evolving global textile industry. Kanchipuram, known as the "Silk City of India," has a rich heritage of handwoven silk saree production.

In recent years, the region has witnessed gradual adoption of organic sericulture practices, where mulberry cultivation and silkworm rearing are done without chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or synthetic dyes, aligning with the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) and other international eco-labels.The study Investigates the market potential, export prospects, and consumer demand trends for organic silk products from Kanchipuram, using both primary and secondary data. Key findings reveal that the demand for organic silk is expanding in environmentally conscious markets such as Europe, Japan, the United States, and Australia, where consumers prefer sustainable luxury textiles.

The research highlights that the unique craftsmanship of Kanchipuram silk, combined with organic certification, can enhance brand value and open new niche markets in global trade. However, challenges including high production costs, limited awareness among farmers and weavers, lack of organized marketing networks, and complex certification procedures hinder large-scale adoption.

The study suggests strengthening institutional support, providing training and subsidies for organic sericulture, developing export-oriented marketing strategies, and promoting eco-branding to increase visibility in international markets. Establishing collaborations between producers, government agencies, and sustainable fashion brands can further enhance competitiveness.

Overall, the organic silk sector in Kanchipuram holds immense potential to contribute to sustainable rural livelihoods, environmental conservation, and India's share in the global organic textile trade.

Keywords: Organic silk, Kanchipuram silk, global trade, market potential, sustainable textiles, organic sericulture, eco-labeling, export marketing, sustainable fashion, environmental sustainability, rural development.

DEVELOPING AND TESTING WILD BOAR REPELLENT FROM MULBERRY

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ABSTRACT

Human wildlife interaction is an escalating problem in Indian agriculture, with wild boar (Sus scrofa) causing severe crop losses due to its omnivorous diet, rapid reproduction and adaptability to varied habitats. In Tamil Nadu, especially near forest fringes of Mudumalai and Sathyamangalam, conventional deterrent methods have shown limited long-term success. This study explored mulberry (Morus spp.) as a potential plant-based repellent, inspired by reports of its non-preference by elephants. A survey of 63 mulberry farmers revealed V1 and MR2 as the most cultivated varieties, with wild boar reported as the leading crop pest (44.5% of cases), particularly in summer (70% of damage reports). Phytochemical profiling using GC–MS and HPLC identified diverse bioactive compounds like alkaloids, phenolics, terpenoids and fatty acids linked to herbivore deterrence. MR2, V1, and S36 varieties recorded the highest morin content, with MR2 showing 95.44% similarity to the morin standard. Field trials at the Government Large Scale Silk Farm, Madhahally, Thalavadi tested mulberry-based formulations for their repellent efficacy. All treatments provided complete protection at 1 and 3 days after application, while untreated controls suffered 28–36% loss. MR2, V1 and S36 maintained superior long-term performance, with MR2 recording only 11% damage at 15 days after treatment (DAT), compared to 73% in controls. Statistical analysis confirmed significant differences ($p < 0.05$), with MR2 achieving the highest mean damage reduction (99.14%), followed by V1 (98.74%) and S36 (97.38%). The findings highlight mulberry-derived repellents particularly from MR2, V1, and S36 as promising, non-lethal and environmentally safe tools for wild boar management. This approach integrates crop protection with biodiversity conservation and offers scalable potential for reducing human–wildlife conflict in agro-forest landscapes.

Keywords: Human wildlife interaction, wild boar, mulberry, morin, alkaloids, plant-based repellent, GC–MS, HPLC, crop protection.

BIOTECHNOLOGICAL PRODUCTION OF COLORED FLUORESCENT SILK FILAMENTS THROUGH TRANSGENIC AND DIETARY APPROACHES IN BOMBYX MORI

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ABSTRACT

The development of colored fluorescent silk filaments represents a significant leap in the application of biotechnology to sericulture. By combining transgenic methods—introducing fluorescent protein genes into Bombyx mori—and dietary supplementation with specific fluorescent pigments, it is possible to generate silk exhibiting vivid and stable fluorescence in a variety of colors. These innovative approaches eliminate the need for post-harvest dyeing, embedding color and luminescence directly into silk fibers as they are spun by the larvae. The resultant silk displays exceptional brightness, stability under ultraviolet light, and maintains the mechanical properties essential for textile and biomedical uses. This work highlights the feasibility of producing multifunctional, eco-friendly silk materials, paving the way for new applications in fashion, biomedicine, and advanced material sciences while contributing to the sustainability and versatility of modern sericulture.

Keywords: Fluorescent silk; Transgenic silkworm; Bombyx mori; Fluorescent proteins; Colored silk; Biotechnology; Eco-friendly silk; Advanced materials; Sericulture innovation

SCREENING OF SELECTED MULBERRY VARIETIES FOR PROPAGATION PARAMETERS

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ABSTRACT

Nursery experiments were carried out at The Indian Agriculture College, during 2024-25 to envisage studies on the nursery propagation parameters of mulberry varieties. Eight mulberry varieties of Morus indica were selected and collected from the Research Extension Centre, Central Silk Board, Samayanallur, Madurai, Tamil Nadu based on the growth traits, were evaluated for propagation parameters under nursery conditions. Result indicated that in nursery growth performance for propagation parameters, among eight mulberry varieties viz., V1, AR 12, Lobed, G2, TN local, G4, MR2, MSG 2 - better survival percent (76.66 %) recorded by AR 12 mulberry variety. It may be due to the fast growing and high rooting ability of AR 12 mulberry variety even under alkaline soils. Significant differences observed in the propagative traits of shoot length, number of roots, root length, survival percentage, number of leaves, number of buds sprouted in different mulberry varieties. AR 12 mulberry variety recorded highest number of leaves (5.00) longest shoot length (3.12), maximum number of buds sprouted (6.33), longest root length (2.96) compared to other mulberry varieties used.

Keywords: Mulberry varieties; Morus indica; Nursery propagation; Survival percentage; Rooting ability; Shoot length; Root length; Growth performance; AR 12 variety; Propagative traits; Tamil Nadu; Silkworm cultivation

EVALUATION OF INDIGENOUS ENTOMOPATHOGENIC FUNGI FOR SUSTAINABLE CONTROL OF CASTOR CATERPILLAR

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ABSTRACT

Castor caterpillar (Achaea janata and/or other regionally important species) is a major defoliator of castor (Ricinus communis L.), causing substantial yield losses and prompting frequent insecticide use with adverse environmental and socio-economic consequences. This research, carried out during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, evaluated indigenous entomopathogenic fungi as sustainable biological control agents against the castor caterpillar under laboratory and field conditions. Native fungal isolates were recovered from rhizosphere soils, infected larvae and local agro-ecosystems, and were characterized by morphological and molecular (ITS) methods to identify promising species (e.g., Beauveria, Metarhizium, Isaria spp.). Laboratory bioassays assessed pathogenicity, dose–response (LC_{50}) and lethal time (LT_{50}) against different larval instars, while compatibility with commonly used agronomic inputs and environmental tolerance (temperature, UV, and humidity) were also evaluated. Selected superior isolates were formulated (wettable powder and oil-based carrier) and tested in replicated field trials on castor plots to measure larval mortality, percent defoliation, crop growth parameters and yield, compared to an untreated control and a standard chemical check.

Indigenous fungal isolates demonstrated strong pathogenicity in the laboratory, causing substantial larval mortality and reducing feeding activity. Field applications of formulated isolates led to consistent reductions in pest incidence and defoliation and improved crop vigor relative to untreated plots, while showing favorable persistence and no adverse effects on non-target beneficials. Results indicate that locally adapted entomopathogenic fungi offer an effective, eco-friendly component for integrated pest management of castor caterpillar. Adoption of these native biocontrol agents—coupled with optimized formulation and application timing—can reduce pesticide dependence, lower production costs and promote sustainable castor production in the region.

Keywords: castor caterpillar, entomopathogenic fungi, indigenous isolates, biological control, SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, integrated pest management.

OPTIMIZATION OF MICROCLIMATIC PARAMETERS IN TROPICAL SILKWORM REARING: ENHANCING PRODUCTIVITY AND THERMOTOLERANCE IN BIVOLTINE HYBRIDS VIA EVAPORATIVE COOLING SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

The successful commercial exploitation of bivoltine silkworm hybrids (Bombyx mori) in tropical and subtropical regions is often challenged by suboptimal rearing environments, particularly during periods of high temperature and fluctuating humidity. These adverse microclimatic conditions stress the larvae, leading to reduced feed efficiency, increased susceptibility to diseases, and a significant decline in cocoon quality and quantity.

This study investigates the impact of precise environmental control, specifically focusing on the application of low-cost, energy-efficient evaporative cooling systems (ECS), to maintain ideal thermal and moisture regimes during the crucial late-age silkworm stages (4th and 5th instars).A randomized block design experiment was conducted across three distinct rearing environments: (1) Ambient Tropical Conditions (Control), (2) Traditional Wet Gunny Bag Evaporation (Standard Practice), and (3) ECS-Optimized Rearing (maintaining 25 \pm 1^\circ\text{C} and 70 \pm 5\% Relative Humidity). Key parameters analyzed included larval duration, final larval weight, effective rate of rearing (ERR), cocoon weight, shell weight, and denier.Results clearly demonstrated that the ECS-Optimized Rearing environment significantly improved all productive traits compared to the control and standard practice groups ($p < 0.01$). Final larval weight increased by 15\%, and ERR saw an improvement of approximately 10\%. Crucially, cocoon shell weight, the primary yield determinant, increased by 12\%, leading to a Net Return Per Rearing (NRPR) enhancement of over 20\%. The ECS successfully mitigated the heat stress response, suggesting a higher degree of thermotolerance in the larvae reared under controlled conditions.

This research validates the utility of adopting simple, scalable climate control technology to stabilize microclimates, thereby realizing the full genetic potential of high-yielding bivoltine hybrids for sustainable sericulture development in challenging climatic zones.

Keywords:Bivoltine Silkworm, Bombyx mori, Rearing Management, Evaporative Cooling System (ECS), Thermotolerance, Microclimate, Cocoon Quality, Effective Rate of Rearing (ERR)

ASSESSING CHEMICAL COMPOSITION OF MINI CLONAL LEAVES OF MULBERRY TREATED WITH DIFFERENT GROWTH HORMONES (IBA & NAA)

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ABSTRACT

Mini clonal technology is one of the pioneering attempts for propagating industrial wood species at very low cost. Tree species which are recalcitrance to rooting can be propagated through this technology. In this regard, the present study was focused on standardizing a sound protocol for mini clonal propagation of mulberry and the leaf quality assessment through rearing. Mulberry variety MR2, served as mother source for clonal propagation. Different sizes of mini cuttings viz., (2cm, 4cm, 6cm, 8cm, 10cm and 15 cm) were excised from the mother plants and subjected to hormonal treatments viz., IBA and NAA at different concentration viz., 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000 and 5000 ppm and the treated cuttings were raised in poly tunnel. Shoot and root growth was observed from 30 DAP.

In this study leaves of mini clonal cutting of mulberry treated with two growth regulating hormones were analysed for their physiological traits viz., (chlorophyll 'a', chlorophyll 'b', total chlorophyll content, chlorophyll a/b ratio and soluble protein content). Their result shows that IBA @ 5000 ppm reigned superiority in terms chlorophyll 'a', chlorophyll 'b', total chlorophyll content, chlorophyll a/b ratio and soluble protein content) when compare to NAA. This proves IBA serve as a better rooting hormone for propagation of mini clonal cuttings with good rooting and leaf quality which imply on feeding efficacy of silkworm.

Keywords: NAA, IBA, DAP, Mini clonal leaves, ppm

PRECISION SERICULTURE: SILKWORMS WITH INBUILT NANO-SENSORS

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ABSTRACT

Recent advances in nanotechnology and bioengineering have opened up new possibilities for enhancing biological manufacturing processes. Silkworms, traditionally used in the bio-fabrication of 3D silk structures, provide a unique biological platform for producing high-quality silk fibres. However, monitoring their physiological condition and ensuring optimal performance during silk production remains a challenge. By embedding nano-sensors within silkworms, it becomes possible to continuously track a range of vital parameters such as heart rate, stress levels, environmental exposure, and internal biochemical states. This technology has the potential to significantly improve the quality of silk production, providing researchers with detailed data that could help optimise silk-sheet fabrication for 3D applications. Nanomaterials such as carbon nanotubes, graphene, or nano-silicon could be used for creating sensors small enough to integrate into or attach to the silkworm without impacting its natural behaviour.

This review explores the potential applications of nano-health monitors in silkworm-driven silk production, including the integration of nano-sensors, challenges associated with embedding such devices, and the prospects for enhancing both silkworm care and fabrication efficiency. In addition, it discusses how these innovations could expand the scope of bio-manufacturing, biomimetic design, and the creation of advanced 3D silk structures for applications in textiles, medicine, and engineering.

Keywords: Nano-sensors, Silk-sheet fabrication, Nanomaterials, Biomimetic Design

EMPLOYING SILKWORMS AS THREE-DIMENSIONAL PRINTERS FOR BIO-FABRICATION

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ABSTRACT

Digital fabrication is an emerging technology in various industries, enabling the rapid prototyping of complex designs. It involves three-dimensional printing of models designed on a computer by multiple methods. Traditionally, silk production is based on the extraction of threads from cocoons. However, biotechnology can be directly utilised to produce fabric, with previous research suggesting the feasibility of such methods.

This review paper discusses the use of silkworms to produce three-dimensional silk sheets using a 3D printer. To guide silkworm movement and prevent cocoon formation on target structures, 3D models are divided using angle-based segmentation techniques adapted from paper-craft algorithms. These segmented components are then thickened, 3D-printed, and surface-processed to create traversable platforms for silkworms to spin silk.

The use of silkworms as biological fabricators has demonstrated the potential for producing 3D silk sheets that conform to complex geometries. Current methodologies in biologically assisted 3D fabrication using silkworms, biological and mechanical limitations of silkworm-driven fabrication, segmentation and model-design strategies that support more uniform yarn production are elaborated.

Keywords: Digital fabrication, 3D Printing, traversable platforms, Silkworms, Biological fabricators

QUANTUM-ENGINEERED SILKWORM EGGS: BIOPRINTING THE FUTURE OF SILK MANUFACTURING

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ABSTRACT

The integration of quantum technologies with bioprinting has the potential to revolutionise the production of biological materials with unprecedented precision. In this speculative study, we explore the possibility of using quantum bio-printers to generate silkworm eggs—a feat that combines the power of quantum computing with biological fabrication. Silkworms, known for their ability to produce high-quality silk fibres, have long been used in the textile industry and more recently in biomanufacturing for creating 3D silk sheets. However, the ability to control and produce silkworm eggs with high precision could have significant implications for improving silkworm-based production systems, genetic engineering, and biological manufacturing.

A quantum bio-printer uses quantum computing algorithms to manipulate molecular and atomic-scale interactions, enabling the printing of biological structures at genetic, protein, and cellular levels. The idea of printing silkworm eggs with such precision would allow for the creation of genetically tailored silkworms with specific traits, such as enhanced silk production, faster growth, or disease resistance. This approach could also open new avenues in biological research, allowing scientists to study the developmental stages of silkworms with greater control over genetic variables. Moreover, it could lead to the development of highly specialised bio-printed organisms with specific traits, enabling new possibilities in bio-manufacturing and tissue engineering. This review outlines the theoretical foundations, technological hurdles, and potential applications of quantum bio-printers for generating silkworm eggs and other biologically complex structures.

Keywords: Quantum bio-printers, Silkworm eggs, Genetically-tailored, Tissue Engineering

COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF PHYSICO-CHEMICAL AND NUTRITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MULBERRY ACCESSIONS FRUITS

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ABSTRACT

The present investigation aimed to evaluate the physico-chemical and nutritional characteristics of fruits from fifteen mulberry (Morus spp.) accessions to identify superior genotypes for fresh consumption and value-addition. Significant variability was observed across all measured physico-chemical parameters, including moisture, pH, total soluble solids (TSS), titratable acidity (TA), ash, fibre, and reducing sugars. Moisture content ranged from 73.53% in MI-0555 (M. indica) to 82.60% in MI-0818 (M. latifolia), indicating substantial differences in fruit juiciness. Fruit pH varied between 3.80 (MI-0300) and 4.45 (MI-0632), with most accessions exhibiting mildly acidic profiles. TSS values showed considerable variation, with MI-0252 (M. laevigata) recording the highest level (14.30°Brix), whereas MI-0818 exhibited the lowest (8.20°Brix). Titratable acidity ranged from 0.72% in ME-0024 (M. indica) to 1.54% in MI-0300 (M. alba). Reducing sugar content was highest in MI-0252 (7.94%) and lowest in MI-0675 (5.04%). Ash content varied from 5.23% in ME-0006 to 6.73% in MI-0783, while fibre content was notably higher in MI-0632 (11.34%) and MI-0783 (10.72%), both belonging to M. latifolia. Nutritional profiling also revealed significant genotype-dependent differences. Carbohydrate content was highest in MI-0300 (21.43%), followed by MI-0489 (18.30%), while MI-0657 recorded the lowest value (10.43%). Protein content ranged from 1.10% in MI-0715 (M. indica) to 2.67% in MI-0632 (M. latifolia). Fat content was relatively low across accessions (0.21–0.92%), with MI-0783 exhibiting the highest level. Vitamin C content showed marked variability, ranging from 10.10 mg/100 g in MI-0715 to 19.77 mg/100 g in MI-0300 (M. alba). Overall, MI-0300, MI-0632, and MI-0783 emerged as promising accessions due to their favourable balance of physico-chemical and nutritional properties. These findings highlight the potential of specific mulberry genotypes for nutritional enhancement, cultivar improvement, and diversification of mulberry-based functional foods.

Keywords: Mulberry fruits;Morus spp.;Physico-chemical properties;Nutritional value;Total soluble solids(TSS);Reducing sugars;Vitamin C;Genotype variability;Fruit quality;Value addition

PRE-COCOON MULBERRY SILKWORM PRODUCTION: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW WITH EMPHASIS ON PEST MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The pre-cocoon stage in mulberry sericulture represents a critical phase determining the economic viability and cocoon quality of Bombyx mori. Efficient management of mulberry agro-ecosystems, improved rearing techniques, and effective pest and disease control collectively define the success of pre-cocoon production. Recent advancements, including biological control, botanical pesticides, integrated pest management (IPM), climate-resilient technologies, and digital monitoring tools, have significantly enhanced silkworm productivity and sustainability. This review synthesizes classical and contemporary research on mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing, environmental optimisation, pest incidence, and advanced pest management strategies. Emphasis is placed on major pests such as Uzi fly (Exorista bombylans), Dermestid beetles, Leaf roller, Tukra mite, and mulberry pests that indirectly affect silkworm development. Innovations in microbial pesticides, parasitoids, and semiochemical traps are evaluated alongside IPM frameworks. Future prospects highlight precision sericulture, AI-based pest prediction models, and climate-smart approaches for enhancing resilience and productivity.

Keywords: Bombyx mori, pre-cocoon production, mulberry sericulture, pests, integrated pest management, Uzi fly, biological control.

NOVEL NON-CHEMICAL DISINFECTION PROTOCOL FOR SILKWORM SEED PRODUCTION: ENHANCING VIABILITY AND ELIMINATING PEBRINE SPORES USING ULTRAVIOLET-C (UV-C) IRRADIATION

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ABSTRACT

The quality of silkworm seed (eggs) produced in grainage operations is the foundational determinant of successful sericulture crops. A critical challenge in seed technology is the reliable disinfection of eggs to eliminate surface-borne pathogens, particularly the highly resilient spores of Pebrine (Nosema bombycis). Current chemical disinfection methods, primarily involving formaldehyde solutions, pose handling risks, can slightly reduce egg viability, and contribute to environmental contamination. This study introduces and evaluates a novel, non-chemical disinfection protocol utilizing Optimized Ultraviolet-C (UV-C) irradiation as a safer and more efficient alternative.

The research established an optimal UV-C exposure regimen (wavelength, intensity, and duration) that demonstrated 100% inactivation of N. Bombycis spores artificially deposited on the egg surface, as confirmed by microscopic examination and molecular diagnostics (PCR). Importantly, the optimized UV-C treatment had no statistically significant adverse effect on key grainage parameters, including fertilization rate, hatching percentage (≥97% viability), or subsequent larval vigor. The new protocol is rapid, dry, residue-free, and significantly simplifies the grainage workflow, reducing labor and the dependence on hazardous chemicals. This innovation provides a sustainable and high-tech solution for improving the sanitary status of silkworm seed, offering a significant leap forward in Silkworm Protection by ensuring disease-free laying material for global silk producers.

Keywords : Silkworm Seed Technology, Grainage, Pebrine, Nosema bombycis, UV-C Irradiation, Non-Chemical Disinfection, Egg Viability, Sustainable Sericulture.

SILKWORM INNATE IMMUNITY AND GENETIC ENGINEERING FOR DISEASE RESISTANCE

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ABSTRACT

Viral and microbial pathogens continuously exert selective pressure on the silkworm, Bombyx mori. This work explores the innate immune mechanisms underlying the silkworm's defence system and the application of biotechnological tools to enhance resistance. The silkworm employs complex defence pathways, including phagocytosis, encapsulation, and humoral responses involving antimicrobial peptides (AMPs). Crucially, the RNA interference (RNAi) pathway is the primary mechanism for suppressing viral replication, notably against the highly virulent BmNPV. Recent advancements in genome editing, particularly the CRISPR-Cas9 system, have been utilised to target and knock out genes associated with disease susceptibility precisely or to enhance the expression of resistance genes. The development of genetically robust and disease-resistant silkworm strains represents the most promising and sustainable long-term strategy for minimizing economic losses, moving beyond reliance on chemical disinfection and cultural practices alone.

Keywords: Silkworm, Innate Immunity, Disease Resistance, CRISPR-Cas9, RNA interference (RNAi), BmNPV, Antimicrobial peptides (AMPs), Phagocytosis, Genome Editing.

PRECISION FARMING TECHNOLOGIES FOR MULBERRY CULTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

Precision farming is emerging as an important tool to improve mulberry cultivation, which is the most crucial pre-harvest component of sericulture. Traditional methods often result in uneven leaf quality due to poor irrigation management, nutrient imbalance, and lack of timely monitoring. This study focuses on how precision technologies—such as IoT-based soil moisture sensors, automated drip irrigation, remote sensing, and GPS field mapping—can enhance mulberry leaf yield and support better silkworm rearing.The research aims to understand how real-time data from sensors helps farmers maintain ideal soil moisture levels and avoid water stress. Remote sensing indicators like NDVI assist in detecting early nutrient deficiencies, while GPS mapping enables uniform spacing,pruning, and canopy management. These technologies improve decision-making on irrigation, fertilizer application, and pest control. By using precision farming tools, mulberry gardens are expected to produce healthier leaves with higher protein content, leading to improved silkworm growth, better cocoon weight, and increased silk production. The study also highlights the importance of affordable precision tools suitable for small and marginal sericulture farmers. Overall, precision farming can make mulberry cultivation more efficient, sustainable, and profitable, strengthening the quality of pre-harvest management in the sericulture industry.

Keywords: Precision farming, IoT sensors, NDVI, GPS mapping, mulberry cultivation, sericulture, drip irrigation, leaf yield, pre-harvest management.

GENETIC AND NUTRITIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING DENIER UNIFORMITY IN *Bombyx mori* SILK

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ABSTRACT

Silk denier, a critical determinant of raw silk quality, is strongly influenced by both the genetic makeup of the silkworm and the nutritional composition of its diet. Achieving uniform denier is essential for producing high-grade silk with superior strength, luster, and reeling efficiency. This study, conducted during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, investigated the combined effects of silkworm genotype and mulberry nutrient management on filament fineness and denier stability in *Bombyx mori*. Three commonly reared bivoltine hybrids (CSR2 × CSR4, CSR6 × CSR26, and CSR50 × CSR51) were evaluated under controlled rearing conditions. Each hybrid was fed with mulberry leaves subjected to four nutrient treatments: recommended dose of fertilizers (RDF), RDF + foliar micronutrients, RDF + nano-nutrient supplements (nano-Zn, nano-Ca), and RDF + probiotic bio-enhancers.

Rearing performance, cocoon biometric traits, shell ratio, and raw silk parameters were recorded, followed by denier testing using an automatic denier meter and filament length analysis. Results indicated significant genotype × nutrition interactions affecting denier uniformity. The CSR2 × CSR4 hybrid exhibited the most consistent filament thickness across treatments, while CSR50 × CSR51 showed higher sensitivity to nutritional variations. Among the nutrient treatments, mulberry fortified with nano-nutrients produced the most uniform denier (2.3–2.6D) with reduced filament fluctuation, improved fibroin synthesis, and higher neatness scores. Probiotic supplementation enhanced digestion efficiency and amino acid assimilation, contributing to stable silk protein deposition.

Biochemical assays revealed increased leaf protein content and enhanced nitrogen assimilation in silkworms fed nano-fortified mulberry, correlating with improved fibroin gland development and consistent filament extrusion. Genetic analysis using SSR markers confirmed the contribution of specific loci associated with silk fineness and fibroin productivity. The study highlights that denier uniformity is a combined outcome of genetic potential and optimized nutrient availability during larval growth.

Overall, this research demonstrates that integrating high-yielding bivoltine hybrids with nutrient-enriched mulberry feeding strategies can substantially improve silk quality, reduce filament breakage, and enhance market value. These findings provide evidence-based recommendations for precision silkworm nutrition and genotype selection to support India's premium silk production initiatives.

Keywords: Silk denier, *Bombyx mori*, mulberry nutrition, nano-nutrients, fibroin synthesis, genetic influence, bivoltine hybrids.

GREEN SYNTHESIS OF SERICIN-BASED NANO-FORMULATIONS FOR PLANT DISEASE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Silk sericin, an abundant protein by-product of the silk processing industry, has emerged as a promising eco-friendly biomaterial due to its unique biochemical properties, including high hydrophilicity, antioxidant activity, and metal chelation capacity. The present study aimed to develop and evaluate sericin-based nanoformulations synthesized through green, non-toxic methods for sustainable plant disease management in major agricultural crops. Sericin extracted from Bombyx mori cocoon waste using a mild alkaline degumming method was employed as a natural capping, stabilizing, and reducing agent for the biosynthesis of metallic (AgNPs, ZnONPs) and botanical (neem–sericin and garlic–sericin) nanoparticles.Characterization using UV–Vis spectroscopy, FTIR, SEM, and DLS confirmed the formation of stable nanoparticles with controlled size (20–80 nm), uniform morphology, and functional groups associated with sericin-mediated stabilization. The synthesized sericin-based nanoformulations were evaluated in vitro against major fungal pathogens affecting horticultural and field crops, including Fusarium oxysporum,Colletotrichum gloeosporioides, Alternaria alternata, and Rhizoctonia solani. Results revealed significantly higher inhibition of mycelial growth, conidial germination, and spore viability compared to conventional botanical extracts. Among the formulations, sericin–AgNPs exhibited the strongest antifungal activity (up to 92% inhibition), followed by sericin–ZnONPs (83%) and sericin–neem nanoparticles (76%). Phytotoxicity assays on tomato, chilli, and mulberry seedlings indicated no adverse effects at recommended concentrations, confirming their biosafety.A pot experiment conducted under controlled greenhouse conditions further demonstrated that sericin-based nanoformulations effectively reduced disease severity of tomato wilt and leaf spot, improved plant vigor, and enhanced root–shoot biomass. The study highlights that sericin not only acts as a green reducing agent but also enhances nanoparticle stability and delivery efficiency, offering a sustainable alternative to chemical fungicides. This research underscores the potential of sericin valorization for developing next-generation biodegradable, cost-effective nanobiopesticides suitable for integrated disease management. The outcomes provide a strong foundation for scaling up sericin-based nanoformulations for field-level validation and commercialization in eco-friendly crop protection.

Keywords: Sericin nanoparticles, green synthesis, plant disease management, AgNPs , ZnONPs, antifungal activity, sustainable agriculture.

COMPARATIVE TOXICITY ASSESSMENT OF NEW-GENERATION BIORATIONALS ON ERI SILKWORM AND HOST PLANT PESTS

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable eri sericulture requires pest management solutions that effectively suppress major host plant pests while ensuring safety to eri silkworm (Samia ricini) larvae. With increasing adoption of biorational pesticides in agriculture, there is a need to evaluate their compatibility within eri silkworm–based production systems.

This study, conducted during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, investigated the comparative toxicity of selected new-generation biorationals on key eri host plant pests and their sub-lethal and non-lethal effects on eri silkworm physiology.Four commonly recommended biorationals—spinosad,emamectin benzoate,chromobacterium-based metabolites (Chromobacterium subtsugae), and azadirachtin—were assessed at field-recommended and sub-lethal concentrations. Laboratory and field assays targeted major pests including leaf webber (Spilosoma obliqua), castor semilooper (Achaea janata), spiraling whitefly (Aleurodicus dispersus), and mites. Spinosad and emamectin exhibited the highest larvicidal activity (78–92% mortality), effectively reducing foliar damage within 5–7 days. Azadirachtin showed strong antifeedant and oviposition deterrent effects, while chromobacterium metabolites provided moderate suppression with slower pest mortality rates.

To assess silkworm safety, treated castor leaves were fed to eri larvae after 24-, 48-, and 72-hour post-application intervals. Toxicity indicators such as larval survival, weight gain,moulting success, cocoon weight, shell ratio, and biochemical markers (proteins, lipids, and glucose) were monitored. Azadirachtin and chromobacterium metabolites were found to be highly safe at all tested intervals, recording >95% larval survival and normal physiological behaviour. Spinosad and emamectin showed mild toxicity at 24 hours, but became safe after a 72-hour withholding interval, with no significant impacts on cocoon or shell traits.Field validation trials revealed that azadirachtin combined with chromobacterium metabolites provided effective, silkworm-safe pest suppression suitable for use in eco-friendly IPM strategies.

Spinosad and emamectin are recommended strictly with a minimum 72-hour safety interval to avoid larval stress or residue-related mortality. The study highlights that new-generation biorationals can be safely integrated into eri sericulture pest management programmes when used judiciously with appropriate safety intervals. These findings support the development of silkworm-compatible IPM modules that enhance host plant protection while safeguarding cocoon quality and farmer income.

Keywords: Biorationals, toxicity assessment, eri silkworm, spinosad, emamectin, azadirachtin, Chromobacterium, leaf webber, IPM compatibility, sustainable sericulture.

ADULTERATION ANALYSIS AND AUTOMATION: IMPROVING SILK QUALITY AND PRODUCTION EFFICIENCY

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ABSTRACT

Post-production processing of cocoons plays a vital role in sericulture, directly influencing the quality and grading of raw silk. With increasing concerns about fiber adulteration, reliable analytical methods are necessary to verify silk purity. Advanced techniques such as Fourier Transform Infrared(FTIR) spectroscopy, thermogravimetric analysis (TGA), differential scanning calorimetry (DSC),amino acid profiling, fluorescence microscopy, and solvent-based dissolution tests offer accurate ways to differentiate between real fibroin and common adulterants like rayon, polyester, and nylon.Also, the integration of automated and semi-automated reeling systems has significantly improved the efficiency of silk processing. These systems optimize filament thickness, detect cocoon ends,control tension, and monitor defects. As a result, they reduce reeling breaks, enhance silk uniformity, and increase productivity compared to traditional methods such as charka or cottage-basin reeling. Additionally, advancements in handloom technology, including electronically controlled jacquard systems, motorized take-up and let-off mechanisms, and precision shuttle assemblies, have improved fabric consistency, increased production rates, and enabled more complex patterns. Therefore, these innovations strengthen the post-production value chain,improving quality control, boosting efficiency, reducing labor reliance, and supporting the production of high-quality, globally competitive silk textiles.

Keywords: Silk, Sericulture, adulteration, Silk authentication, Handloom technology; Silk quality control,Textile innovation.

INNOVATIVE BIOFORTIFICATION AND BIOSTIMULANTS TO ENHANCE MULBERRY LEAF QUALITY AND BIVOLTINE COCOON YIELD

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ABSTRACT

Mulberry leaf quality is the most critical factor influencing the growth, health, and cocoon productivity of bivoltine silkworms. Innovative approaches such as biofortification and biostimulants are gaining prominence for sustainably enhancing mulberry nutrition and productivity. Biofortification through micronutrients, foliar sprays, and nano-nutrient formulations improves the concentrations of essential elements like nitrogen, zinc, iron, and magnesium in mulberry leaves, thereby enriching their nutritive value. These nutrient enhancements directly contribute to better larval growth, improved silk gland development, and superior cocoon parameters. Biostimulants including seaweed extracts, humic and fulvic acids, amino acid formulations, and plant growth-promoting microorganisms—further support mulberry growth by enhancing nutrient uptake, improving root architecture,increasing photosynthetic efficiency, and boosting biochemical traits such as proteins and antioxidants. The combined use of biofortification and biostimulants results in higher-quality mulberry leaves that support increased cocoon weight, shell ratio, filament length, and overall bivoltine cocoon yield. These technologies are environmentally friendly, cost-effective, and suitable for smallholder sericulture farmers, helping reduce dependence on chemical fertilizers while improving soil and plant health. This review highlights their potential to transform mulberry cultivation and emphasizes the need for further research on standardized application methods to maximize benefits in sericulture-based systems.

Keywords: Biofortification; Biostimulants; Mulberry Leaf Quality; Bivoltine Cocoon Yield

EFFECT OF BIO-NANO ZINC FORMULATIONS ON GROWTH AND COMMERCIAL CHARACTERS OF BIVOLTINE MULBERRY SILKWORM (*Bombyx mori* L.)

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ABSTRACT

Bivoltine cocoon productivity is strongly influenced by nutrient enrichment and larval metabolic efficiency. To enhance overall performance, an experiment was conducted during Late Spring 2025 at the College of Temperate Sericulture, SKUAST-Kashmir, to evaluate the effect of bio-nano zinc formulations on the growth and commercial traits of *Bombyx mori* (HTP5). Mulberry leaves fortified with 10-50 ppm bio-nano zinc were administered to fifth-instar larvae on the 1st, 3rd and 5th day of feeding. Significant improvements were observed among treatments, with **40 ppm producing the most superior results**. Larval weight reached 37.94 g/10 larvae, silk gland weight 1.493 g and SGTSI 0.3935, indicating enhanced nutrient utilization. Economic traits improved substantially, with cocoon weight of 1.973 g, shell weight 0.400 g, shell ratio 20.27% and cocoon yield 16.63 kg/10,000 larvae. Pupation rate increased to 88.93%. Post-cocoon traits also improved, with higher filament length, stronger non-breakable filament length, raw silk percentage of 17.55% and a fine denier of 2.73. Reproductive traits were strengthened, recording fecundity of 536.33 eggs, fertility of 99.40% and hatchability of 97.50% at 40 ppm. Overall, bio-nano zinc at 40 ppm proves to be an effective and sustainable nano-nutrient approach for improving bivoltine cocoon productivity, silk quality and reproductive efficiency.

Keywords: *Bombyx mori*, bio-nano zinc, bivoltine, growth, commercial characters, mulberry

GENOMIC INSIGHTS INTO THE ANTIFUNGAL AND PLANT GROWTH PROMOTING TRAITS OF PSEUDOMONAS PLECOGLOSSICIDA NAN2 ISOLATED FROM THE RICE RHIZOSPHERE

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ABSTRACT

Plant growth promoting rhizobacteria (PGPRs) are beneficial microorganisms that inhabit the rhizosphere and enhance plant growth through various mechanisms. In this study, a PGPR strain designated NAN2 was isolated from the rice rhizosphere and demonstrated multiple plant growth-promoting traits, including the production of hydrogen cyanide (HCN), ammonia, indole-3-acetic acid (IAA), phosphate solubilization and antifungal activity against Magnaporthe oryzae. Complete genome sequencing and annotation of strain NAN2 revealed a genome size of 5356785 base pairs (bp) with a GC content of 62 %, comprising 227 contigs, 4807 coding sequences(CDSs) and a total of 4960 genes. Notably, the genome contains a nonribosomal peptide synthetase (NRPS) gene cluster associated with the biosynthesis of rhizomides (A, B and C). These results suggest that NAN2 has strong potential as an environmentally resilient biocontrol agent that can protect plants from invasive diseases. To our knowledge, this is the first genomic analysis of Pseudomonas plecoglossicida NAN2 isolated from rice fields, providing valuable insights into its biocontrol capabilities and plant growth promoting (PGP) properties.

Keywords: Genome sequencing , PGPR, Bio control , NAN_2.

DEVELOPMENT OF SERICIN–HYDROGEL WOUND DRESSINGS WITH ENHANCED ANTIMICROBIAL AND HEALING PROPERTIES

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ABSTRACT

Silk sericin, a natural protein derived from *Bombyx mori* cocoon waste, has gained significant attention in biomedical applications due to its exceptional biocompatibility, antioxidant potential, and innate antimicrobial properties. This research, carried out during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, focused on developing sericin–hydrogel wound dressings designed to accelerate tissue repair while providing broad-spectrum protection against pathogenic microbes.

Sericin extracted through a gentle alkaline degumming process was blended with chitosan and alginate to formulate composite hydrogels using a green, non-toxic crosslinking approach. The hydrogels were further incorporated with sericin-stabilized silver nanoparticles (Sericin–AgNPs) to enhance antimicrobial efficacy without compromising biocompatibility.Physicochemical characterization using FTIR, SEM, XRD, and swelling ratio analysis confirmed the successful integration of sericin and nanoparticles into the hydrogel matrix, resulting in uniform porosity, high moisture retention capacity, and mechanical stability suited for wound applications. Antimicrobial activity tests conducted against common wound-infecting bacteria—*Staphylococcus aureus*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, and *Escherichia coli*—showed significant inhibition zones, with Sericin–AgNP hydrogels exhibiting superior bactericidal effects compared to sericin-only formulations.

Biocompatibility assessments using *in vitro* cytotoxicity on fibroblast cell lines indicated over 90% cell viability, confirming the safety of the composite dressings. An excision wound model study performed on Wistar rats revealed that sericin–hydrogel treatments accelerated wound closure by 40–55% compared to untreated controls, with enhanced collagen deposition, reduced inflammation, and faster epithelialization observed through histological analysis. The synergistic effect of sericin's antioxidant and moisturizing properties, combined with the antimicrobial strength of biosynthesized nanoparticles, contributed to improved healing performance.This study

demonstrates the potential of sericin-based hydrogels as an innovative, biodegradable, and cost-effective wound dressing material with strong therapeutic value.

By utilizing sericulture waste as a high-value biomedical resource, the research supports sustainable material development and lays the groundwork for future translational studies, commercialization, and clinical testing within India's growing bio-materials sector.

Keywords: Sericin hydrogel, wound healing, antimicrobial activity, biosynthesized nanoparticles, biocompatible dressing, tissue regeneration.

STANDARDIZED REARING PRACTICES FOR DIFFERENT SEASONS IN SILKWORM

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ABSTRACT

Seasonal shifts in temperature, humidity, and photoperiod significantly influence silkworm (Bombyx mori) physiology, feeding behaviour, and cocoon yield.Standardized rearing practices are essential to stabilize performance across diverse climatic conditions and minimize crop loss. This paper reviews optimized protocols for spring, summer, rainy, and winter seasons, focusing on environmental control,batch preparation, disinfection routines, larval handling, and leaf quality management. Key variables such as rearing house temperature (24–28°C), relative humidity (65–85%), bed spacing, and moulting care are analysed in relation to seasonal constraints. The study emphasises the importance of microclimate regulation through ventilation, humidification, and insulation, along with season-specific mulberry leaf scheduling and disease-preventive measures.Implementing rigorous,season-wise standard operating procedures improves larval survival,uniform growth, cocoon weight, and overall bivoltine crop stability. These standardized approaches provide a reliable framework for producing consistent cocoon quality throughout the year despite climatic fluctuations.

Keywords:Silkworm rearing; Bombyx mori; seasonal management; standardized practices; temperature control; humidity regulation; microclimate; mulberry leaf quality; disease prevention; cocoon yield; bivoltine crops; rearing house management.

ORGANIC PROTOCOLS FOR PREMIUM MULBERRY IN BIVOLTINE SERICULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Adopting organic techniques for cultivating superior mulberry is vital for the sustainable development of bivoltine sericulture. This holistic approach includes enriching the soil with 10-15 tonnes per hectare of vermicompost and incorporating green manure crops such as sunn hemp or dhaincha. To further enhance nutrient availability, biofertilizers containing Azotobacter and phosphate-solubilising bacteria are utilised. Pest management is achieved through the use of neem-based biopesticides (5% NSKE) and botanical extracts like Dashparni ark, while cultural practices such as trap cropping provide effective control. Drip irrigation is employed to maintain optimal soil moisture for leaf growth, and pruning at a 90×90 cm spacing ensures a continuous supply of foliage. These organic practices significantly enhance leaf quality, increasing crude protein levels (15-20%), carbohydrate content, and moisture (75-80%). The improved nutritional profile directly benefits bivoltine silkworms, enhancing larval weight and cocoon characteristics, particularly shell weight and reelability, thereby establishing a foundation for sustainable, high-quality silk production.

Keywords: Organic techniques, superior mulberry, bivoltine sericulture, vermicompost, biofertilizers, biopesticides, leaf quality, cocoon characteristics, sustainable production.

SERICIN EXTRACTION METHODS AND THEIR APPLICATION IN COSMETICS

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ABSTRACT

Sericin is a type of silk protein, which contains 18 amino acids including essential amino acids and is characterized by the presence of 32 per cent of serine.The total amount of hydroxy amino acids in sericin is 45.8 per cent. There are 42.3 per cent of polar amino acid and 12.2 per cent of nonpolar amino acid residues.Sericin contributes about 20-30 per cent of total cocoon weight. The removal of gum from crude silk is based entirely upon its solubility in hot water, dilute solution of sodium carbonate, three successive 1 h extractions of silk or simply heating in water at 100ºC or autoclaving at 118°C or autoclaving for 3 h under 2.5-3 atmosphere pressure, extraction with aqueous solution of urea at 100ºC from cocoons. Silk fibres can be completely degummed in boiling solutions. When sericin is extracted from cocoons of Bombyx mori by heating on water bath and autoclaving at different temperatures the satisfactory yield is obtained by autoclaving at 105°C for 30 min with good gelling property and yield. Sericin alone or in combination with silk fibroin has been used in skin, hair, and nail cosmetics.

Keywords: Sericin, extraction methods and cosmetics

FROM ROOTS TO RISE: THE ECO-INNOVATION JOURNEY IN SILK CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Sericulture in India has long been woven into the fabric of rural life, supporting local economies, preserving traditional knowledge, and shaping cultural identity. Today, however, the sector is under increasing pressure due to shifting climate patterns, outbreaks of pests and diseases, unstable market conditions, and dwindling natural resources. These challenges underscore the need to move beyond conventional methods and adopt sustainable, innovation-driven practices. This study explores how silk production is evolving from traditional techniques to modern, technology-supported systems focused on environmental care, efficient production, and stronger socioeconomic resilience. Emerging tools such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), IoT-based monitoring systems, and automated climate-control technologies are highlighted as game-changers for improving mulberry cultivation and silkworm rearing. Precision farming, eco-friendly degumming methods, biofertilizers, organic nutrient management, and integrated pest management (IPM) promote sustainability while reducing reliance on chemical inputs. Digital advisory platforms, mobile decision-support apps, and skill-building programs further equip farmers with timely guidance to boost yields and enhance cocoon quality. Examples from leading sericulture regions show significant gains in productivity, disease control, and income stability when traditional knowledge is paired with modern technology. The study concludes that sustainable progress in silk culture depends on blending age-old wisdom with scientific innovation and supportive policies especially those encouraging public-private partnerships, digital access, and climate-resilient infrastructure. By embracing this shift, India can strengthen rural livelihoods, minimize environmental impacts, and position itself as a global frontrunner in sustainable, technology-enabled silk production.

Keywords: Silkworm rearing, Green degumming, Artificial intelligence, Machine learning

CLIMATE-RESILIENT SERICULTURE: STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE SILK PRODUCTION IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

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ABSTRACT

Sericulture is a key agro-based that supports rural livelihoods, biodiversity, and regional economies, particularly in Asia. However, the sector is increasingly vulnerable to climate change,which influences mulberry growth, silkworm health, pest and disease prevalence, and habitat sustainability for wild silk species. This review synthesizes current scientific understanding and technological advancements in climate-resilient sericulture, drawing upon multidisciplinary research spanning crop physiology, genetic improvement, ecological modelling, pest management, and socio-economic adaptation. Special attention is given to the four major commercial silks—mulberry (Bombyxmori), tasar (Antheraea mylitta), muga (Antheraea assamensis), and eri (Samia ricini)—and theirresponses to climatic stressors. Strategies examined include climate-resilient mulberry breeding,silkworm strain improvement, habitat restoration, integrated pest management, and policy measures supporting adaptive livelihoods. The synthesis emphasizes that climate-resilient sericulture require integrated interventions at genetic, ecological, and socio-economic levels to sustain productivity and rural resilience in the face of escalating climate variability.

Keywords: Climate change, genetic improvement, climate resilience, pest management, sustainable agriculture

INFLUENCE OF PER OS APPLICATION OF HONEY ON REELING RELATED PARAMETERS OF SILKWORM, BOMBYX MORI L.

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ABSTRACT

Silk is a natural fiber, composed mainly of two proteins like sericin and fibroin. These proteins are secreted by *Bombyx mori* L, which is a monophagous insect feeds only on mulberry leaves. As the mulberry nutrition decides the growth and development of silkworm larvae, numerous attempts were made to improve the nutritional quality of mulberry leaves by exogenous application of different essential nutrients *viz*., minerals, amino acids, vitamins, proteins, *etc.* The honey, a multi-factorial nutrient produced by the honey bees is rich in amino acids, carbohydrates, minerals, proteins, vitamins and enzymes, which elicit modulation in the growth of silkworm.

By keeping these in mind, the studies were carried out to assess the influence of honey from different bee species and protein sources on the reeling parameters of silkworm cocoons. The silkworm larvae were fed on the mulberry leaves treated with honey and proteins sources from third instar to spinning stage daily once in the morning.

Among the various treatments analysed, stingless bee honey recorded significantly maximum silk filament weight (384.52 mg), silk filament length (1321.15 m) and non-broken filament length (398.92 m), compared to other treatments. The same honey also significantly reduced the denier of silk filament and renditta (2.50 and 6.33, respectively) over the control. The studies with various concentrations of honey also showed that stingless bee honey at 5 per cent performed well in improving all the silk reeling related parameters of silkworm.

Keywords: Sericin, honey, multifactorial nutrient, stingless bee.

SERICIN-BASED BIOACTIVE FILMS FOR FOOD PRESERVATION AND EDIBLE COATINGS

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ABSTRACT

Silk sericin, a hydrophilic protein recovered from *Bombyx mori* cocoon waste, offers excellent film-forming, antioxidant, and antimicrobial properties that make it a promising biomaterial for sustainable food preservation. The present research, conducted during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, aimed to develop, characterize, and evaluate sericin-based bioactive films and edible coatings for enhancing the shelf life and quality of perishable fruits and vegetables. Sericin extracted through eco-friendly alkaline degumming was blended with biopolymers such as starch, pectin, and chitosan to create composite films using solvent-casting techniques. To improve functional activity, natural extracts (green tea, turmeric, lemon peel) and sericin-stabilized silver nanoparticles were incorporated as bioactive agents. Characterization studies using FTIR, SEM, tensile strength analysis, and water vapor permeability tests confirmed that the developed films exhibited uniform structure, strong mechanical properties, and good barrier performance.

The addition of sericin significantly enhanced antioxidant activity (45–70% DPPH inhibition) and provided effective antimicrobial protection against common spoilage organisms including *Aspergillus niger*, *Penicillium spp.*, *Escherichia coli*, and *Salmonella typhi*. Edible coating formulations showed excellent adhesion and transparency, making them suitable for real-time application on fresh produce. Shelf-life evaluation was conducted on tomatoes, bananas, grapes, and cucumbers stored under ambient and refrigerated conditions. Sericin–chitosan films and sericin-based edible coatings effectively delayed ripening, reduced physiological weight loss, minimized microbial decay, and maintained firmness and color compared to untreated samples.

Coated tomatoes showed a shelf-life extension of 6–8 days under ambient conditions, while bananas exhibited reduced browning and slower starch degradation. Sensory evaluations confirmed that treated fruits retained natural flavor and market acceptability.

The study demonstrates that sericin, a traditionally discarded sericulture by-product, can be transformed into value-added biodegradable packaging materials and edible coatings with significant potential to reduce post-harvest losses in horticultural supply chains.

The findings support the adoption of sericin-based films as an eco-friendly alternative to synthetic plastic packaging, contributing to both environmental sustainability and enhanced food safety. Further work may focus on film scalability, regulatory compliance, and commercialization pathways for the food industry.

Keywords: Sericin films, edible coating, food preservation, bioactive packaging, antimicrobial activity, shelf-life extension, sustainable materials.

TRANSCRIPTOMIC CHANGES IN MULBERRY INDUCED BY BENEFICIAL RHIZOBACTERIA

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ABSTRACT

Plant Growth-Promoting Rhizobacteria (PGPR) are essential for improving plant health, growth, and stress tolerance. Enhancing leaf quality and biomass production is crucial for maintaining sericulture productivity in mulberries (*Morus* spp.), the main host plant for the silkworm *Bombyx mori*. The molecular alterations that underlie PGPR–mulberry interactions can now be better understood with recent developments in high-throughput transcriptome sequencing. The transcriptome changes in mulberry leaves and roots after inoculation with specific advantageous rhizobacterial strains are examined in this work. Significant gene expression reprogramming linked to defense priming, nutrient uptake, and plant growth enhancement was found by RNA-Seq analysis. PGPR-treated plants showed significant upregulation of genes related to secondary metabolite production, phytohormone signaling (auxin, cytokinin, and gibberellin), and nitrogen and phosphorus uptake. Increased expression of transcripts linked to antioxidant enzymes like peroxidase, catalase, and superoxide dismutase suggested better stress tolerance and ROS scavenging. Pathogenesis-related (PR) proteins, phenylpropanoid biosynthesis, and systemic resistance indicators were among the defense-related pathways that showed discernible increase. PGPR activated both baseline immune responses and Induced Systemic Resistance (ISR). Differential expression of a number of transcription factor families, including WRKY, MYB, and NAC, demonstrated their regulatory functions in coordinating PGPR-mediated growth and defense regulation.The transcriptome profile showed that applying PGPR to mulberries causes complex molecular reactions to improve physiological function and increase resistance to biotic and abiotic challenges. Insightful information on the molecular underpinnings of the PGPR–mulberry symbiosis suggested viable methods for creating long-term bio-stimulant based methods to enhance mulberry production and leaf yield in the sericulture industry.

Keywords: PGPR, Mulberry transcriptomics, Induced systemic resistance, Plant–microbe interactions, RNA-Seq analysis.

IOT BASED PRECISION FARMING FOR ENHANCING MULBERRY LEAF QUALITY PARAMETERS

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ABSTRACT

Even though increase in India's raw silk production, the country faces challenges in sericulture expansion due to limited land and freshwater for mulberry growth. Though drip irrigation improves efficiency and reduces labour, it lacks decision-making based on soil moisture content to determine when and how much to irrigate, often leading to over- or under-irrigation by farmers. A field experiment was conducted to study the effect of soil moisture sensor-based drip irrigation and nitrogen management on mulberry leaf productivity and quality at Bengaluru. There were nine treatment combinations of horizontal factor (irrigation management) included conventional drip irrigation (I_1), yellow soil moisture indicator (YSMI)-based irrigation (I_2) and sensor-based drip irrigation (I_3), whereas vertical factor (nitrogen management) included no nitrogen (N_1) (control), 100% recommended dose of nitrogen (N_2) and NDVI based nano urea application (N_3) laid out in strip plot design. Among different treatment combination, sensor-based drip irrigation with NDVI based nano urea application recorded significantly highest leaf yield (718.20 g plant^{-1}) at 60 DAP and also significantly highest leaf total chlorophyll content of (2.34 mg g^{-1}), moisture retention capacity after 6 hrs (79.96 %) and nitrogen content (3.04 %) were recorded compared to other treatment combinations at 45 DAP, whereas lowest leaf yield and quality parameters were observed under YSMI (I_2N_1). These results showed that sensor-based drip irrigation with NDVI based nano urea application is appropriate to enhance leaf productivity and quality in mulberry.

Keywords: Drip irrigation, IoT, Mulberry, Sericulture and Soil moisture sensor.

DEFENSE SIGNALING PATHWAYS (SA, JA, ET) IN MULBERRY UPON PATHOGEN INFECTION

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ABSTRACT

The Mulberries *(Morus spp.)* are subject to a variety of biotic stressors, such as bacterial, viral, and fungal diseases, which have a substantial impact on the output of silkworms and the quality of their leaves. Salicylic acid (SA), Jasmonic acid (JA), and ethylene (ET) play key regulatory functions in the complex network of defense signaling pathways that activate mulberries to prevent pathogen invasion. Resistance against biotrophic infections is primarily linked to the SA pathway. Pathogen infection in mulberries induced pathogenesis-related (PR) proteins, accumulated SA quickly, and activated systemic acquired resistance (SAR). Both long-term immunity and localized hypersensitivity reactions are influenced by these processes. In contrast, the JA pathway is mostly triggered after infection by herbivorous insects and necrotrophic diseases. In mulberries, JA signaling increased the synthesis of secondary metabolites, cell wall-strengthening substances like lignin, and proteinase inhibitors and minimized tissue injury and limited pathogen invasion. In necrotrophic infections, ethylene (ET) functions both independently and in concert with the JA system. ET affects oxidative burst, defense-related gene expression, and communication between several signaling cascades. Crucially, depending on the invasive pathogen, SA–JA–ET interactions in mulberries are dynamic and frequently antagonistic or synergistic. Mulberry incorporated these mechanisms to optimize defense responses during pathogen infection, guaranteeing effective resource distribution between growth and immunity. Coordinated hormone signaling is crucial for improving mulberry resilience, according to recent molecular investigations that include transcript profiling and hormone measurement.

Keywords: Salicylic Acid (SA) Pathway, Jasmonic Acid (JA) Signalling, Ethylene (ET) Defence Response, Mulberry–Pathogen Interaction

IMPROVED PRE-COCOON TECHNOLOGIES FOR HIGH-QUALITY SILK YIELD

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ABSTRACT

The pre-cocoon sector plays a decisive role in determining the quality and quantity of silk produced, making technological advancements in this stage vital for sustainable sericulture. This study highlights improved pre-cocoon technologies that enhance silkworm growth, ensure uniform cocoon formation, and boost overall silk yield. Key innovations include the adoption of high-yielding mulberry varieties, scientific leaf harvesting methods, hygienic rearing environment preparation, and the use of fortified bed disinfectants. The integration of chawki rearing centers, shoot-feeding systems, and controlled environmental conditions further improves larval health and survivability. These practices collectively minimize disease incidence, optimize resource use, and ensure consistent cocoon quality suitable for premium silk production. The findings emphasize that improved pre-cocoon technologies not only increase productivity but also contribute significantly to farmer profitability and the strengthening of the sericulture value chain.

Keywords: Innovation, chawki rearing, premium silk, productivity.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS IN THE PRE-COCOON SECTOR OF SERICULTURE

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ABSTRACT

The pre-cocoon sector forms the foundation of successful sericulture, encompassing mulberry cultivation, silkworm seed production, and scientific rearing practices. Recent technological advancements in this sector have significantly improved cocoon quality, productivity, and farmer profitability. Innovations such as high-yielding mulberry varieties, precision farming techniques, and nutrient-enriched leaf production ensure optimal nutrition for silkworms. Modern silkworm rearing technologies—including chawki rearing centers, eco-friendly bed disinfectants, automatic environmental control systems, and shoot-feeding methods—enhance larval health, reduce disease incidence, and enable uniform growth. Additionally, improved mounting structures and hygiene protocols contribute to efficient cocoon spinning and higher yield. These advancements collectively strengthen the sericulture value chain by reducing labor, increasing efficiency, and ensuring the production of high-quality cocoons suitable for premium silk. Overall, technological progress in the pre-cocoon sector plays a transformative role in modernizing sericulture and promoting sustainable rural livelihoods.

Keywords: Improved cocoon quality, labor efficiency, chawki rearing.

INFLUENCE OF COCOON DRYING AND REELING TECHNOLOGIES ON SILK DENIER STABILITY AND FILAMENT BREAKAGE

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ABSTRACT

Cocoon drying and reeling technologies play a crucial role in determining silk filament uniformity, denier stability, and reeling performance in *Bombyx mori*. Variations in drying temperature, moisture removal rate, and reel-specific mechanical operations directly impact filament elasticity, sericin plasticity, and subsequent breakage rates. This study, carried out during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, evaluated the comparative influence of traditional sun drying, hot-air drying, solar-assisted dryers, automatic reeling machines, and semi-automatic cottage basin systems on silk denier stability and filament breakage behavior.

Cocoons of bivoltine hybrids (CSR2 × CSR4 and CSR6 × CSR26) were subjected to three drying methods—sun drying (ambient), hot-air drying (70°C), and solar hybrid drying (55–60°C)—and subsequently reeled using two reeling technologies: multi-end automatic reeling machine (ARM) and conventional cottage basin. Denier measurements were recorded using an automatic denier meter, while reeling traits such as filament length, raw silk yield, breakage rate, and neatness were quantified according to BIS standards.

Results revealed that solar-assisted drying produced the most stable denier range (2.3–2.5D), attributed to gradual and uniform moisture removal that preserved sericin coating and maintained filament elasticity. Hot-air drying, while faster, caused partial sericin hardening and internal filament stress, resulting in wider denier fluctuation (2.6–2.9D). Sun drying showed the highest variability due to inconsistent environmental conditions. Reeling performance differed significantly between technologies: ARMs exhibited 40–55% lower breakage rates and up to 18% improvement in neatness and reelability. Cottage basins, although widely used, produced higher denier variability and increased filament snapping due to manual tension inconsistencies.

Microscopic analysis confirmed that optimal moisture levels in solar-dried cocoons facilitated smoother filament unwinding and reduced internal fibrillation. The interaction between drying method and reeling technology was statistically significant, with solar drying + ARM combination yielding the most consistent and high-quality silk. Energy audits showed that solar drying also reduced power consumption by 35%, supporting sustainability goals.

This study emphasizes that controlled cocoon drying coupled with advanced reeling technologies significantly enhances denier stability, reduces filament breakage, and improves raw silk quality. The findings offer practical recommendations for upgrading cocoon processing units, supporting precision reeling and value addition in India's sericulture sector.

Keywords: Cocoon drying, silk denier, filament breakage, reeling technology, solar dryer, automatic reeling machine, silk quality.

ADVANCES IN POST-PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY FOR BIVOLTINE COCOON VALUE CHAIN

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ABSTRACT

Bivoltine silk production in India increasingly depends on efficient post-production (post-cocoon) technologies to convert superior cocoons into internationally competitive raw silk. Post-cocoon operations such as cocoon drying and stifling, grading, cooking, reeling, spinning and twisting decisively influence filament length, reelability, renditta and raw silk recovery from bivoltine hybrids. Over the past decades, significant mechanization has been introduced in cocoon drying, automatic reeling, cocoon cutting and spinning, leading to higher labour productivity, better process control and reduced drudgery in the post-cocoon sector. Recent studies highlight that improved drying protocols, controlled-environment stifling and optimized cooking schedules can preserve fibroin integrity and enhance filament length and non-breakable length, particularly important for high-shell-ratio bivoltine cocoons. At the same time, evaluation of newly developed bivoltine breeds and hybrids increasingly includes a comprehensive set of post-cocoon parameters (filament length, denier, reelability, raw silk percentage) to align breeding goals with reeling performance and market requirements. Emerging innovations such as sensor-based monitoring, AI-assisted grading and data-driven process optimization promise further gains in quality, yield and energy efficiency, but issues of high capital cost, need for skilled manpower and adaptation to diverse regional conditions remain major constraints to widespread adoption. This review synthesizes current knowledge on post-production technology for bivoltine cocoons, identifies critical research gaps, and outlines future priorities for integrating mechanization, digital tools and climate-resilient practices to strengthen the bivoltine silk value chain in India.

Keywords: Bivoltine cocoons; Post cocoon technology; Cocoon drying; Stifling; Reeling performance; Filament length; Raw silk recovery; Mechanization; Sensor-based monitoring; AI-assisted grading; Process optimization; Silk value chain.

EFFECT OF COCOON COOKING METHOD ON FILAMENT LENGTH AND SILK QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

Cocoon cooking is a critical pre-reeling step that determines reelability, filament length, and the overall quality of silk produced. Variations in cooking methods lead to differences in sericin dissolution, filament cohesiveness, and reelability efficiency. The present study, conducted during 2024–2025 at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai, evaluated the effects of four cocoon cooking methods—single-pan open cooking, multi-pan cooking, pressurized cooking, and basin hot-air conditioning—on filament length, renditta, raw silk recovery, and yarn quality parameters.Standardized batches of bivoltine hybrid cocoons were subjected to each cooking technique under controlled laboratory conditions. Key parameters recorded included filament length, average denier, neatness, cohesion, elongation percentage, and raw silk yield. Pressurized cooking achieved the highest sericin softening efficiency, resulting in the longest filament length (900–1050 m) and superior reelability. Multi-pan cooking produced moderately high filament length (820–940 m) with improved uniformity and stable silk denier. Open-pan cooking showed lower softening uniformity, resulting in shorter and more variable filament lengths (650–780 m). Hot-air conditioning methods maintained cocoon integrity but recorded intermediate filament length and slightly higher breakage frequency during reeling.Quality assessment using silk testing standards revealed that silk obtained from pressurized cooking had the highest neatness score, uniform denier profile (2.3–2.5), and superior cohesion values, contributing to smooth reeling performance. Multi-pan cooking produced silk with acceptable reelability and reduced breakage points, making it suitable for small and medium-scale sericulture units. Economic analysis indicated that although pressurized cooking produced the highest-quality silk, the multi-pan method offered the best balance between cost and output quality for farmers.The study concludes that cocoon cooking method significantly influences filament characteristics and silk quality. Pressurized cooking is ideal for achieving premium silk quality, whereas multi-pan cooking represents a practical, cost-effective choice for rural sericulture clusters. Improving adoption of optimized cooking practices can substantially enhance reelability, raw silk recovery, and income generation among sericulture farmers in South India.

Keywords: Cocoon cooking, filament length, silk quality, sericin softening, reeling efficiency, multi-pan cooking, pressurized cooking, raw silk yield.

ADVANCES IN BIVOLTINE COCOON PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY: INTEGRATING IMPROVED REARING PRACTICES, HOST PLANT MANAGEMENT AND PEST REGULATION FOR ENHANCED SILK YIELD

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ABSTRACT:

Bivoltine sericulture has emerged as a critical driver of high-quality silk production in India, particularly under tropical conditions where productivity is constrained by fluctuating climate, pest incidence and inconsistent mulberry leaf quality. This study synthesizes recent advancements in bivoltine cocoon production technology with emphasis on optimal host plant management, improved silkworm rearing protocols, environmental regulation, and eco-friendly pest management. Field and laboratory trials conducted during 2023–2024 evaluated the influence of integrated mulberry nutrition, season-specific rearing schedules and botanical biopesticides on larval growth rate, cocoon traits and rearing efficiency. Results indicated that supplementation with FYM + NPK + micronutrients increased leaf moisture and protein content significantly ($p<0.05$), which correspondingly improved larval weight, effective rate of rearing (ERR), and cocoon shell ratio. Adoption of improved rearing houses with temperature-humidity regulation (T: 25–27°C; RH: 70–80%) reduced larval mortality by 18.6% over traditional systems. Neem-based formulations (3%) effectively suppressed uzi fly and muscardine infection without affecting larval feeding. Overall, the integrated package recorded a 22.4% higher cocoon yield and 19.1% higher raw silk output. The findings highlight the potential of optimized rearing environments, improved mulberry agronomy, and eco-friendly pest regulation strategies to substantially enhance bivoltine cocoon production under Indian sericultural conditions.

Keywords: Bivoltine silkworm, cocoon production, mulberry nutrition, pest management, rearing technology, sericulture.

IMPACT OF VAM INOCULATION ON NUTRIENT UPTAKE, GROWTH, AND LEAF QUALITY OF *Terminalia arjuna*

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ABSTRACT

Vesicular arbuscular mycorrhiza (VAM) fungi are critical soil symbionts that enhance plant nutrient acquisition, water relations, and stress tolerance. This research evaluated the impact of VAM inoculation on nutrient uptake, growth, and leaf quality of *Terminalia arjuna* seedlings under nursery conditions at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai during 2024–2025. A randomized complete block design was implemented with VAM inoculated and uninoculated controls maintained for 120 days. Results demonstrated significant enhancements in root colonization, macro- and micronutrient uptake, vegetative growth parameters, and leaf physiological quality in VAM-treated seedlings. Enhanced phosphorus (P), nitrogen (N), and potassium (K) accumulation translated into superior chlorophyll content and potential suitability of foliage for tasar silkworm feeding. These findings underpin the utility of VAM inoculation as an eco-friendly technology suitable for improving host plant quality in tasar sericulture systems.

Keywords: VAM fungi, *Terminalia arjuna*, nutrient uptake, seedling growth, mycorrhizal symbiosis.

Introduction

Terminalia arjuna is a multipurpose tropical tree valued for its medicinal properties and ecological function. Its foliage also serves as an alternate food source in tasar silkworm (*Antheraea mylitta*) rearing systems. Enhancing leaf nutritional quality and seedling establishment is essential to support sustainable sericulture. Conventional fertilization, however, faces limitations such as low nutrient use efficiency and environmental costs.

Arbuscular mycorrhizal (AM) fungi — commonly referred to as VAM — form symbiotic associations with roots of most terrestrial plants, facilitating the exchange of soil-derived nutrients for plant photosynthates. VAM hyphae extend beyond the root depletion zone, improving the acquisition of relatively immobile nutrients, particularly phosphorus, and also assist in uptake of nitrogen, potassium, and trace elements. This enhances nutrient balance, plant growth, and stress tolerance.

Recent studies highlight VAM's role in improving seedling quality in forest tree species under nutrient-poor nursery conditions. For example, VAM inoculation enhanced growth and nutrient uptake in tree seedlings by improving root absorption surface and facilitating biochemical adaptations under stress. Moreover, AMF associations contribute significantly to plant water relations and physiological functions under drought conditions through improved stomatal conductance and water uptake.

This study aimed to quantify the effects of VAM inoculation on nutrient uptake, growth performance, and leaf quality of *T. arjuna* in a controlled nursery experiment to provide baseline data for integration into sustainable tasar host plant management.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Experimental Site and Design

The experiment was conducted from January to May 2025 in the nursery at SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, Baburayenpettai (Tamil Nadu), under ambient tropical conditions. A randomized complete block design (RCBD) was used with two treatments:

- T1: Control (no VAM inoculation)
- T2: VAM inoculation

Each treatment consisted of 10 replicates, and seedlings were maintained in polybags filled with a standardized forest nursery soil mixture.

2.2 VAM Inoculum and Application

A consortium of native VAM fungi dominated by *Glomus* spp. was obtained from a certified microbial culture lab. Inoculum comprised spores, root fragments with infection, and mycelial fragments. At planting, 10 g of VAM inoculum was placed near the seedling root zone to ensure root contact and colonization. Controls received sterilized soil without inoculum.

2.3 Growth Parameters

Seedling height (cm), collar diameter (mm), root length (cm), and total dry biomass (g plant^{-1}) were measured at 120 days after inoculation. Biomass was determined after oven drying at 70 °C to constant weight.

2.4 Nutrient Analysis

Leaf samples were collected at harvest, oven dried, and ground. Nitrogen (N) was estimated by micro-Kjeldahl digestion, phosphorus (P) by vanadomolybdate method, and potassium (K) by flame photometry.

2.5 Mycorrhizal Colonization and Leaf Quality

Root samples were cleared and stained with trypan blue, and percentage colonization was assessed by the gridline intersect method. Leaf chlorophyll content was quantified using spectrophotometry.

2.6 Statistical Analysis

Data were subjected to analysis of variance (ANOVA) using statistical software. Significant differences between treatment means were determined at $p \leq 0.05$.

Results and Discussion

Vesicular arbuscular mycorrhizal (VAM) inoculation significantly influenced nutrient uptake, growth, and leaf quality of *Terminalia arjuna* seedlings. VAM-treated plants recorded markedly higher root colonization compared to uninoculated controls, confirming successful establishment of the symbiotic association. Enhanced mycorrhizal colonization resulted in significantly greater uptake of major nutrients, particularly phosphorus, nitrogen, and potassium. Improved phosphorus acquisition is attributed to the extensive hyphal network of VAM fungi, which enhances nutrient absorption beyond the root depletion zone.

Growth parameters such as plant height, stem girth, root length, and total biomass were significantly higher in VAM-inoculated seedlings. Improved nutrient availability and enhanced root architecture likely contributed to superior vegetative growth and seedling vigor. Similar growth responses due to VAM inoculation have been reported in several forest tree species, indicating the broad applicability of mycorrhizal technology in nursery management.

Leaf quality analysis revealed a significant increase in chlorophyll content and leaf nutrient concentration in VAM-treated plants. Higher chlorophyll levels indicate improved photosynthetic efficiency and physiological activity. Enhanced leaf nutritional quality is particularly important for tasar silkworm (*Antheraea mylitta*) feeding, as nutrient-rich foliage is known to support better larval growth and cocoon formation. Overall, the results demonstrate that VAM inoculation is an effective, eco-friendly strategy for improving *Terminalia arjuna* seedling quality and strengthening sustainable tasar sericulture systems.

Conclusion

VAM inoculation significantly enhanced nutrient uptake, vegetative growth, and leaf physiological quality of *Terminalia arjuna* seedlings under nursery conditions. These improvements are attributable to enhanced root colonization and hyphal nutrient foraging that improves nutrient and water acquisition. The enhanced leaf quality has important implications for using *T. arjuna* as a supplementary host in tasar silkworm production systems. Adoption of VAM inoculation in nursery practices offers an eco-friendly, sustainable approach to improving seedling quality and supporting integrated agroforestry-sericulture systems.

Future Work

Future studies should evaluate field-level performance of VAM-inoculated *Terminalia arjuna* under different soil and climatic conditions. Direct feeding trials with tasar silkworm (*Antheraea mylitta*) are needed to quantify effects on larval growth, cocoon yield, and silk quality.

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EVALUATING THE ROLE OF FPO-DRIVEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN STRENGTHENING SILKWORM REARERS' LIVELIHOOD SECURITY AND RURAL VALUE CHAINS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Between 2022 and 2025, India's sericulture sector experienced structural changes through expansion of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), digital cocoon markets, and new income-generating models for smallholders. This study evaluates the role of FPO-driven social entrepreneurship in enhancing livelihood security for silkworm rearers and strengthening the rural cocoon value chain. Research was undertaken across major sericulture clusters in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, covering 450 rearer households (225 FPO members and 225 non-members). A mixed-methods framework was applied, including livelihood security indexing, value chain efficiency analysis, enterprise performance scoring, and Difference-in-Difference (DID) modelling for 2022–2025. Results show that FPO membership increased average rearer income by 32–48%, reduced input cost by 22–35%, and improved cocoon price realization by 14–21%. Women's participation increased by 52%, while credit access improved from 29% to 76% among member households. FPO-led digital platforms, decentralized chawki rearing centers, and collective marketing reduced transaction losses and enhanced quality compliance. The findings demonstrate that FPO-driven social entrepreneurship significantly contributes to livelihood resilience, value-chain integration, and rural socio-economic transformation.

Keywords: Sericulture, Social Entrepreneurship, Farmer Producer Organizations, Livelihood Security, Value Chain, Silkworm Rearers, Rural Enterprises

Introduction

Sericulture remains a major livelihood activity in India, employing nearly nine million people as of 2024. Although India is the world's second-largest silk producer, productivity gaps, inconsistent input quality, price fluctuations, and lack of market transparency continue to affect small-scale silkworm rearers. Between 2022 and 2025, national programs—including the Silk Samagra-2, FPO Promotion Scheme (NABARD, NCDC), and digital cocoon auctions (CSB e-Kokoon portal)—enabled significant enterprise-based restructuring of the sericulture economy.

In this context, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) emerged as strategic institutions capable of transforming sericulture into a collective, socially entrepreneurial, and market-resilient system. Unlike traditional cooperative models, FPO-driven social entrepreneurship prioritizes enterprise sustainability, innovation, community empowerment, and value-chain integration. However, empirical evaluation on how FPOs strengthen livelihood security of silkworm rearers and enhance rural value chains during 2022–2025 remains limited.

This study addresses this gap by systematically assessing FPO-led interventions across three major states and quantifying their socio-economic and institutional impacts.

To evaluate economic benefits achieved by silkworm rearers through FPO- driven social entrepreneurship during 2022–2025.

- To measure livelihood security improvements in income stability, risk reduction, social capital, and credit access.
- To analyze FPO contributions to rural sericulture value-chain strengthening, including production, marketing, and enterprise linkages.
- To derive policy recommendations for scaling FPO-led social enterprises in Indian sericulture.

Recent literature highlights the growing significance of FPOs in agricultural transformation. Gowda et al. (2023) noted that FPO membership increases bargaining power and price realization in mulberry-based systems. Ranganathan & Devi (2024) reported that FPO-led digital trading platforms reduce middlemen margins by 14–18% in non-perishable commodities. In sericulture, Deshpande and Kumar (2023) emphasized that chawki quality, disease control, and training influence rearers' income variability.

Studies on social entrepreneurship indicate that rural producer collectives promote inclusive governance, social capital formation, and gender-responsive enterprise growth (Nair & Joseph, 2022; Patel et al., 2025). Central Silk Board (2024) documented productivity improvements from decentralized chawki rearing centers and integrated cocoon procurement hubs.

However, specific evidence linking *FPO-driven social entrepreneurship models* to *livelihood security outcomes* of *silkworm rearers* remains inadequate, making this study both timely and essential.

Materials and Methods

All data were collected between January 2022 and March 2025.

Study Area

Three major sericulture districts were selected:

- Kolar, Karnataka
- Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu
- Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh

Sampling

A total of 450 respondents:

- 225 FPO members
- 225 non-members
- 9 FPO directors
- 18 extension officials
- 6 reelers
- 3 chawki center managers were interviewed.

Data Collection

- Household surveys (structured and semi-structured)
- Focus group discussions (12 FGDs)
- Enterprise financial records (2022–2025)
- Market linkage documentation
- CSB productivity databases

Analytical Approaches

- Difference-in-Difference (DID) model
- Livelihood Security Index (LSI)
- Value Chain Efficiency (VCE) scoring
- Enterprise Sustainability Score (ESS)
- Propensity Score Matching (PSM) to reduce sampling bias
- Cost–Benefit Ratio (CBR)

Results and Discussion

Economic Impact of FPO Participation (2022–2025)

Table 1. Economic Indicators of FPO vs. Non-FPO Rearers

Indicator	FPO Members	Non-Members
Cocoon yield (kg/100 dfl)	66.2	53.9
Price realization (₹/kg)	703	587
Input cost/dfl (₹)	492	674
Net income/cycle (₹)	12,480	7,980
Annual income from sericulture (₹)	3.78 lakh	2.56 lakh

Data show marked economic advantages for FPO members from 2022–2025. Cocoon yield increased by 22.9% due to access to certified chawki worms, scientific training, and disease-control packages promoted by FPOs. Price realization improved due to collective auctions, digital platforms, and direct reeler linkages. Input costs decreased significantly owing to bulk procurement, standardized disinfectants, and subsidized leaf production systems. Annual income increased by nearly 48%, directly improving livelihood resilience. DID analysis confirmed that 71% of the income variation was attributable to FPO interventions rather than external market conditions. These findings strongly support the economic empowerment effect of FPO-driven entrepreneurship.

Social and Institutional Empowerment

Table 2. Social Indicators

Indicator	FPO Members	Non-Members
Women's participation (%)	58	27
Access to institutional credit (%)	76	29
Training sessions attended/year	4.2	1.4
Social participation index	High	Moderate
Leadership representation (%)	34	9

Result

Social empowerment significantly improved under FPO-led social enterprises. Women's participation more than doubled due to targeted livelihood programs—mulberry sapling nurseries, cocoon sorting units, charkha operations, and self-help group linkage projects. Access to institutional credit rose sharply, with FPOs enabling joint-liability financing and negotiation with NABARD, Canara Bank, and cooperative banks. Member households attended over four training programs annually covering chawki rearing, hygiene, disinfection protocols, and marketing strategies. Leadership representation among women reached 34%, indicating strong gender-inclusion outcomes. The social participation index, including involvement in meetings, enterprise committees, and extension events, showed significantly higher values for FPO members. These results demonstrate that FPO-driven social entrepreneurship fosters social capital, community cohesion, and institutional inclusion.

Value Chain Strengthening

FPOs introduced major value-chain improvements:

- Establishment of decentralized chawki rearing centers (DCRCs)
- Collective mulberry sapling nurseries
- Integrated cocoon procurement centers
- Adoption of CSB e-Kokoon digital marketplace
- Direct supply agreements with reelers in Ramanagara and Dharmavaram
- Standardized quality testing protocols (moisture %, filament length)

Outcomes:

- Value-chain efficiency increased by 28%
- Price fluctuation reduced from 19% to 11%
- Cocoon rejection rate dropped by 31%
- Average transaction time reduced from 72 hours to 14 hours

FPOs played a central role in upgrading weak, fragmented traditional chains into coordinated, market-linked rural enterprises.

Livelihood Security Index (LSI)

Component	FPO LSI Score	Non-FPO Score
Income stability	0.78	0.49
Risk reduction	0.73	0.41
Social capital	0.81	0.52
Access to assets	0.69	0.45
Skill enhancement	0.74	0.38
Overall LSI	**0.75**	**0.46**

FPO members achieved substantially higher livelihood security over 2022–2025 due to improved income, reduced disease vulnerability, and greater integration with formal markets.

Conclusion

The findings strongly establish that FPO-driven social entrepreneurship between 2022 and 2025 significantly transformed the sericulture livelihood ecosystem in India. Economic gains, social empowerment, gender inclusion, institutional integration, and value-chain strengthening were consistently higher for FPO members. FPOs acted as enterprise hubs, enabling access to credit, technology, digital markets, training, and collective bargaining. These impacts contributed to higher livelihood security, reduced production risks, and more competitive cocoon value chains. To scale these benefits nationwide, policymakers must expand FPO incubation programs, strengthen digital marketing systems, invest in decentralized chawki centers, and enhance women-led entrepreneurial models. FPO-led social entrepreneurship thus represents a sustainable pathway to rural prosperity and global competitiveness in India's silk sector.

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ISBN 978-93-90357-65-9

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