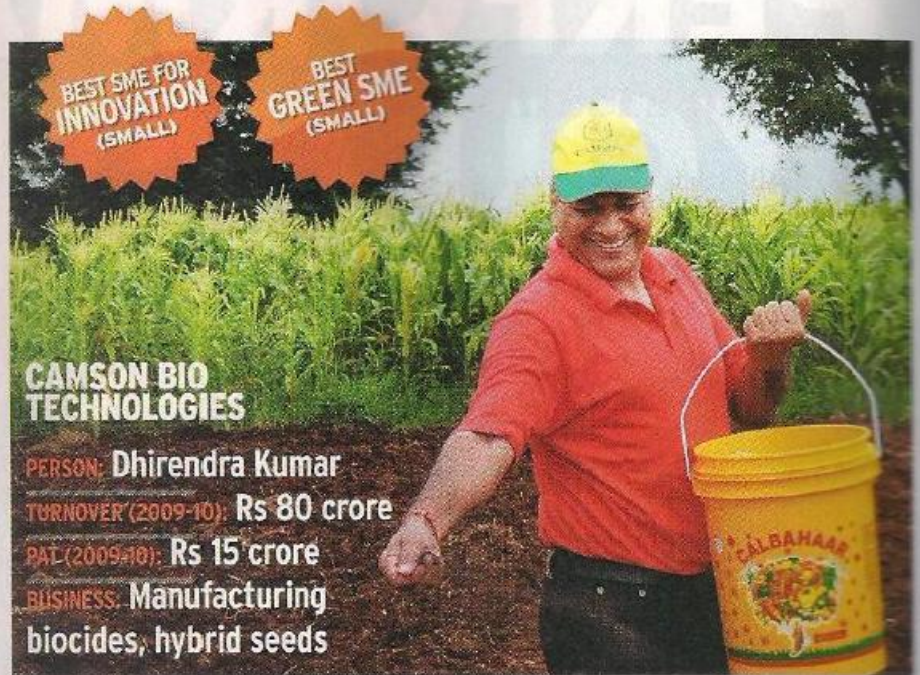


SPECIAL REPORT BT-YES Bank Best SMEs

Killer Apps

For nearly a decade, biotechnologist Dhirendra Kumar's Camson Bio Technologies had no product. He had chucked up a job to set up the company in 1993, but it was only in 2001 that Calphomil biocide, a pesticide with natural organisms, successfully hit the market. Today, he has a portfolio of 27 biocides, seven biofertilisers and 45 hybrid seeds including one for a watermelon that fits into middle class refrigerators. "We are the first to develop this freezer watermelon," says Kumar.

He is content with Camson's growth rate of 35-50 per cent, and keeps it debt-free, scarred by those early days, when he used to live on one meal a day, struggled to pay his son's tuition fee and survived on the goodwill of his landlord and staff. He is now trying out a franchisee model, selling farmers seeds of cash crops, biofertilisers and biocides — and advice — in return for a revenue share. "Not only will our seeds give them higher yields, they will also be growing a produce that is healthier." He has so far done this with 1,200 acres. Meanwhile, he is exploring Singapore, Egypt and Dubai for his products.



K.R. BALASUBRAMANYAM