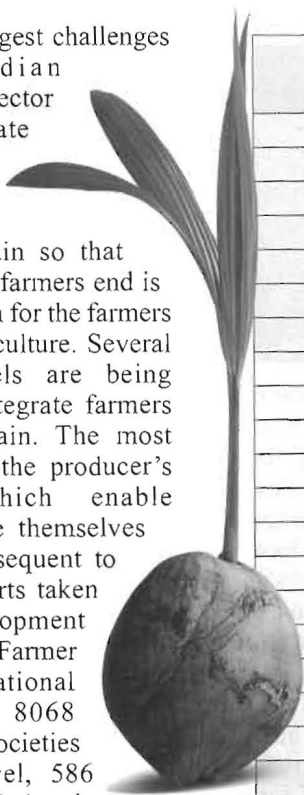


FPOs gearing up to bridge the demand supply gap in dwarf coconut seedlings

● **Pramod P Kurian**, Assistant Director, Coconut Development Board, Kochi-11

One of the biggest challenges of Indian agriculture sector is how to integrate farmers, especially the small and marginal farmers with the value chain so that the net return at the farmers end is remunerative enough for the farmers to stay back in agriculture. Several institutional models are being tried in India to integrate farmers with the value chain. The most common model is the producer's cooperatives, which enable farmers to organise themselves as collectives. Subsequent to the continuous efforts taken by Coconut Development Board, the three tier Farmer Producer Organizational structure with 8068 Coconut Producer Societies in the bottom level, 586 Coconut Producers Federations in the middle level and 36 Coconut Producer Companies at the apex level is formed in the country now.

Coconut Development Board continuously requested the Coconut Producer Societies, Federations and Companies to initiate the production of quality dwarf coconut seedlings. On realizing the necessity of producing dwarf coconut seedlings suitable for producing various coconut products many of the FPOs started establishing dwarf coconut nurseries. A reason for FPOs restraining from establishing dwarf coconut nursery was the non availability of good dwarf nuts from seed gardens. Understanding this difficulty, Coconut Development Board identified suitable dwarf coconut seed gardens in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and



Company Name	Seedling Production (Nos)
Palakkad	45000
Kuttiady	30000
Kaipuzha	7000
Thirukochi	10000
Vadakara	13500
Tirur	30500
Tejaswini	30000
Kozhikode	10000
Kadathanad	30000
Kodungallur	25180
Karappuram	3900
Koyilandy	20000
Nilambur	15500
Perambra	15200
Ponnani	10000
Thamarassery	20000
Kottayam	10000
Pathanamthitta	10000
Idukki	6500
Total	342280

Andhra Pradesh enabling the farmer collectives to procure seednuts from these sources. Board has posted the details of these gardens in its website, www.coconutboard.nic.in.

Even after repeated persuasion and follow ups from Board's side, Coconut Producer Societies, Federations and Companies are still reluctant to start dwarf coconut nurseries of their own and depend on Board's DSP Farms for dwarf coconut seedlings. The Farm Manager of DSP Farm, Neriyaamangalam, Kerala has taken necessary steps to produce 3.25 lakh seedlings during the current year. Under the scheme, Replanting and Rejuvenation of coconut Gardens, Board is committed to produce and distribute a large number of coconut dwarf seedlings to the beneficiaries.

Hence the Board finds it very difficult to provide seedlings to all the needy farmers. The dwarf seedling production by state machineries is also meager.

Since the demand supply gap is so wide, Coconut Development Board is prompting and giving target to the Farmer Producer Organisations to produce maximum dwarf coconut seedlings. Since 365 Coconut Producer Federations were formed in Kerala during March 2015, Board, fixed a target of sowing 10000 seed nuts per Federation for a minimum of 300 federation expecting to produce 18 lakhs quality dwarf coconut seedlings in the coming two years. The subject was seriously discussed during the monthly company review meetings held at Coconut Development Board. Slowly the procurement and sowing of dwarf seed nuts by Coconut Farmer Producer Companies have started picking up. So far, around 3.5 lakhs dwarf seed coconuts were procured and sown by the Producer Companies across Kerala under the technical guidance of Board. The details of the production of seedlings by the Producer Companies in Kerala is shown in Table .

The outcome of this initiation of Coconut Development Board is expected to start yielding result from 2019 onwards enhancing the production of coconut suitable for tender coconut, extra virgin coconut oil, coconut milk, neera etc. Our products will have good demand both in domestic and international markets. Coconut Development Board dreams of a day when well educated youth including females tap Neera and the small statured coconut palm offers a better reward than paid by any MNC. "Arise and pursue your dreams." ■