



Coconut Cultivation in India - A SWOT Analysis

V. Rajagopal and S. Arulraj

Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod - 671 124, Kerala

Introduction

India is a major producer of coconut in the world. The country produced 12.129 million nuts from an area of 1.77 million hectares during 2000 with an average productivity of 6800 nuts/ha. Coconut cultivation in the country is mainly in the hands of small and marginal farmers with more than 80% of the coconut holdings of less than 0.40 ha. size. The Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) and the State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) have identified a number of technologies by which the coconut production and productivity in the country could be improved significantly. The country has vast natural resources and infrastructural facilities that could make this task an achievable one. However, the coconut sector suffers from a few major weaknesses which should be tackled effectively for achieving the set goals.

A SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats) analysis is an important tool for analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in a system. The analysis will help the policy makers and managers to formulate effective management programmes. Based on the rich experience gained by the authors over the years, findings gathered from various studies/surveys and observations made in different seminars/meetings, an attempt was made to undertake a SWOT analysis on coconut cultivation in India and the results are presented in this paper.

Coconut Cultivation in India

Strengths

Coconut is a perennial crop with continuous production of nuts and other marketable products.

- Wider adaptability to ecosystem.
- Established management practices for sustained yield levels.
- Time tested and proven technologies for adoption at farmers' level with scope for inter/multi/mixed crops.
- Innumerable products/byproducts of high economic value.
- High employment opportunities.
- High potential for export of products and earnings in international markets.
- Health promoting food products and eco-friendly non-food items.
- Great stake for agro-industries and community development.

Weaknesses

- Predominance of small and marginal holdings
- Less marketable surplus
- Fluctuations in productivity
- Prone to attack by abiotic and biotic factors
- Inadequate knowledge and poor adoption of technologies
- Market based on one or two products only
- Lack of infrastructure for marketing
- Insufficiency of agro-based industries

Opportunities

- Evaluation of the largest number of germplasm for a given purpose/utilization
- Enhancement of knowledge through intensive training programmes

- Greater scope for adoption of technologies with refinement
- Promotion of community level approach for augmenting farm income
- Potential source for women empowerment through self-help groups
- Restructuring the market base linkages with agro-corporations/industries
- Excellent scope for product diversification and addition of high value to products

Threats

- Decline in farm income imposed due to various factors - market price, infestation by pests/diseases, adverse weather
- Neglect of the garden leading to poor yield levels
- Increase in unemployment of youth and women
- Non-competitiveness at global level
- Depression in coconut community

Coconut Cultivation in Kerala

The SWOT analysis presented above may vary from region to region. An in depth analysis with reference to Kerala State was undertaken and the results are presented here:

Strengths

- Largest producer in India (Kerala's production - 5496 million nuts)
- Largest area under coconut cultivation (Kerala's area - 9.36 lakh ha. spread throughout the state)
- Coconut is mingled with the State's culture



- Existence of reputed Research Institute for improving the coconut sector
- Vast human resources with high literacy rate
- Well organized extension network (Krishi Bhavans)

Weaknesses

- Lower productivity as compared to neighbouring states
- Incidence of diseases and pests
- Poor soil fertility and productivity especially in the laterite belt
- More than 80 percent of the area is under rainfed conditions
- Perennial nature of the crop which inhibits frequent changes in the farming/cropping systems in line with the emerging situations
- Absentee land lordism reflecting on poor management of coconut gardens

Opportunities

- Transfer of technology especially in the field of nutrient, soil and water management
- Strengthening the on - farm processing and value addition
- Increasing the per unit area productivity through inter/mixed cropping and adoption of farming system approach
- Adoption of management practices to improve the productivity in root (wilt) affected gardens
- Adoption of Integrated Pest and Disease Management technologies
- Women empowerment in post harvest technology
- Improving employment for rural youth in production sector

Threats

- Low level of technology adoption
- Low productivity and lower technical efficiency

- Fluctuating market prices
- Waning interest of coconut farmers in farming

Suggestions

The results of the study presented in this paper indicate vast potential available in the sector for improving the coconut sector. Research and development agencies may formulate/modify development strategies so that strengths and opportunities in the system are effectively tackled to tackle the weaknesses and improve the coconut sector for improving welfare of the growing community. The study clearly revealed the scope for exploitation of opportunities enhancing the ultimate welfare of coconut cultivators. This also suggests policy planners to evolve strategies keeping in view the utmost demands for alleviating poverty.

DGFT Announces Countries List of Export House Status

The Government has announced the countries in Latin America, the Commonwealth of Independent States and Sub-Saharan Africa region to which exports can be made by domestic units under the reduced export performance criteria for attaining recognition as an 'export house' under its Exim Policy.

As an export promotion measure, the Government had in the Exim Policy for 2002-07 announced that units exporting an average free on board (f.o.b.) value of Rs. 5 crores to these markets during the preceding three licensing years would be granted an 'export house' status.

Under normal circumstances, units are required to maintain an average f.o.b. value of Rs. 15 crores during the preceding three licensing years for achieving an 'export house' status.

A circular issued by the Directorate-General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has listed out as many as 49 countries in the African region that would be covered under the reduced export performance criteria for attaining the status of 'export house'. The countries named in the circular include Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania. India's total trade with the Sub Saharan Africa region stood at \$3.3 billion in 2000.

While 12 countries including Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine have been named for the CIS region, the circular also listed out the names of Latin American countries including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Surinam.