



# A Summer Cruise through the Coconut World

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Coconut is Nature's gift to mankind – the super food which is natural, healthy, adds to wellness and also enhances immunity. It is a trustworthy companion to humans across the globe. Processing and product diversification of coconut into innovative products occurred later in India in comparison with other major coconut producing countries like Indonesia and Philippines. We were more into domestic consumption of tender and mature coconut and value addition through traditional products like coconut oil, copra and desiccated coconut. Diversification into various products not only opened up a new array of innovative products but also created market avenues in newer areas and among newer segments across the globe. Export prospects increased for coconut products, initially among the Indian diaspora abroad followed by slow penetration to the other segments too. Market promotional activities were facilitated by the Board by extending support for brand promotion, quality certification, participation in international and domestic trade fairs and exhibitions, organizing buyer seller meets etc where coconut products by Indian manufacturers were showcased. The Board facilitated participation of entrepreneurs and exporters in major trade fairs across the globe to create market access for coconut products, to expand markets and develop niche markets for specialized products. The coconut sector was thus slowly cruising and making its own pathway in the export market when the pandemic struck. The activities came to a standstill and lost momentum. It is in this context that the Board thought of creating alternate avenues for market development for coconut products.

To stay relevant and progress further in this digital world, we have to move forward and stay focused. Meetings had already switched to online mode during the pandemic. This was when there came through a thought – why not provide a digital platform for promoting coconut products of processing units facilitated and supported by CDB. Based on discussion with various stakeholders and export organisations, CDB joined with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry(FICCI) to create a Three day Coconut World – a World which showcased the natural beverages, the nutritious sweeteners, the heavenly nectar, the healthy edible oils, the fibre rich foods, curios, artefacts etc – all from the Tree of Life ie., coconut.

## The Coconut Cruise

Coconut World was indeed a Virtual Trade Fair that showcased a variety of diversified processed products from the different parts of coconut – ranging from food, sweeteners and beverages to non-food products. It provided an opportunity for potential buyers and traders from across the globe to undertake a three day sojourn through the diverse coconut products.

The Virtual Trade Fair was organized during 26-28, April 2022, coinciding with the Annadata Devo Bhava Campaign organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and farmers Welfare, Government of India to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence- Azaadi ka Amrutosav. The trade fair undertook showcasing of the coconut products of manufacturers and processors to the domestic and international market.

A Virtual Convention Centre was created by FICCI in the FICCI Bike Platform where the Virtual Trade Fair on Coconut Products 2022 was organized with event branding, walkway in the exterior platform. The trade fair had a lobby area, information desk for technical support, feedback counter and way to the exhibition/conference halls/B2B meeting rooms. Separate registration links were provided to the buyers and sellers in advance so that by the 26<sup>th</sup> of April all had been onboard the virtual platform.

### The Coconut Entrepreneurial Dignitaries

Around 54 major manufacturers of coconut products, mostly edible products, had participated in the Virtual Trade Fair. The manufacturer participation was coordinated by CDB. Further with the support of FICCI, the Board facilitated the onboarding of the individual manufacturers on the platform. The seller's booth had the options of Text chat/Video-Audio chat/display posters on the back wall, logo display, fascia name, display of around ten PDF posters/brochures/product profiles on back wall; an LED screen with the option of films/JPEG files created could be played in loop and live demo option. The manufacturers had used the platform to display product images and videos, brochures, posters, corporate videos showcasing the facilities in the processing centres and the process of production, contact details etc. Live interaction facility with manufacturers was also extended with business enquiry forms to support enquiries. There were visitor logs accessible to each entrepreneur to facilitate offline interactions. The participants had the facility to arrange B2B meetings with registered visitors. The manufacturers could generate report of the buyers visiting the stall, queries received, meetings scheduled etc for further follow up action too.

### The Coconut Seekers

FICCI promoted the event through the various unit offices of FICCI in India for sourcing domestic buyers and the international offices for sourcing overseas buyers. The trader directory of the International Coconut Community was also utilized by the Board for sourcing international buyers. FICCI also organized campaigns in the social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Ads, YouTube, Whatsapp and Email Marketing. Around 347 buyers from across the globe had registered as buyers in the platform. There were over 1100 visits by interested buyers to the various booths in the platform during the three day period.

The fair had an extended one day period and the enquiries could be traced back by the manufacturers for a further three week period in order to capitalize and undertake follow up through activities for each and every enquiry received virtually.

### Outcomes of the event

Four B2B sessions were organized with leading players like Lulu Group, NESTO group, Flipkart and Amazon. The buyer groups explained in detail on the registration process and the modus operandii for inclusion as vendor and display of products for sale. The manufacturers actively participated with queries on the packaging, quality parameters, credit period, mode of payments, promotional activities etc. All four groups were interested to organize promotional drives for coconut products in association with the Board and FICCI within and outside India, especially the Middle East.

Apart from the group business events, around 371 individual B2B meetings were scheduled during the event days of Virtual Trade Fair. These events were organized using the provision extended by the platform by sending meeting requests and scheduling meetings with the mutual consent of the buyers and the sellers.

### The take aways

The fair provided an opportunity for the micro and small enterprises to reach out to the consuming world with quality products. It was indeed a learning experience for the small scale manufacturers of coconut products to package and present their products in the virtual world portraying their strong



## Obituary - Sugata Ghose



Coconut sector in India lost a scholar and leader during the month of May who contributed much to the coconut community. Shri. Sugata Ghose, former Chief Coconut Development Officer, Coconut Development Board passed away in Kolkata on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2022. He served as the Chief Coconut Development Officer of the Board from December 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015.

Shri. Sugata Ghose, a postgraduate in Plant Pathology started his official career in Tea Board in 1979. He joined Coconut Development Board in 1986 as Deputy Director and subsequently served as Director at various offices of the Board. He had provided unstinted support to the Board in the preparation and implementation of various schemes of the Board in the country. He was a voracious reader and had definite opinions on the developmental initiatives for the coconut sector.

He maintained very good relations with the collaborating institutions and worked hand in hand for the sustained development of the sector. Though a pathologist, he was very strong in economics and made valid contributions to the various recommendations from the Board for improving trade of coconut and its products. Shri. Ghose had represented the country at the International COCOTECH Conference and Exhibition organized by Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC) in Sri Lanka in 2014. He was very motivating to the officers and was instrumental in deputing CDB officials for the International Training on Coconut organized by Coconut Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Tropical Agriculture Sciences (CRICATAS), China. He was the plenipotentiary delegate from India during the APCC Session meeting held in the Federated States of Micronesia. He was also a member of the Technical Working Group of APCC and had participated in the meetings in Kochi, Bangkok in 2015 and Bali in 2016. He represented India at the International Conference on Coconut Oil in Bangkok in 2015. He is survived by his wife Reeta Ghose and son Sahaj Ghose. Coconut Development Board family deeply mourn the death of Shri. Sugata Ghose.



points –nutritive, medicinal or health attributes and also look ahead for improving quality, packaging and promotions. The objective was to exploit the potential of the virtual platform to the benefit of the numerous coconut product manufacturers. The manufacturers gained access to retail giants like Flipkart, Lulu, Amazon and Nesto which could be further followed through by one to one interactions resulting in business relations. The virtual trade fair was also a learning experience for the Board and gave insights into the needs of the buyers and the

ways and means to improve the market promotional activities of coconut products. With increased competitiveness for Indian manufacturers with the convergence of the international and domestic prices, the potential for export of coconut products is on the rise and we hope that the entrepreneurs are able to capitalize the opportunities that have opened up. This will not only stabilize India's position as a leading exporter of coconut products but will also transfer the benefits back to the millions of small holder coconut farmers. ■