

Intercropping of fruits and vegetable crops in coconut garden in Gujarat

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Coconut is one of the important plantation crops of Gujarat state particularly in coastal areas. State enjoys 1600 kms of coastal belt (the highest for any state in the country) most suitable for coconut plantation. About 60 per cent of the area and production of coconut comes from the undivided coastal districts of Junagadh, Bhavnagar, Valsad, Gir Somnath and Devbhumi Dwarka. The traditional area is predominantly of tall varieties of coconut which thrive for more than 80 years. Coconut is considered as the cash crop of more than 5 lakh people residing in the coastal belt. In the state, coconut farmers are facing problems like fragmented holding, scattered production, homestead nature of cultivation, lack of skilled manpower, incidence of pest and diseases, lack of adoption of scientific cultivation practices, lack of appropriate mechanization for harvesting and small scale processing and lack of awareness about improved technologies.

Coconut gardens offer excellent opportunities to exploit the interspace potential for maximizing returns per unit area. Coconut based cropping systems involving cultivation of compatible crops in the interspaces of coconut and integration with other enterprises like dairying, fishery, piggery unit offer considerable scope for increasing production and productivity per unit area, time and inputs by more efficient utilization of resources like sunlight, soil, water and labour. Under such a cropping system, all the management practices and component production systems should be able to maintain high productivity, profitability and sustainability of the existing coconut palms to maximize economic yield of the farm. Sustainability is the main objective of farming system, where the production process is



optimized through efficient utilization of the inputs in safeguarding the environment. Fruit, spices, tuber and forage crops are important crops that can be grown as intercrop in coconut gardens in the South Gujarat region. Studies conducted at AICRP (Palms), Regional Horticultural Research Station, ASPEE College of Horticulture and Forestry, Navsari and other research institutions of the country have unambiguously proved the technical feasibility and economic viability of intercropping as compared to the monocropping of coconut. Many farmers also have adopted the technology and realized the profitability and sustainability in the coconut garden. The success story of a farmer who could integrate fruit crop as well as vegetables in coconut garden and achieved economic benefits is briefed here.

Mr. Harshad Raghunand Bhandari is a young enterprising farmer of the village Nargol from Umergaon tahsil of Valsad district of Gujarat state. He is a graduate and actively participates in horticulture exhibitions, training programmes etc. and also encourage to other farmers for cultivation of coconut by adopting coconut based cropping system. He has built a good rapport with scientists



and is continuously in contact with the AICRP (Palms), NAU, Navsari and state horticulture department of Gujarat state. He started coconut cultivation with his two brothers during 1998 in 17 ha area and presently his garden is with palms of various ages and different varieties like WCT, COD and MGD. He adopted the coconut based integrated cropping system model in his farm after visiting AICRP Palms centre at Navsari and started cultivating different vegetable crops (brinjal, okra, tomato, cucumber and cowpea) and fruit crops (banana) as an intercrop under young as well as old coconut garden in a systematic manner for the last three years in a one hectare garden. For all the crops, he adopted recommended package of practices with regard to nutrient management

and water management. For supplying the required nutrients, organic manures viz., FYM/ poultry manure/goat manures were used. The biomass from the crops is being recycled in the garden in the form of mulching and converting it into suitable vermicompost. He harvests the nuts for tendernut purpose, wherein the vendor himself harvests the nuts and gives the prevailing market price as there is growing demand for tendernut in the state. By his experience, he has realised increase in the yield of coconut under intercropped garden compared to monocrop apart from getting the additional income from the intercrops. The economics (average of 3 yrs) of the system indicated that, the variable cost of production involved to maintain one ha of the system was around Rs. 1,15,000/- to Rs. 1,20,000/- per year and the average net return realized from all the crops was to the tune of Rs. 2.85 lakhs to 3.45 lakhs/ha per year depending upon the market price of the crops. Thus, from his experience it was realized that, cropping system with banana and vegetables in coconut is highly profitable and remunerative over a period of time in the South region of Gujarat.

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Cabinet approves hike in MSP for Copra for 2019 season



The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval for increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Fair Average Quality (FAQ) of Milling Copra Rs.9521/- per quintal for 2019 season from Rs. 7511/-per quintal in 2018 and the MSP of Ball Copra has been increased to Rs.9920/- per quintal for 2019 season from Rs. 7750/- per quintal in 2018.

The MSP of Copra is expected to ensure appropriate minimum prices to the farmers and step up investment in coconut cultivation and thereby production and productivity in the country. The approval is based on the recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). CACP, an expert body, which takes into account the cost of production, trends in the domestic and international prices of edible oils, overall demand and supply of copra and coconut oil, cost of processing of copra into coconut oil and the likely impact of the recommended MSPs on consumers, while recommending the MSPs.

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) and National Cooperative Consumer Federation of India Limited(NCCF) would continue to act as Central Nodal Agencies to undertake price support operations at the Minimum Support Prices in the coconut growing states.