

Tamilnadu excels in coconut cultivation

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Coconut, predominantly a small holders' crop, occupies a prime position in the cultural, social and economic lives of millions of people across the world. Globally the crop has coverage of 12.15 million hectares and an annual production of 64.89 billion nuts spanning across 93 countries. India is the second largest producer of coconut in the world accounting for 24.24% in production, first in productivity and third in area under cultivation (15.59%).

Coconut Scenario in Tamil Nadu

Coconut production in Tamil Nadu is significantly increasing on account of congenial climate and proper management of the coconut gardens by the farmers. Tamilnadu is the second largest producer of coconut in the country with an area of 4,10,149 ha. under coconut cultivation with a production of 58,942 lakh nuts (2010-11). The state has recorded an increase of 2.42% in area and 6.26% in production in 2010-11. The average yield per palm is 14,371 nuts per ha which recorded 5.00% increase over the previous year.

Among the coconut tract of southern India, Tamilnadu holds foremost share in coconut area and production. Coconut cultivation is considered to be one of the major livelihood supports to 3.15 lakh farmers in the state.

Production of Seedlings

The Department of Agriculture,

Area, production and productivity of coconut in Tamil Nadu (2010-11)				
S. No	District	Area (Ha)	Production (lakh nuts)	Productivity (Nuts/ha)
1	Coimbatore	80712	11970	14831
2	Tirupur	49598	4086	8238
3	Thanjavur	33271	5221	15692
4	Dindigul	28284	4902	17331
5	Kanyakumari	24916	4533	18193
6	Vellore	22292	2081	9335
7	Theni	18715	3159	16880
8	Krishnagiri	15887	3217	20249
9	Tirunelveli	15621	1292	8271
10	Salem	14278	1994	13966
11	Madurai	11280	2251	19956
12	Erode	10987	1679	15282
13	Virudhunagar	9512	1082	11375
14	Ramanathapuram	8363	636	7605
15	Pudukottai	8214	1248	15194
16	Dharmapuri	7160	1421	19846
17	Namakkal	6654	1418	21310
18	Sivaganga	6599	1384	20973
19	Thiruchirappally	6397	1215	18993
20	Karur	5937	659	11100
21	Thoothukudi	5876	673	11453
22	Thiruvarur	5142	757	14722
23	Nagapattinam	4041	682	16877
24	Kancheepuram	3442	386	11214
25	Cuddalore	2230	384	17220
26	Villupuram	1948	196	10062
27	Thiruvalluar	1137	133	11697
28	Thiruvannmalai	719	106	14743
29	Perumbalur	541	143	26433
30	Ariyalur	338	33	9763
31	The Nilgiris	58	1	1724
State		410149	58942	14371

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Chennai- 6

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and the Coconut Development Board are playing major roles in improving the productivity and production per unit by the way of producing and supplying quality planting materials through various schemes. Many coconut farmers in

Theni and Pollachi area are also producing hybrid seedlings in the farmers' field itself with the help of agricultural scientists and experts with out any assistance from any government departments.

The Central as well as the state

Hybridisation, need of the hour

Murugan(46), native of Gudalore, Kambam is a teacher who has opted coconut hybridization as his means of livelihood. It is 20 years since he is into farming. He is having 3000 trees in his 70 acre garden. In order to arrest the spreading of root wilt disease, he brought Cowghat Orange Dwarf seedlings from the DSP farm of the Board at Mandya before 10 years. After this, he is doing hybridization in his own garden and planted his own hybrids in 5 acres each year. With the help of a technician from one of the renowned hybrid farms, in his own garden, he is doing hybridization and is selling DxT seedlings @Rs.180. He has already sold 5700 seednuts



COD and MYD in Murugan's garden

to Tamil Nadu state agriculture department. Murugan who is producing 20000 hybridized seedlings in a year has already sold

1 lakh seedlings so far. Murugan is also doing tender coconut harvesting. Murugan is available on 9042494347.

government has established coconut nurseries in 111.74 acre for the production of quality seedlings in the state which adds to the productivity of the state. The state government is procuring seed nuts of tall, TxD and DxT varieties for producing seedlings and for supplying to farmers. During 2010-11

government has supplied 3.411 lakhs Tall, 3.930 lakh TxD and 11,000 DxT coconut seedlings to farmers.

Cultivation

Most of the gardens in Tamilnadu are maintained as mono crop with wider spacing. In some

areas multi cropping system is also practiced with a combination of coconut + vegetables + cattle + fruits. Since the state is receiving optimum rainfall, most of the farmers are adopting drip irrigation system. This in turn, arrest the spread of pest and diseases. Majority of the coconut gardens are maintained very well by adopting integrated nutrient management as per the recommendations of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University. The recommended fertilizer dosage is being used optimally. The gardens are free from major pests and diseases. In some patches where the tall variety is predominantly grown, eriophyid mite infestation is seen and as a preventive measure, farmers are undertaking root feeding with Azadiractin.

Copra

In Tamil Nadu more than 50%



A mother palm of MYD variety

of coconut is converted to copra and equal quantity of coconut is traded in the form of partially dehusked coconut for supplying to non traditional states in India. In copra production, Tamil Nadu stands at the top position which help the coconut farmers economically. As on December 2012, 29,732 tonnes of copra is produced in the state. (ie. 50% of total production of the country). Around 50 copra driers are established for copra production in the state.

Tender Coconut

The increasing health consciousness among the people has made more importance to natural drinks like tender coconut water and business giants like Pepsico and Coco cola are setting up tender coconut processing units. Since

Realizing the potential of tender coconut market

D. Gavaskar from Theni is a farmer cum businessmen who has identified the vast potential of tender coconut harvesting as well as marketing. Gavaskar's 10 acre coconut garden is having 800 coconut palms of COD, MYD, DXT and tall varieties. Like other farmers of his area he prefers tender coconut harvesting since it can be harvested at the sixth month as well as the premium price it fetches. From Theni district alone around 20,000 tender nuts are traded every day to Chennai, Madurai, Trichy and Kerala. Along with the tender nuts he is getting from his garden, Gavaskar is procuring tender nuts from the nearby gardens and is selling nearly 5000 nuts per day. He is buying nuts @ Rs. 11-13 and is selling @ Rs. 17. Gavaskar is available on 8675956968.

Farmers fix the price of tender coconut based upon meteorological report and market trends

Annamalai Srinivasan, an agriculture graduate is the Secretary of Pollachi based Tender Coconut Grower's Association. Himself a farmer, Srinivasan owns 70 acres of land out of which 60 acres is planted with coconut alone. In 1991, he made his first coconut planting with 1000 Deejay seedlings. Later on with the help of his classmate, he himself did hybridization and planted another 2000 dwarfs and hybrids in his own garden. Now he is selling DXT seedlings @ Rs.130. He recollects that, since his was Deejay's seedlings, he used to get Rs. 5 per tender nut when the prevailing price

was Rs.2 only, way back in 1995. Once he realized the potential of tender coconut market, he planted more tender coconut varieties. Tender Coconut Growers Association is fixing the price of tender nut based upon meteorological report and the market reports of metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. Nearly one lakh tender nuts are traded everyday from Pollachi to Chennai. At the initiative of this Association, nearly one lakh tender nuts are traded to neighbouring states like Andhra and Maharastra. Srinivasan can be contacted on 9942930400.

Tamilnadu being a giant in coconut production there is immense scope for developing processing units. Tender coconut consumption needs to be promoted since it is the only natural unpolluted, undiluted and unpoisoned drink. Intensive promotional campaigns can be undertaken under the auspices of the public relations department to increase consumption of tender coconut which will not only provide a nutritious, natural health drink, but will also aid in increased and sustained returns to the coconut growers. CDB has been advocating the consumption of tender coconut water. The Government of Tamil Nadu has already initiated activities for promotion of tender coconut as a health drink and an amount of Rs. 10 crores has been earmarked in the budget for the same. It is also planned to initiate more tender coconut parlours and tender coconut processing units in Tamilnadu with the financial support

from CDB and State Government.

The present day farmers of Tamil Nadu are keen to cultivate maximum tender coconut varieties like, COD, CGD, MYD, MGD and MOD. In India, Tamil Nadu is the only state where maximum tender coconut varieties are cultivated. The reason being that tender coconut can be harvested in the sixth month where as mature coconut can be harvested in the 10th month only. Moreover if the coconuts are harvested at tender stage, the incidence of pest and disease can also be reduced and the production will increase proportionally. The price of tender coconut at farm gate itself fetches Rs.13-14/- which goes up to Rs.18-19/- during peak summer. If the farmers are harvesting more tender coconut, the production and productivity will increase manifold.

It is felt that the tender coconut revolution has already begin in

Tamil Nadu. Farmers may be motivated to plant 25% dwarf, 25% hybrid and 50% tall varieties so that the farmer can run his farm as well as his livelihood in a better way without any economic crisis and simultaneously the production and productivity can also be increased in a better way which will make the nation the world leader in this sector. Organized efforts to tap this sector is the need of the hour. Farmers from Pollachi area have already formed the Tender Coconut Growers Association. More than 350 farmers are now deciding the price of their tender coconut.

Value addition

Coconut cultivation and allied industries have now become the main source of livelihood and employment security for the chunk of the population in the state. There are about 7000 coir based industries and 200 coconut based industries in the state which provide employment opportunities to more than a lakh of people in the state. Under Technology Mission on Coconut, Board has supported 44 processing units in the state making the state to stand foremost in national coconut industry. The state has huge investments in coconut based industries like shell powder, activated carbon, shell charcoal, desiccated coconut, coconut oil, copra and packed tender nut water units.

Export

In India, Tamil Nadu stands top in coconut exports also. The state contributes to about 60% of the country's total export of coconut and coconut products. Tamil Nadu exports various products of coconut to various nations mainly fresh coconut, desiccated coconut



Coconut value added products of Tamil nadu based entrepreneurs

powder, copra, packed tender coconut water, shell powder, activated carbon, coconut shell charcoal, coir based products etc. As on today, Board has issued 861 Registration cum Membership Certificate to coconut product exporters out of which 390 are from Tamil Nadu alone.

CDB programmes in the state

Coconut Development Board is implementing various programmes in the state with futuristic planning. The planning is done in a manner to ensure that the entire benefits are gained by the farming community. Tamilnadu, being one of the important states with coconut cultivation the implementation of schemes for improving the farm level income of coconut farmers will gain more interest and active participation from farmers. The higher productivity and huge investments in coconut sector makes the state a leader in same. Since the Board has a Regional Office in the state itself, the monitoring of the schemes is also smoothly done. The clusters formed

under the scheme Integrated Farming in Coconut Holdings for Productivity Improvement will serve as model farm for adoption of scientific management practices. 'Friends of Coconut Tree' implemented in the state is also expected to make a paradigm shift in the employment pattern of rural youth by bringing in lot of employment opportunities for a secure and safe job profile.

For realizing maximum income, coconut farmers must come forward to form farmer collectives like CPSs and to establish Tender Coconut outlets/ Tender Coconut parlours in the state in the major tourist spots, pilgrim centers, hospitals, hotels and on the waysides of National Highways, State Highways.

The recent initiative of the Government of Tamilnadu to allot 33.46 ha. for CDB for research and extension activities is a positive step. This shows the importance attributed to this crop by the Government of Tamil Nadu for exploiting its maximum potential.