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Dovetailing Coconut farmers in Palakkad

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The Palakkad Coconut Producer Company (PCPCL) formed by federating 24 Coconut producer federations with a farmer strength of 24000 is well ahead in initiating multiple programmes in various fields with an urge to pioneer the best technology in association with some of the premium institutes of the country. PCPCL is having an authorized share capital of Rs 5 Cr. and member farmers have mobilized share of Rs 2.6 Cr. as on 13th August 2015.

Lets have a brief look into the various developmental programmes taken up by PCPCL for the overall growth of coconut farmers.

Research & Development

Having no established model in this industrial vertical, PCPCL had experimented, tested and adapted technologies from Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), Kasargode for the extraction of high quality neera (with pH value of 6.5 to 7.0) and establish a no preservative, nutritious, virgin health drink under the brand name 'Pam Dew'.

PCPCL had created history by establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for research for processing Neera, with one of India's state of the art technological marvel called Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) on a unique revenue sharing model. This seems to be a very rare model with a public sector institute. In the latest review meeting held on 20th July, 2015, CFTRI has informed that they are in the last leg of their trials of the proposed first product research with

two remarkable breakthroughs are ready to be submitted for approval of PCPCL by end of August, 2015. The Team PCPCL and the Team CFTRI are happy to note that the outcome of this research would bring out better products to the world, which will leapfrog India ahead in the segment.

Neera Processing Plant

The processing plant construction is progressing. A honey making unit using vacuum evaporator technology is expected to commence in a month with a honey processing capacity of 500 litres/ hour. Currently PCPCL is

On the special occasion of Onam, PCPCL offer all its member farmers a 'Farmer's Corner' in its 'COCONUT POINTS' to showcase their products! The chemical free farm produces and its value additions can be sold in the PCPCL Retail Chain. Palakkad, being the rice bowl of Kerala, PCPCL introduce varieties of rice, rice flakes, rice powder and value added product blends of rice and coconut, which are sourced directly from member farmers. Farmers are liberated to celebrate Onam. Product Bouquet include, 'Aval Vilayichathu', exotic range of 'Chammanthipodi', mouth watering 'Pazham Paani (Roasted Banana in Coconut Honey)', Dosa Batter, Turmeric Powder, Natural Black Pepper, etc.

in an advance stage of entering into a marketing agreement of PamHoney and PamSugar for entire western and northern region with an experienced trading group, apart from the overseas markets. As the PCPCL had already initiated processing through traditional method, it is expected to deliver the first off-take by 1st week of August, 2015. After the sampling done by this proposed associate of PCPCL, the response they are receiving seems to be overwhelming and they themselves are excited over this response.

Drip Irrigation

Under the farmer welfare programme, PCPCL negotiated hard with M/s. Jain Irrigation Systems Limited for an approximate 1000 acres drip programme and are able to offer approximately 20% discount on the MRP of such high quality pipes and accessories. This programme became slow as it begun to rain again! However, still the material is moving out as the intensity of monsoon is fading out.

Micro Enterprises

As of now, PCPCL has 25000+ shareholding farmers, which is ever increasing and approximately 50000+ farmers are in the ambit of this three tier structure. PCPCL envisages processing at least 20% of the nuts produced by these farmers by establishing at least two micro enterprises in each CPS over a period of two years. The first 12 units among such enterprises are expected to start production soon with the help of financial assistance from Kerala Finance Corporation (KFC). They had already undergone two levels of 'Entrepreneurial Development Programme (EDP)' trainings on building capacity and a final exposure visit to identified institutes would make them freeze the projects, technologies and machinery.

In order to strengthen the activities of federations and societies, PCPCL is also undertaking capacity building and skill

development programmes. FoCT new batches are about to get started and the Neera Technician Training programme is going on as part of the skill development. PCPCL's Human Capital Management (HCM) Division started formally functioning and initiated Communication Skill Enhancement Programme for batches of employees for improving their communication. This division has also initiated a process to identify and develop a management cadre

this is a happy outcome, it is alarming as the sale is down due to the monsoons. The Neera subcommittee has been taking some tough decisions to sustain and move forward. Coconut points established by PCPCL is throughout the district and is getting popular. As on date, 25 coconut points are selling neera, neera honey, syrup, sugar and other coconut products such as coconut oil, chips etc.

Coconut Procurement



selected from educated individuals, especially women, who would be keen to use their knowledge and skill. A key group is formed to work out modalities of conceiving and formulating training modules in affiliation with some of the premium institutes.

The monitoring of activities are being done smoothly by the subcommittees organized by PCPCL.

Neera Subcommittee

Despite all the odds and investments, the neera production across the federations had significantly increased. Though

& Oil Production

The coconut procurement pilot was carried out by Nemmara Block Federation and procured approximately 1.1 Lakhs nuts and distributed approximately 15+ Lakhs to approximately 50+ farmers. This exercise provides key indicators in terms of expenses on wages and transportation costs etc. On further course, strategizing the procurement process with the minimum requirement of working capital in place and also with a clear goal set on the processing of the procured nuts for value additions. Though coconut oil was made of these procured nuts,

partially force sold high quality copra which was prepared through the quality process with No Sulphur, No Chemicals and No Smoke, in the open market in competition with the normal abused copra to keep the cash flow intact! However, the coconut oil made out of this high quality copra is accepted and after initial lukewarm response, the sales graph of PamFresh Coconut Oil is ticking steadily up, thanks to marketing efforts to boost sales initially. Now, PCPCL had come up with one more variant of the PamFresh Coconut Oil by bringing out traditional chak processing and the variant is called 'PamFresh Coconut Oil' – 'Thani Nadan', which retains lot of virgin values of the original coconut oil. Two medicated oil variants are on trials and on completion of successful trials these medicated variants would be introduced in the market.

Equity Mobilization Committee

The equity mobilization committee has been working hard to conduct monthly meeting of CPSs of all federations, where they have been engaged in making the member farmers aware of the importance of building such a Farmer Producer Organization for sustenance. Though most of our farmers are not able to visualize the need and effect of such an organization, some of them get inspired and initiate participating in the process. This engagement

keeps people active in the system. However, our subsidy culture makes our people bargain for petty benefits against the share payments and demand supply of manures for further payment of shares. However, with this committee's outreach drives, the farmers are becoming more and more aware of the significance of the company.

PCPCL knew much in advance, that we are fighting a battle with an undefined battlefield and we need to establish a farsighted strategy to win this and also realised the importance of accurate market data from international arena to evaluate the demand – supply proportions worldwide and also the market dynamics to position our products with added value propositions. Thanks to the support of Coconut Development Board (CDB) and its dynamic team lead by the most enterprising legend of our times, we were directed to committed young entrepreneurs who were as enthusiastic as us on being part of this revolution among farmers. The Sanjivani Naturals Team had done a wonderful job for PCPCL in the last six months by participating in two major organic fairs, one in Germany and another one in London, where they had showcased our flagship products, which received an overwhelming response. They also conducted a deep research in

competitive products in the market and brought some valuable data along with few premium brands of honey and sugar available in the international market.

PCPCL is proud to announce that 'Pam Honey' and 'Pam Sugar' would win hands down, in competition with any of those best products available in the international market. PCPCL also did a study on various other hot moving coconut products including coconut chunks (which is similar to chips) and they are much above the products available in the Indian market.

In exploration of technologies and experimenting through new horizons, PCPCL had engaged professionals as consultants for guiding the organization in right direction. Since the beginning, Team PCPCL was consisting of management graduates from IRMA and Food Technologists from premier institutes like IIT, Kharagpur.

There are multiple associations in exploring technologies with premium institutions and it had always been a learning curve with so many revelations and new horizons. PCPCL had taken weighted average of many such existing technologies before taking some concrete decisions. It was learning all the while and through this process PCPCL realized the merits and demerits of many such methodologies prevailing in the market.

Having no model in this segment, it has been a tight rope walk for PCPCL on completely dark terrains of technology and thanks to various institutions, who walked along with support to explore this unknown path. The MoU with M/s. CFTRI is one among the unique propositions in research which made PCPCL's life much easier, in terms of the time, investment and expertise. PCPCL hopes that this journey will be smoother in the coming days and will also ensure farmers fair, stable and reasonable price. ■

PCPCL - CFTRI research initiative is taking a positive turn after about 1+ years exhaustive struggle in the unknown terrains of Coconut Sap (Neera) research.

The first ever such revenue sharing partnership in research since the inception is producing fanta-fabulous results in bringing out the most chemical free, nutrient rich, natural drink which would disrupt the existing know-how of the products available. PCPCL's belief in creating value for this 'blessing of the nature' (otherwise called 'God's Own Drink') finds positive results!

