

Coconut cultivation - A passion more than a profession

E.Aravazhi and Pramod P Kurian

Assistant Director and Technical Officer, Coconut Development Board

Coconut palms feature in Indian writings dating back more than 3,000 years. Coconut plays an important role in Indian ritual and features in Indian mythology, for it resembles a human head with three marks on its shell like eyes and a mouth and fibre like hair.

When we talk about the history of coconut in Andhra Pradesh the name of late Shri. Sundararama Raju is written in golden letters because of his enduring contribution for the development of coconut cultivation and industry in the state of Andhra Pradesh. He was the founder of East Coast Hybrid Centre, coconut seed garden in Ittikalagunta, Tadepalligudem Village in West Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh. The seed garden was established during 1980 in 70 acres. It was at a time when the farmers were not so concerned about coconut cultivation in Andhra Pradesh, Shi.Sundararama Raju pioneered the expansion of coconut in Andhra Pradesh particularly in costal Andhra Pradesh. Coconut cultivation was a passion than a profession to him. He maintained an extensive collection of literature on coconut, which is difficult to find out even in Universities and libraries. Presently the garden is looked after by his son Shri.Varaprasada Raju.

32 coconut varieties are being maintained in his garden of 70 acers out of which around 20 acers are planted with dwarf



Shri.Varaprasada Raju in the garden

varieties (i.e. COD, CGD, GB, MGD, MYD) which is being utilized for the production of seed nuts including D×T hybrid seedlings. Parent material source for ECT and GB is Andhra Pradesh and CPCRI for all the other varieties.

In his farm, Shri Sundararama Raju had integrated floriculture with coconut cultivation. In addition there exists rare collection of various exotic and indigenous plant species like gerbera, neem trees etc. The garden is also equipped with a well laid out irrigation system which include food, drip and sprinkler, suited to the intercrop established between the palms. The major intercrops cultivated are Heliconia, Ginger, Flowering Banana, Aglonema etc. The farm has eight bore wells for

meeting the water requirement of the farm. Water is being used so judiciously here which projects the importance of water for coconut cultivation

The average productivity of the garden is 160-170 nuts per palm per year. The seed garden is having two retail out lets for selling seedlings, one at Rajahmundry and one at Hyderabad. Planting materials are also sold at Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Chennai and Vishakapatnam. The average return per unit area is more than 2.5 lakhs per acre.

For further information contact;
East Coast Coconut Hybrid Centre
Kunchenapalli Post, Ittikalagunta,
Tadepalligudem, West Godavari -Dt,
Andhra Pradesh - 534 101
E-mail: sundaravanum@gmail.com
Phone : 08818- 222167, 222749. ■