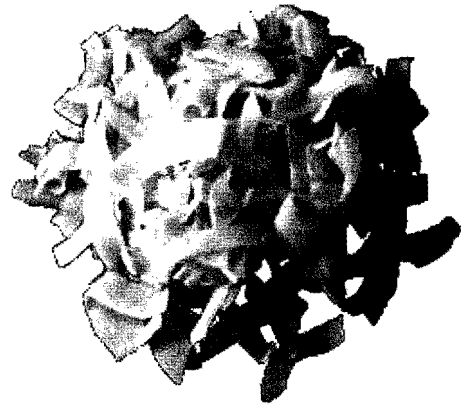


# Processing of Coconut Chips

## The Kalpakam and Kerasree Success Stories

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Coconut plays an important role in the livelihood security of millions of people in the southern states of India. However, this sector faces a number of structural problems mainly arising from the fluctuating price of coconut. The price of coconut at present solely depends on the price of coconut oil in the domestic market which in turn depends on the international prices of edible oils.



**Till recently making of copra was the only processing option at farm level which often failed to ensure reasonable economic returns to the farming community. However, novel products like coconut chips and available technologies for utilization of coconut water to make vinegar and squash extend the scope for community level processing of coconut and in the long run will help the coconut farming communities to realize better returns from coconut cultivation.**

For a successful agro processing enterprise both backward and forward linkages are to be established, which are often overlooked in many developmental programmes. Efforts were made to bridge this felt gap in the processing of coconut products under the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) on 'Value Chain in Coconut' being implemented by

CPCRI for the period 2009-2012. As part of the project women Self Help Groups (SHGs) were formed and the members were provided with technical support for the production of coconut chips. Comprehensive training programme covering various steps involved in preparation of coconut chips were imparted to the members of these groups at Agro Processing Laboratory, CPCRI, Kasaraogd. They were further empowered to make a range of coconut food products by providing training on production of coconut pickle, chutney powder, coconut water squash, vinegar etc. at Technology Development Centre of CDB. Apart from these training programmes, capacity development programmes for



*Women SHG unit engaged in the production of coconut chips*

the SHG members on themes like good processing practices, quality control, procurement of raw material, maintenance of machinery, marketing of value added products, maintenance of accounts and audit etc were also organized. The processing units were formally linked with coconut farmers for assuring procurement of nuts of appropriate maturity. The SHGs sold their products at the local markets by direct marketing and also through intermediaries. They also participated in many exhibitions conducted with the financial support from NAIP in various parts of the state.

The 'Kalpakam' Women SHG unit at Madikkai gramapanchayath and the 'Kerasree' unit at Bedadka gramapanchayath are the two SHGs engaged in the production and marketing of coconut product under NIAP in Kasaragod District. Both these groups are having eight women members each: and all from rural background. Till the formation of SHGs, these women were underemployed for most part of the year without any regular income and were in a state of marginalization in the development process. 'Kudumbasree Mission', the state sponsored poverty alleviation programme facilitated the formation of self help groups of women for taking up income generating activities with arrangements for microcredit facilities. The project sensitization activities brought these two SHGs as partners of the NAIP and helped them to establish coconut processing units in the year 2009. The 'Kalpakam' unit is located at Kalichampoti, PO Madikkai 671314 and the 'Kerasree' unit is located at Kanhirathinkal, PO Bedakam 671541. Smt. Sheena and Smt. Suja are currently the Presidents of these two SHGs and Smt. Sreeja B and Smt. Lakshmi K are the Secretaries in order.

At present around 100 numbers of coconuts are



*Kerasree in an exhibition*



*The coconut chips produced by the SHGs displayed in a departmental store under the brand name 'Magicco'*

being processed per day in each of these units. The coconut chips produced by them is currently marketed in Bangalore for which they signed an MoU with a private distributor. They produce on an average 7 kg of coconut chips from 60 nuts (as it is the capacity of the dryer installed in their unit). The cost of production of chips varies between Rs.160.00 to 185.00 per kg depending upon the procurement rate (Rs.14.00 to 18.00 per kg of coconut). They sell the product at Rs.200 per kg to the distributor. Besides, the members get regular employment and earn Rs.150/- per day as labour charges and also realize better margins from a portion of coconut chips and other value added products by means of direct marketing. Through the experience gained in managing various activities of production and marketing of coconut chips members of both women SHGs opines that they have gained more self confidence and also could develop leadership qualities.

**Recognition in the society, improvement in communication skills, knowledge in financial management, skill for negotiation and ability to actively participate in the development process in their localities are the benefits they could derive by involving in the management of the coconut based product diversification unit.**

Above all, the economic empowerment is the most important benefit accrued, they opined. The success story of the two women SHGs from Kasaragod indicate the potential of coconut chips, a simple but wholesome coconut product, to provide income and employment opportunities in the rural economy of coconut grown areas of the country.

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