

Empowering Youths through Climbing Machine to Enhance Coconut Farmers Prosperity

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Introduction

Achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat, requires strategic interventions, including the development of skilled manpower in coconut plantations. Coconut climbing, a critical component of coconut cultivation, is declining due to safety concerns, an ageing workforce, and lack of trained youth. However this challenge presents an opportunity to equip unemployed youth with machine assisted climbing skills, creating sustainable livelihood opportunities. Training youth in coconut farming and providing access to climbing devices can improve the socio-economic status of marginalized communities, particularly Scheduled Caste (SC) youth. Innovative farm tools reduce drudgery and make farming more attractive to young people. Skilled climbers can provide services for harvesting, crown cleaning, and plant protection, thereby improving farm productivity and profitability. Such initiatives also help farmers continue coconut cultivation despite labour shortages, preventing the decline of agriculture that severely hampers food security, rural

employment, and the national economy

To address the skill gap and promote socio-economic empowerment among SC youth, the ICAR–Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (ICAR-CPCRI), Kasaragod, initiated a skill development programme on coconut climbing under the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP)

In coconut cultivation, operations such as harvesting, crown cleaning, and pest management require skilled climbers. The absence of trained workers often leads to neglect of coconut gardens, resulting in reduced productivity. Delayed harvesting can also cause nut loss due to premature fall and pilferage. During the fiscal year 2024–25, the Institute trained 16 SC youths from Kasaragod district, Kerala, in coconut farming and climbing techniques. The trainees included 10 females aged 18-22 years and 6 males aged 20–23 years. At the end of the training programme, coconut climbing devices were also distributed to the trainees to support them in initiating service-based livelihood activities and encourage self-employment in

coconut farming communities.

This initiative offers a viable livelihood opportunity for unemployed rural youth, enabling them to earn a stable income. Moreover, the programme equips them not only with technical know-how but also fosters social empowerment, improved economic status, and long-term security. It also addresses the labour shortages in coconut farming, preventing the neglect of coconut gardens and supporting the sustainability of the sector. By combining traditional practices with modern technology, the programme revitalizes coconut climbing as a viable profession and will strengthen the coconut production system.

Conclusion

The programme achieved skill development in coconut farming and machine-assisted empowering SC youth while preserving an essential rural occupation. Through the training programme under SCSP, ICAR-CPCRI is developing a skilled workforce and promoting a resilient, productive, and inclusive coconut sector. ■