C. Thamban

Coconut production for prosperity

Since coconut is ideal crop for diversification, it needs to be cultivated to fetch remunerative price on sustainable basis. Here some success stories in different fields are reported.

D. CHANDRASEKHAR CHOWTA, a renowned farmer of Kasaragod, is a frequent visitor to CPCRI, Kasaragod. He is 65 year-old man and is keen on adopting new technologies. He along with his brothers own the 'Chowtaru thotta' (Chowta Estate) in Miyapadav village, Meenja Grama Panchayat of Kasaragod district. He has a land holding of 40 acres under the joint family system in which a variety of crops are being cultivated. In his land he cultivates coconut, cocoa, cashew, vanilla, arecanut and rubber. Banana is also extensively cultivated as an intercrop. He has also taken up subsidiary enterprises such as dairy, vermicomposting and beekeeping.

During 2000, he procured 150 coconut seedlings of Chowghat Orange Dwarf variety of coconut and established a garden exclusively for marketing tender coconuts. Chowghat Orange Dwarf is the most ideal tender coconut variety. He planted it in 2 acres. By 2004, dwarf coconut palms started yielding. Though nowadays coconut does not fetch a remunerative price, there is a good market for tender coconut. Retail/wholesale dealers of tender coconut regularly visit Chouta's farm and purchase tender coconut. And Chouta family gets a very remunerative price for their produce. On an average, 50-60 coconut per tree are harvested for sale, the price being Rs 8-10 per nut, while market price is Rs 3-4 per nut.

Chandrasekharan, Sivam House, Adukkathuparamba, Madikkai post in Kasaragod district, is a testimony to the effectiveness of technology service provided the institute. Chandrasekharan is a farmer having one acre of land and he cultivates coconut, banana and pepper in his farm. Lack of availability of quality organic manure was a major difficulty experienced by him in the efforts for sustainable crop production. During 2008, he became a member of the coconut farmers' cluster. He attended various training programmes on sustainable coconut production technologies including vermicompost production using on-farm wastes including coconut leaves. ATIC supplied nucleus cultures of local strain of *Eudrilus* spp. capable of composting coconut plantation wastes to Chandrasekharan. In one production cycle, he produces 250 kg vermicompost from his vermicompost unit in 90 days and apply the same to coconut, banana and pepper. Besides, he also collects vermiwash which he applies to vegetables. According to him there is perceptible improvement in growth and yield of crops due to the application of vermicompost.

Coconut grown at Chowta's farm

Chandrasekharan standing near his vermicompost production unit and vermicompost produced using coconut leaves (*inset*)