

No Farmer - No Future

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Vasanth Velusamy, an MBA graduate from Udumalpet of Tamil Nadu firmly believes that if there is no farmer, there won't be future. Vasanth had to opt this field forcefully as his father Mr. Velusamy, who was also a coconut farmer, suddenly expired when he was doing his plus 2. He kept aside his ambition of becoming an engineer and took up farming as a profession. Now he dreams of becoming the owner of world's largest farm business company based on coconut and has set it as his goal. When the new generation is behind the white collar jobs, Vasanth is inspiring all to take up agriculture as a profession. His wife Ms. Kavitha Vasanth, a farmer's daughter also loves and supports his profession and encourages him to make his dream come true. She is doing her Bachelor of Farming Technology (BFT) at TNAU along with the herculean task of running home and the farm.

Vasanth's 37 acre Karisal Farm in Sinjuvady located on Anthiyur Kundalapatti Road, Pollachi Taluk has 2600 yielding coconut palms. This includes 700 MYD, 700 COD, 1000 DxT and 200 tall viz. tiptur, arasapatti, WCT varieties. The triangular model planting was done during 2004. A spacing of 25 ft is maintained between tree and 40 ft between the east west directions. Karisal Farm has productivity of 200 nuts per palm for DxT variety, 180 for dwarf and for the tall variety 110 nuts.

Karisal Farm is into hybridization since 2011. He has set apart 500 mother palms in 7 acres exclusively for hybridization. Karisal Farm's hybridized nuts are very popular among Pollachi farmers. The farm has its own trained man power for hybridization activities. DxT hybrids, MYD, COD and other tender coconut varieties are produced here.

Coconut Development Board is procuring nuts from his farm for its CPS on a lesser price of Rs.18 per nut. He is happy to supply his seednuts to the Board since he has procured the seedlings from the Demonstration cum Seed Production Farm of the Board at Mandya. He is selling the seed nut of COD @ Rs. 25 and MYD @ Rs. 20. As there is high demand for tender coconut, he is getting Rs.15 -Rs.19 per nut according to the variety at the farm gate.

Vasanth is maintaining a coconut nursery in 4 acres. Presently 8,000 DxT and 7000 dwarf seedlings are available which will be ready for sale by January 2013. He is selling the seedlings @ Rs. 250 for DxT, Rs. 100 for COD and Rs. 75 for MYD at farm gate. Vasanth is keenly concentrating on hybridization since it is helping him to realise higher revenue from coconut farming.



Vasanth Velusamy in Karisal Farm



Emasculation

Since there is sufficient availability of water, irrigation is done through drip system. He has designed a solar copra dryer with a capacity to process 20,000 nuts per day which is under construction. Karisal Farm is following mixed farming. More than 300 tree species like sandal wood, teak, rose wood, mahogany etc. and all tropical and sub tropical fruit crops are cultivated in the farm.

The farm is having to its credit a 1000 sq. mt. poly house which is used as a nursery for coconut, various fruits, vegetables and flower crops. Karisal Farm is into rabbit rearing also. He is maintaining one of the largest private rabbit farms in Tamil Nadu. The manure of rabbit adds to the yield of the farms and reduces the cost of cultivation. He is selling live rabbits @ Rs. 200 per kg. He also supplies rabbits to pharmaceutical companies and star hotels on a higher price. The lucerne grass which is having high nutritional quality (alfa alfa) is used as rabbit feed.

The present annual income of Karisal Farm is nearly Rs. 30 lakhs. He is expecting an additional income of Rs. 25 lakhs by January 2013



A well maintained palm

through the sale of coconut seedlings alone.

Vasanth is planning to establish a seed breeding farm at Elumalai, Madurai in 200 acres. Bringing out new hybrids or select suitable eco types for specific purpose like coir, oil, tender and process industries, developing a multilayer model farm around coconut and building integrated coconut processing unit and starting a farm school specializing in coconut farming are his future plans.

Vasanth is aware that there exists a huge demand for pest and

disease tolerant hybrid seedlings. Since there are very few seed breeders and the role played by government agencies is also meager, this sector does have good future potential. He knows that the country is in demand of more than 1 crore seed nut per annum which is a Rs. 100 crore worth business. As there are only few players in the field he is hopeful and determined that he has a bright future. Along with Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, Vasanth too believes that right decision is the secret of success and experience paves the way for taking right decisions.

Let us hope that the success story of Karisal Farm and Vasanth Velusamy may inspire many youth to take up coconut farming business as a challenging career to make better prospects in their life as well as in the economy of the country.

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Rabbit rearing