

# The future of coconut sector

The agriculture sector of the country needs a make over from a livelihood activity to business venture leading to the establishment of many processing units and the production of diversified products. Our farmers need to be transformed from mere producers. In coconut sector farmer collectives is a strong and sound platform for equipping the small and marginal farmers to venture into value addition and product diversification. In India already 20 Coconut Producer Companies are formed under CDB's initiatives. Representatives of the producer companies are expressing their views on the future of the coconut sector.

## Processing and value addition for better prospects

The coconut farmers of Kerala who were reeling under various problems are slowly recovering with the production of neera. Earlier farmers were of the belief that copra and coconut oil were the only two products that can be made from coconut. The farmers have become aware that there are many other products that can offer economic security to them. Now they know that every part of coconut can be used in one way or other which can add to the income of the farmer.

Farmers across the state have accepted the novel ideas put forward by Coconut Development Board. Neera production is started in the state. The initial inertia among the farmers has slowly gone and the farmers are voluntarily coming forward to take up processing and value addition of coconut. In Kerala, Coconut Producer Companies formed by the Coconut Producers Federations are already into neera tapping. Farmers are agitated about the restriction of the Excise Department in granting license to limited number of palms. Coconut farmers are hopeful that they would be able to

produce more neera in the future. It is hoped that radical changes can be made in the coconut sector of the country when all the Coconut Producer Companies start neera production and processing. Neera has come as the saviour of coconut farmers.

*P Pradeep Kumar, Chairman, Kozhikode Coconut Producer Company*

## Neera- the saviour of coconut farmers

Coconut farmers need not worry anymore even if there is fluctuation in the price of coconut. The commercial production of neera has started. The farmers of the state are not going to be affected by the ups and downs in the price of coconut once all the Coconut Producer companies start the production and marketing of neera and its products. Hereinafter the price of coconut will not be based on coconut oil price. In future coconut price will be determined based on the price of neera and its value added products like neera jaggery, honey and other products.

Kaipuzha Coconut Producer Company is planning to produce 67 products from coconut. This includes traditional coconut oil and

virgin coconut oil. Apart from this, products like desiccated coconut and coconut paste will be produced. The profit of the company will be shared between the members as dividends and in turn the company will procure coconut and neera from its members.

Coconut farmers are organized now with the three tier Farmer Producer Organization. Now they know how to do the management of coconut for realizing maximum yield. Hence there is no need to worry about the future of this sector.

*Shajahan Kanjiravilayil, Chairman, Kaipuzha Coconut Producer Company*

## The future of coconut

Coconut farmers were so far dependent on the minimum support price declared by the government. Since coconut farming was not profitable, farmers started taking up other crops. The sector has revived with the formation of the three tier farmer producer organization. Production of neera and other value added products have become possible with the formation of the farmer producer organizations. Concerted and

coordinated efforts have been initiated by 12 Coconut Producer Companies in Kerala for taking up coconut processing and value addition. Time is not so far for the coconut products from gods own country capturing the global market.

*P P Asokan Director, Kuttiyadi Coconut Producer Company*

### **Fair, reasonable and steady price for coconut**

Farmers are still concerned about the marketing of neera. Kuttiyadi Coconut Producer Company has moved ahead in giving training to neera technicians and in the production of coconut value added products. Production of spray dried coconut milk powder is an important project of the company. The company requires around 20000 nuts per day for processing and value addition. This itself will ensure fair, reasonable and steady price for coconut. There shall be specific budget for agriculture for bringing down the production cost and for ensuring fair, reasonable and steady price for the produce. This is the future wish of the coconut farmers.

*Babu Mathathu, Chairman, Kuttiyadi Coconut Producer Company*

### **Let us ensure a safe future through intercropping**

The production of neera, the future drink and the fair and reasonable price fetching for coconut has in fact created a revival in coconut sector. The formation of the three tier farmer producer organizations across the state has created a confidence among the farmers and they are aware that with the back up of Coconut Producer Companies they would be in a position to fix

the price of their produce in future. The three tier system could also make a change in the traditional linking of coconut to copra and coconut oil. The sector will definitely have better prospects with the additional income realized through processing and value addition. We need to plant more dwarf variety seedlings suitable for neera production and also have maximum intercropping for realizing better income.

For achieving all these, the farmers need to be educated through their collectives. Our units shall comply with international standards enabling our products to compete in the international market. The consortium of the Coconut Producer Companies shall be able to create awareness among the members on product standards.

The ten coconut producers federations registered with the Board from Kasaragodu district has already conducted Friends of Coconut Tree training programme and neera technician training programme. The company has also taken the initiative for setting up a neera processing plant. The company is hopeful that the timely guidance of Coconut Development Board will enable them to reap the goals at the earliest.

*M P Baby, Chairman, KCPL, Kasaragod*

### **Better prospects through product diversification**

Members of Tejaswini has set their future hope in the prospects of neera. Even traditional tappers are showing interest in neera tapping and have also approached the Company for getting trained. This may solve the dearth of neera technicians to a greater extent.

Tejaswini has already distributed more than ten thousand Malayan Yellow Dwarf variety seedlings brought from the Deejay Farm among its members. This would create more dwarf variety seedlings suitable for neera tapping. Value added products like coconut honey, chips and chocolate will be produced by the company for realizing maximum value from coconut.

A coir unit, fiber unit and organic manure units are already set up by the company. Organic coconut oil and premium coconut oil will be ready for sale shortly. More than thirty thousand cocoa seedlings are distributed among the farmers for intercropping cocoa in coconut gardens. The company has already started two neera stalls in the district and is planning to open more stalls once the production of neera is increased. Tejaswini is also producing neera honey and cake.

*Sunny George, Chairman, Tejaswini Coconut Producer Company, Kannur*

### **Replanting and Rejuvenation programme offers better hopes**

The permission to tap neera and the opportunity to produce more value added products is offering newer avenues and better prospects for coconut farmers. If all the farmers are making use of the Replanting and rejuvenation programme, all the senile unproductive palms can be replaced with high yielding dwarf varieties. This would make drastic improvement in coconut production and productivity and would also provide more palms suitable for neera tapping and would make this the best crop with a bright future.

Coconut Development Board has initiated the formation of Coconut Producer Companies with the objective of making increase in the GDP of the country. The awareness created for neera and its products among the general public by the Board has created good demand for the product. This offers great scope for the farmers to venture into neera production and the farmers are assured of a bright future for the sector.

*Babu Joseph, Chairman, Thirukochi Coconut Producer Company*

### Value addition for better future

Government of India has made only a nominal increase in the Minimum Support Price fixed for copra during 2015 season. An increase of Rs. 300 only is made in the MSP. Coconut farmers of Kerala are requesting the Government of Kerala to allocate the budget provision of Rs 15 crores to the Coconut Producer Companies. Coconut Producer Companies can make revolutionary changes in the lives of the people by producing and supplying neera, pure coconut oil and other coconut value added products. If the vegetable farmers and dairy farmers are following the model of coconut farmers, good quality products can be made available to people. If the central and state governments are making enough budgetary provision for farmers, they will be in a position to make radical changes in the society.

*K Sachidanandan, Chairman, Kodugalloor Coconut Producers Company Limited*

If the farmers are capable of fixing the price, future will be safe.

Various problems affecting the sector has made this sector idle since the last decade. Coconut Producer Company, the apex body of the three tier farmer producer organization is working with the mandate of getting the farmer the right to fix the price of their produce. Once they are capable of fixing the prices, they would be able to make positive changes in the economy of the state. The entry of neera to the market is hopefully watched by the state. All the companies are conducting neera technician training programme. If one percent of the palms of the state is used for neera tapping, it can create one lakh employment opportunity. If more palms are used for neera tapping, it can create more employment opportunities.

Once the Coconut producer Companies start the production of best quality organic manure and follow scientific management practices there will be a quantum jump in coconut production. Alongwith conducting neera training programmes many of the companies are in the process of setting up neera processing plants. As coconut oil and other value added products conquer both the domestic and international market, coconut will occupy a premier position in the state's economy. The replanting and rejuvenation programme will also provide a facelift to the coconut sector.

*V Kabeer, Chairman, Koyilandy Coconut Farmers Producer Company.*

### Let us tap the maximum potential

Chicacole Coconut Farmers Producer Company is the first Coconut producer company formed in Andhra Pradesh. The major objective of the company is to organize the Coconut Farmers for following scientific coconut cultivation, increase production and processing coconuts for better value addition and marketing for realizing maximum value for coconut.

Srikakulam is the area where medium to big sized coconut is available. The company aims to harness this potential initially for exporting to Middle East. The company aims to converge all the medium and micro irrigation schemes of other departments in order to increase the production potential of the area manifold. The company is encouraging farmers to produce coconut by adopting organic methods of farming.

Chicacole Coconut Farmers Producer Company has started the process of project preparation for establishing an integrated processing unit of coconut. Edible products like Virgin Coconut Oil, Desiccated coconut, Coconut milk, Vinegar etc can be manufactured in this unit. As part of by product utilization, coir fibre, coir pith blocks and shell charcoal will also be produced.

The company plans to establish seed garden, hybridization unit for the production of hybrids and nurseries exclusively for producing dwarf seedlings. State Government has agreed in principle for transferring 18 acres of land of Horticultural Farm, Thilakam, Kavitti to the company. The company aims to develop this farm into a Research cum Demonstration farm on Coconut. Chicacole Coconut Farmers Producer Company has plans for tapping Neera and to produce value added products from Neera.

*Johar Khan, Chairman, Chicacole Coconut Farmers Producer Company Limited, Andhra Pradesh.*