

## **Additional Secretary, Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi interacts with Coconut Farmers at Ezhupunna**



Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, Additional Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Govt. Of India, today visited Theeradesa Naliker Utpadaka Federation, located at Cherthala, Ezhupunna village in Pattanakad (Block), Alleppy District and interacted with Coconut farmer members.

Dr. Likhi observed that the three tier pyramidal structure of FPOs promoted by the Coconut Development Board (CDB), was innovative, considering the charitable nature of lower level collectives and the formation of Company under Companies Act, at Apex Level. The Coconut Producers Society (CPS) at the grass root level, Coconut Producers Federation (CPF) at the intermediate level and Coconut Producers Company (CPC) at the apex level enables more participation and involvement of farmers to form smaller groups and plan activities at different levels based on the level of farmer collectives.

Group approach at CPS level facilitates collective purchase of inputs, community based seedling production, integrated measures for pest and disease management, intercropping, combined harvesting and community level infrastructure for farm level primary processing and value addition. The Federations undertake activities prophylactic spraying in the area, training and engaging skilled manpower for harvesting and palm crown cleaning, identification and marking of mother palms for seed nut procurement, community based infrastructure for copra production and implementation of schemes of CDB etc. Logical scaling up of CPF to producer Companies ensure sustainable income, brand building, market development, product diversification, processing and export.

The Theeradesa Naliker Utpadaka Federation is a consortium of 8 Coconut Producer Societies in the village. It is involved in various activities as envisaged in the three tier system. The various schemes of the Coconut Development Board are implemented through the Federation. 761 farmers are members of the Federation. They have 41722 palms with a productivity of nearly 11 lakh nuts per year. Major activities of the Federation include establishment of coconut nursery and production of quality planting material. The Federation continues to raise and propagate quality coconut seedlings. Quality seed nuts are procured from certified coconut farms in Pollachi, Tamil Nadu and Thejaswini coconut Farmer Producer Company in Cherupuzha, Kannur district in Kerala. Even though the Covid pandemic situation had its adverse impact in the sale of seedlings, the Federation managed the nursery activities without incurring major loss.

The Friends of Coconut Tree (FOCT) training programme of CDB was utilized to develop skilled labour force for harvesting and plant protection operations. This skilled labour force is utilized by the member farmers in the area. The Federation also publicizes the availability of trained Friends of Coconut Trees for timely harvesting of coconuts so that farmers are in comfort.

Dr.Likhi was appraised that the Federation has organized training programmes for various coconut farmer groups on intercrop cultivation of turmeric and ginger. Planting materials of the intercrops were arranged for farmers and detailed package of practices were also given to ensure adoption of the practices. Lectures on disease and pest control in coconut were also organised. In situations when physical training programmes were limited during Covid pandemic, communication between the members on the various initiatives and practices to be followed were maintained through Whatsapp groups.

Dr. Likhi interacted with the Coconut farmers regarding the implementation of schemes and programs of various central agencies under MoAFW. He also listened to grievances expressed by the farmers. The office bearers of the federation stated that they have plan to scale up the activities of the federation into the company. They sought support of the Board and Government of India to form a producer company. Dr.Likhi, assured support in this regard and instructed the officials to extend all support to the Federation to form the company immediately as per provisions contained in the New Central Sector Scheme 'Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisation'.



Dr. Likhi later had a review meeting of Centrally Sponsored Schemes of the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare at Coconut Development Board, Kera Bhavan, SRV Road, Ernakulum. The officials of Coconut Development Board ,Directorate of Cocoa and Cashew Development(DCCD),Directorate of Marketing& Inspection(DMI)Mission Director, Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture(MIDH) Kerala ,Director, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana(RKVY),Director(Seeds),ADC, Mechanization and Technology(M&T), Directorate of Plant Protection, Quarantine & Storage(DPPQS),also participated in the meeting.

Additional Secretary Dr.Abhilaksh Likhi emphasized the need by Coconut Development Board/State Government to ensure extensive publicity of the work being done by the apex Coconut Federation. He also asked the State Government to take all requisite steps to ensure that the benefits of all agricultural schemes/Programmes/projects reach the intended target beneficiaries.