

A success saga in freshwater mussel pearl production

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KALPETTA: The freshwater mussel pearl production techniques are no more to be a secret to the farmers in Wayanad as a farmer at Pul-pally has scripted a success saga in freshwater pearl culture.

Rajan Poriyaniyil, an inland fish farmer, entered the venture nearly a year ago after he attended a workshop organised by the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) in Kasaragod on emerging trends in agriculture and allied activities.

He started pearl culture by depositing as many as 30 endemic mussels (*Lamellidens marginalis*) to the district that he had collected from the tributaries of the Kabani River. The farmer got more than 20 pearls in the first harvest.

"Usually a round foreign body, sand or small stone, should be injected into the live mussel to produce pearl in commercial pearl farms. In order to protect itself from the foreign body, the mussel secretes calcium carbonate and covers it fully layer by layer. This later transforms into a pearl.

The shape of the pearl would depend on the shape of the foreign body (nucleus) and its position inside the



Designer pearls cultured by Rajan Poriyaniyil, a progressive inland fish farmer in Wayanad district.

mussel," Neeta Susan, David, Extension officer, Fisheries Department, Wayanad told *The Hindu*.

Good market

"We can insert any form of nucleus into mussels," Mr. Rajan said adding that he inserted moulded religious symbols and Hindu deities made out of shell powder of mussels that he had collected from the workshop.

"The product can be used as pendants and the designer cultured pearl has a good demand in the market," he said.

Depending on the lustre and size of the product each

designer pearl will get a minimum of Rs.500 in the market.

The pearl culture would provide an additional income to the fish farmers as they would not incur any expense in the production while they were cultivating mussels with fishes, Mr. Rajan said.

"Mr. Rajan has proved from his own experience that the fresh water mussel culture has a vast potential in the district and we are planning to promote it among the inland fish farmers," K. Sudheer Kishan, Assistant director, Fisheries Department, said.