

Published: January 7, 2015 00:00 IST | Updated: January 7, 2015 05:51 IST

Lakshadweep coconut farmers fail to cash in on organic tag

R. Ramabhadran Pillai

Coconut farmers unable to fetch premium price for produce

The land of Lakshadweep islands has received organic certification but the farmers are unable to realise a premium for the farm produce there. Coconut farming is the mainstay on the islands, but neither nuts nor copra fetch a premium, falsifying the belief that organic farming will bring fortune to the farmers.

The land belonging to the nine islands of Lakshadweep had been certified organic by the Aluva-based international organic certifying agency Indocert. “Chemical imports have been banned by the government there and the coconut palms are grown under natural surroundings,” Sudip C. Nair, Inspection Coordinator, Indocert, told *The Hindu*. The organic certification, accorded last year, is valid for one year and will have to be renewed later this year, he said. Organic produce gets a higher price in markets across the world, but the Lakshadweep farmer is far from realising it, exposing the chinks in the armour of the marketing system.

Production facility

Lakshadweep can benefit much from marketing organic products such as desiccated coconut and coconut milk, but that would require separate organic certification. Though the Lakshadweep Development Corporation has a production facility on the islands for making such products on a small scale, there is no separate organic certification for them. Farming in the Union Territory is eligible for aid under several government schemes, but there is clear lack of proper follow-up as the officials are transferred from island to island even before schemes get implemented, he pointed out.

No special price structure has been quoted for the organic copra by the market administrators, says Ahmed Koya, Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Lakshadweep, who is currently on deputation as Secretary of the Federation, in Kozhikode. It is for the government to float a base price for a new category called organic copra, he says. The federation aims to sell 3,500 tonnes of organic copra in Kerala for the six-month period ending May this year. The copra will be distributed from Beypore and Mangaluru.

Coconut is the only major crop on the islands, with a production of 553 lakh nuts a year. The area under cultivation exceeds 2,600 hectares, according to the data available from the government. There is high productivity of over 20,000 nuts a hectare on the island, with an average yield from a palm per year put at 80 plus.

Farmers unable to realise a premium for their produce.

Printable version | Feb 28, 2015 2:41:21 PM | <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/lakshadweep-coconut-farmers-fail-to-cash-in-on-organic-tag/article6762456.ece>

© The Hindu