

29	Development of Coir Industry in Tripura	Tripura Small Industries Corporation Ltd., Agartala	2002
-----------	---	---	------

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Like in other parts of the country, in the state of Tripura and other states of the North-Eastern region of the country also, with increase in population, the demand for new avenues for activities is increasing at a very high rate. The employment opportunities in primary and tertiary sectors have become limited. Here is the important port for development of industrial sector. In the present socio-economic condition, the need for industrial growth does not required to be explained further. But the Industrial growth in the state of Tripura is m, less than the desired level. As a result, the Government is very keen to find out employment opportunities in the secondary sector. Since the state is not having coal, mineral etc. (other than Natural Gas) and due to its location and transportation problem, Large group of industries are not possible to be established here. Moreover due to lack of exposure. Industrial workers required for many of the Industrial activities are not available here. Considering all these factors, it is the best option to promote Agro. & Horticulture based industrial activities; Which can provide full or part time employment opportunity to a large section of population. The coconut, especially Coir is one of such items.

Considering the need for the study on prospects of “Coir Based Industries” in the state Department of Industries & Commerce has entrusted the job to the “Consultancy Division” of ‘The Tripura Small Industries Corporation Ltd.’, Agartala.. The study has been conducted during the year 2001-2002.

The total area under cultivation of coconut is 9200 Hectares (01 -02) with productivity of 760 nos. of coconut per hectare. It was found that local varieties of coconut start producing at the age of seven years and yield in Tripura is much lower than the national average. The low yield is due to poor planting material, non-adoption of scientific plantation management practice and less of organized cultivation.

The present market scenario of the following products were also assessed:

1. Coir
2. Coir Yarn
3. Coir Mat & Carpet
4. Coir Mattress with foam lining
5. Rubberised coir mattress
6. Other coconut based products

Processing of Coconut starts with de-husking, the kernel is consumed as fruit, dried kernel known as copra is used in confectionery including paan-masala. Copra is the starting material for making of coconut oil, coconut paste, dessicated coconut etc. Coconut shell can be used for charcoal, shell powder, activated carbon and many decorative & utility items. Due to presence of oil the shell is good fuel also. Coconut shell powder has found its use in polymer industries as filler due to its uniformity in chemical and physical properties.

Coconut husk contains fibres(coir) and coir pith. The process of separating fibre from the husk is called the de-fibring. In Kerala it is done through ridding by keeping the husks soaked in saline water (back water) for eleven months and then separating the fibre and the pith by manual or semi mechanized method. This process is not applicable in NEER as there is no saline water. Mechanical de-fibring through beater/ combing can be used. Coir board has developed method of defibring in 3 months using micro organism. In the process of de-fibring pith is obtained as by-product. Pith can be converted to manure and it is also used in nursery beds as it has water retaining capacity. Coir fibre is used for rope, mattress, cushions, carpet etc.

Present production of coconut in Tripura is 7 million numbers. It has been worked out that the husk of 1000 numbers of coconut produces 80-90 kg of coir fibre. If 50% of coconut production can be used for collection of husk 300 MT of coir fibre can be produced. This can be planned for expansion through proper cultivation and also collection from the nearby states. There is one unit of Coir in Agartala with 2.5 MT of coir yarn capacity, but it was not operative in January,2002 due to non availability of the raw material..

The state Govt. and Coconut Development Board has taken initiative for increase in coconut plantation. The following steps are recommended for development of coir industry in the state:

- ❖ Setting up of de-fibring units in different places of the state
- ❖ Setting up of yarn manufacturing units
- ❖ Setting up of coir based handicraft units

- Immediate steps:
 - ❖ Setting up of a “Coir-Cell” in the Directorate of Industry
 - ❖ Setting up of a multi-departmental co-ordination committee
 - ❖ Setting up Central de-fibring Unit
 - ❖ Training Programme for making frame mattress and other coir based handicraft items.