

## **Supply of Kadali Banana to Guruvayur Temple**

Kudumbashree District Mission of Thrissur had been supplying the Kadali Banana to the Devasom of Guruvayur, Kadali banana being the favorite offering to the deity of Guruvayur Temple. The bananas cultivated by the Kudumbashree women of Thrissur district in purely organic way are taken for poojas and are given away to the people as prasadam and are also used in preparing 'panchamrutham' (a sweet desert) as well. The JLGs in the district thereby got a permanent market for their cultivation. A total of 750 women from 150 Joint Liability Groups had been supplying 1.5 million of Kadali Banana to Guruvayur Temple every year. Kudumbashree District Mission of Thrissur had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Guruvayur Devaswom regarding the same. The project had been a great success. The wise act of the District Mission had helped to find out a permanent market for the banana cultivated by JLGs in the district. Let's see how the project works!

### **Guruvayur Temple**

Guruvayur Sri Krishna Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to the Hindu god Guruvayurappan (a four-armed affiliation of the Hindu god Vishnu), Kerala and is one of the most important places of worship which is located in the town of Guruvayur in Thrissur District in Kerala. It is believed by the followers that, Kadali Banana along with Yellow silk and lotus bud is the favorite offering of the deity.

## **Kadali Banana**

Kadali is a small and sweet fruited variety of banana. The variety is mainly grown for offerings in temple. The variety is known by names like Ambalakadali, Nivedyakadali etc. The fruits are small but very sweet in taste. The average bunch weighs about 8-10 kg. Being taken for poojas, the market for the fruit is always assured. Many believe that Kadali Banana have contents of gold in it. The fragrant Kadali Banana has got medicinal features as well.

The 'Naivedyam', or food offering, made during different prayers and rituals for Lord Krishna at the world famous Guruvayur temple in Thrissur district of Kerala, includes a rare variety called 'Pooja Kadali'.

## **Supply of Kadali Banana to Guruvayur Temple**

'Nivedyam' is the project implemented jointly by Kodakara Block Panchayath, Grama Panchayaths within the Block and the Kudumbashree Mission which aims to supply pooja kadali required for prayer rituals to the Guruvayur temple daily by utilizing the Kudumbashree network. As a result not only would employment and income be generated but also the rare variety of 'Pooja kadali' banana which is facing extinction would be rejuvenated. The daily requirement of kadali banana of Guruvayur would be met by cultivating the crop by the JLG groups in the district. These groups have been formed, cultivation has been staggered and supply has commenced with the support of the Mattathur Labour co-operative society for marketing. Guruvayur Devaswom buys the kadali banana as per the conditions laid down in the tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Around 4000 to 25,000 Kadali Bananas are needed in Guruvayur temple based on the season. Earlier, to give this daily offering, the temple was dependent on supply from Tamil Nadu, as this special variety was on the verge of extinction in Kerala, which wasn't following organic method of cultivation, whereas Kudumbashree women follow organic method of cultivation.

When the authorities of Guruvayur Devaswom arrived at a predicament situation during when the Kadali Bananas weren't available for meeting the pooja purposes, Kudumbashree came up with the solution that they would cultivate the kadali bananas upon the deal between the devaswom that it would be completely procured by the Guruvayur Devaswom. And then the women started cultivating the bananas as a group of 4 to 5 people. The harvested bananas from every group are collected by the Mattathur Labour Co-operative society. The women don't have to worry about the marketing of the crops that, how much they produce, the society procure it from them paying the money.

The women farmers from Kudumbashree are growing these bananas under seven panchayaths of Kodakara block, and supplying them to the temple, ensuring a taste of homegrown plantain for the revered deity.

The JLGs of Thrissur had been supplying the Kadali Bananas to the Guruvayur Temple for the last 8 years since 9 June 2009. The JLGS had been supplying the bananas with the help of Mattathur Labour Co-operative Society.

The Mattathur Labour Co-operative Society for Local Development and Social Welfare Ltd is registered under Kerala Co-operative Societies Act 1969 (No. R. 1264) and has started its functioning on 17 March 2008.

Mattathur Labour Co-operative society procures the plantains from the farmers at a rate of Rs.3.80 per banana finger. Deducting the labour costs the farmer will get Rs3.15 per banana. Before giving away the bananas the JLGs paste the stickers on the plantain bunch which has the name and code of the JLG, date and the number of banana fingers. Vegetable Food Promotion Council gives the information about the actual market rate of the banana to the Mattathur Labour Co-operative Society.

On receiving the plantain, the Mattathur Labour Co-operative Society pays the money to the farmers. Then, the society will take the banana to the Guruvayur Temple and stores the banana at the place provided by Guruvayur Devaswom for storing the banana. The raw bananas would be smoked for ripening. The bananas are procured on Tuesdays and Fridays of every week. Out of those bananas the best 400 bananas would be taken for 'Nivedya' purpose and 7 boxes containing 300 bananas each are taken for giving away as prasadam.

The seed of the Kadali banana is also procured by the Mattathur Labour Co-operative Society. They would procure the kadali seed from the JLGs at a rate of Rs 21 per seed. Only best quality kadali seeds are procured by the society to maintain the quality of the crop cultivated.

### **Joint Liability Groups in the district**

Farming has taken off in a big way among women under Kudumbashree's collective farming and 'Samagra' projects, implemented with active participation from Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and supported by a farming subsidy. Not only has the project increased agricultural production, it has also brought considerable fallow land back under cultivation and financially empowered

thousands of women. And as a result all the barren lands left became agriculture lands which enabled the common women to be successful.

Joint Liability Groups (JLGs), structured under the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) guidelines, have been formed to ensure agricultural credit from banks for women cultivators. The JLGs come under the interest subsidy scheme of Kudumbashree, when they avail agricultural loans from banks – the state government provides a subsidy of five per cent on the seven per cent interest of agricultural loan. So far, around 10,543 JLGs have availed of loans amounting to over Rs. 123 crore under the project.

The Guruvayur temple only accepts 'Pooja Kadali' of a stipulated size. Each banana should be of 50 gm each. Twin bananas and underweight banana fingers wouldn't be accepted by the temple. As per the contract, the temple accepts only ripe banana. Those plantain bunches which do not have stipulated size, i.e., those bunches that don't meet the criteria are then utilised for making 'Rasayanam', an ayurvedic preparation and are also used for preparing jams, which has a high demand as well as market value.

### **Scope of the Programme**

The JLGs of the district has got a regular market for their cultivate crops by giving it to Guruvayur Temple. More JLGs are getting attracted to supply kadali bananas to the Guruvayur temple that they would get a fixed market price for their products. Even if one produce it excessively, there is no doubt that it would be having enquiry in the market and because of the presence of Mattathur Labour Co-operative Society in the deal, they would get paid for their cultivate crops

within no time. The intervention made by the District Mission of Thrissur was timely that the farmers are getting paid for their efforts without any time lag.