

Alathur Rice: Rice Revolution Story from Annamanada Panchayath of Thrissur

Alathur Rice is the organic rice produced and sold by the Annamanada Grama Panchayath by cultivating of their own forming Joint Liability Groups. Even within short span of time, Alathur Rice had attracted people from different parts of the state and it had even received calls from abroad for marketing the same. Kudumbashree Mission of Thrissur and a Resource Person from Thrissur had helped these women very much for bringing up the same. Let's see how they brought up Alathur Rice and the making of their success story!

Importance of Rice

Rice is defined as the seed of the grass species *Oryza sativa* (Asian rice) or *Oryza glaberrima* (African rice). As a cereal grain, it is the most widely consumed staple food for a large part of the world's human population, especially in Asia. It is the agricultural commodity with the third-highest worldwide production after sugarcane and maize.

Rice is the most important grain with regard to human nutrition and caloric intake, providing more than one-fifth of the calories consumed worldwide by humans. There are many varieties of rice and culinary preferences tend to vary

regionally. The role played by rice in maintaining the nutrition of mankind is very relevant.

Rice and Kerala

While thinking about the importance of Rice in a Keralite's life, rice is the staple food of the people of Kerala. The important rice producing areas in the state are Kuttanad and Palakkad. While the Kuttanad region in Alappuzha is endowed with a large system of backwaters, agriculture in Palakkad benefits from irrigation projects in Malampuzha, Chulliar, Meenkara, Walayar, Pothundi, Mangalam and Parambikkulam.

Among farmers who have plots of huge size, the operational holding typically comprises self-owned land, leased-in land and land owned by relatives. Productivity in rice cultivation is relatively high in this region. Farmers and Krishi Bhavan (agricultural assistance office) officials observe that yield levels of 3,000 kg/hectare are quite common in this region, which is higher than the State-wide average (2,557 kg/hectare). There are also farmers who have achieved yields as high as 4,500 kg/hectare.

Kudumbashree Joint Liability Groups

Kerala State provides indeed a different picture of success of women in Kerala in group farming. The socio economic transformation during the last three decades had resulted in the large scale conversion of paddy fields for non farming uses. Factors like increasing labor cost, lack of effective market support and resulting low yields had created a disinterest among land owning farmers to continue farming.

This had resulted in reduction of employment in farming sector, which affected the women farm workers and their farmers severely. Traditionally women had been the major partners of the Kerala's farming system. Most of them are either engaged as unpaid family workers or as paid workers in other farms. Non availability of land for farming was a major constraint they faced.

Kudumbashree Mission had established state wide base of community organizations, of women to work in tandem, with local self governments for poverty eradication through socio-economic development.

Kudumbashree entered into the field of agriculture since 2004 with in the frame work of Community Based Organization. The community Development societies (CDS), Area Development Societies (ADS) mobilized the women farmers for lease land farming from Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs), the grass root level organization. Many of the women under took farming as their own livelihood. The concept of lease land farming came when it was realized that women from Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs), especially the small and marginal farmers are interested in farming as their income source. Men as a whole moving out of agriculture and in the course of time big farmers transformed their cultivation from food crops to cash crops which is more remunerative. As Kerala is highly food deficit state it was found essential to bring agriculture back and thus the situation was congenial to organize women farmers in the sector. Kudumbashree Mission put an effort to mobilize women farmers from the NHGs either for individual farming or organized to groups. Most of these women farmers are landless or having only marginal lands, they were motivated to take up the fallow land in their localities on lease. In order to facilitate their sustained existence

Kudumbashree came up with the scheme to incentivize the farming sector with the assistance from State Government as well.

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) is a sub component of the National Livelihood Rural Mission (NRLM) announced by Government of India aimed to improve the present status of women in Agriculture and to enhance the opportunities for empowerment.

Kudumbashree, the programme implementing agency (PIA) for Kerala, has undertaken the project through the institution of Joint Liability Group (JLG) of women farmers. The project target was kept at promoting 30,000 JLG, with 1,50,000 women farmers undertaking cultivation in 24,000 Ha.

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana project focuses on capacity building of the farming community through the identification of best practices among the community. Resource persons are selected from the community and act as the grass root workers of this programme. Trainings form an integral part of project aiming at providing scientific practices and solution to the door step of the farmers.

The collective strength earned by the women under Kudumbashree and the availability of credit at low interest for taking up farming, have played a crucial role in transforming the landless women as farmers.

Alathur Rice from Annamanada of Thrissur

Annamanada is a beautiful village in the southern corner of Thrissur district in the Indian state of Kerala. It is situated 8 km from Mala and 10 km south of Chalakudy.

The Joint Liability Groups from Annamanada of Thrissur used to cultivate rice starting in 2014 and with the help of a young man, an engineer turned farmer helped the women to attain their goals. With his help, they took their cultivated rice to mills at Palakkad and began branding it and sold it. It was named 'Alathur Rice'. The rice is being sold at a rate of Rs 75 per kilogram. Their rice is of high demand even from abroad as well. The rice is sold in 5 Kg and 10 Kg packets. Agro Hyper Bazar, which will make avail all the farming machinery and value added products under one roof, will sell Kudumbashree products from now onwards. Products made by Kudumbashree women from different parts of the district will be for sale at the shop. Alathur Rice is of high demand at the store. The rice is being brought by an organic shop from Dubai as well. People are also buying rice through courier as well. Alathur Rice has 3 months shelf life.

The JLGs had processed the rice in 2 terms. Starting cultivation in 2014, 9 ton was sold then and the paddy produced during 2015-16 was processed and in 2017, in the second term of their cultivation, 15 ton was sold out. The status of the rice sold by the Annamanada JLG is as follows:

Year	Quantity
2014	9 ton
2015	-
2016	-
2017	15 ton
2018	Processing

Scope of Alathur Rice

Alathur Rice is of high demand among the customers that its pesticide free rice that is available in the market today that is produced locally. Shri. Anil, resident of Annamanada itself was the one who extended his support for the women to bring about their strength and stood with them. Anil was professionally an architect working based in Delhi. He resigned his job and started farming because of his love for nature and cultivation. He along his friends had cultivated rice in 10 acres as an experiment and on finding it successful they decided to extend this and cultivation was done in yet another 10 acres of land. Government of Kerala had felicitated him for his efforts in farming. And it was during that time, the Kudumbashree women were in search of someone who could help them and later the association had began making brilliant changes.

The support extended by the Kudumbashree District Mission of Thrissur for boosting the production and sale of Alathur Rice is noteworthy. Its sure that by focusing more into the production and sale, Annamanada Panchayath and JLGs are to make rice revolution in Annamanada.