

Rice Revolution:

Organic Rice from Kudumbashree

Thennala Kudumbashree CDS set a mark before the whole society with a different but wonderful initiative. It's nothing but the organic rice cultivated and branded by themselves- Thennala Rice.! And it literally created a 'rice revolution'. Every rice grain will say the story of a few women who believed in themselves and were not ready to accept the defeat so easy. Thennala Rice is the story of a group of women's confidence and pain.

How it was evolved?

It was during 2010-2011, that Thennala Panchayath received the machinery from government as part of the 'Haritha Malappuram' project. Malappuram district mission suggested the panchayaths who got the machinery to start cultivation of their own. Krishi Bhavan gave the seeds. A group of 10 CDS members were turned into a group and 14 acres of land was taken on lease and it made all the difference.

But due to the attack of leech, many of them stepped back and only four of them left. They decided to take it as a challenge and so 4 women with one heart decided to start cultivation in 14 acres of barren land. 'Mundakan' was cultivated in the paddy field at Palakkal. The cultivation was a success. The cultivated rice was shared between them and the rest was stored at a rented house. Even though Supplyco procured the paddy, the payment for it was received after one

year. It was Smt. Yasmin Arimbra, the CDS Chairperson of Thennala then who took the courage to lead the whole team. She believed that they could achieve it and her will power paved way for a 'rice revolution' which set a model for many. And it was the start of a new initiative.

Following its success, many JLGs come forward showing their interest to do cultivation and they joined together and started cultivation in 236 acres of land. The rice cultivated was then branded as 'Thennala Organic Rice' and the value added products like rice powder, rice flakes, rice bran etc. Apart from the support received from NABARD, 'Garima' farmers club consisting of CDS members, MKSP master farmers gave leadership for their activities.

Launched as Thennala Agro Producer Company

A Producer Company is a body corporate registered under the Companies Act, 1956; and having specified objects and activities. Ownership and membership of such companies is held only by 'Primary Producers' or 'Producer Institution', and member equity shall not be publicly traded. However it may be transferred, only with the approval of the board of directors of the Producer Company.

The initiative was welcomed by the district mission and the banks had also shown interest in giving loans for them. Later a producer company- 'Thennala Agro Producer Company' was launched joining the JLGs. Thennala Agro Farmers producer Company Ltd. was incorporated as Producer Company on 9 September 2015.

Fighting back the issues and succeed

Now 126 JLGs are there in the producer company. By joining 10-15 a cluster was formed and each cluster has one secretary and one president. Every cluster has a director. So there are 10 directors for the producer company. The women got capacity training and training under the Mahila Kisan Sashakteekaran Pariyojana of the Kudumbashree Mission.

Too many issues aroused when the women to came up with such an idea. Many tried to drain their confidence. But believing in themselves, they moved forward with the sheer confidence.

Stages of production

Now the company is cultivating in 5 paddy fields in Marakkaddapam, Vaalakkulam Paadam, Apla Paadam, paalakai Paadam and Eranjippadam. They sow six varieties of rice seeds-uma, aishwarya, siyon, Njavara, Jyothi and Ponni. The thennala rice is cultivated purely in organic way without using any chemical fertilisers.

The company procure the paddy from the JLGs and send it to mill and then pack the same. Value added products like rice flakes, rice bran etc. Payasam Rice, broken rice etc are the value added products launched in market along with Thennala Rice. Now the rice is sold at a rate of Rs 50 per kilogram.

The cost calculation of the products is as follows:

SI No	Item Name	Paddy/ Kg	% of Output	Rice/Kg	Cost of Paddy	Each of 1 Kg Output	Expense Of 1Kg Output	Charge	Packing Charge	Packing Cover	Sticker	Transporting	Cost /Kg	MRP
1	Matta	15,343.00	60%	9,205.80	15.00	1.66	24.90	4.65	0.50	1.15	1.50	1.70	34.40	40.00
2	UBR 1 st	1,000.00	58 %	580.00	15.00	1.72	25.80	4.82	0.50	1.00	1.50	1.70	50.00	50.00
3	UBR 2 nd	1,000.00	58%	580.00	15.00	1.72	25.80	4.82	0.50	1.00	1.50	1.70	50.00	50.00
4	BR 2 nd	500.00	60%	300.00	15.00	1.66	24.90	4.65	0.50	1.00	1.50	1.70	50.00	50.00
5	Rich Rice	500.00	65%	325.00	15.00	1.53	22.95	4.28	0.50	1.00	1.50	1.70	70.00	70.00
6	UBR Powder	500.00	58%	290.00	15.00	1.72	25.80	4.82	0.50	1.00	1.50	1.70	50.00	50.00
7	Avil	500.00	60%	300.00	15.00	1.66	24.90	4.65	0.50	1.00	1.50	1.70	50.00	50.00

Scope of the Initiative

Although “Thennala rice” got good brand value and demand in market, these farmers were unable to generate sufficient revenue through sales. The company has already made tie up with many agencies across the state for marketing rice and rice products. The products are of high demand even from outside the country. Naturopathy centre in Tirur had been buying Thennala rice regularly. Other Organic stalls had been buying the same. Proper marketing of the product could take it to even more heights.

Appreciations all the way

The company has been receiving appreciations from different people from different places across the globe. So many teams had visited the Thennala Agro Rice Company to study the Thennala Model of rice Production. Even a team from Africa visited the company to study more about the same. People from various organisations are visiting the company to study about the initiative.

Future plans

Thennala Rice has a few ideas hopefully to be executed in the upcoming years. Seed bank is one among that. Now Thennala CDS is distributing the needed seeds for the farmers. It is also planned cultivate some more seed varieties after testing them. This will also be included in the Seed bank. Labour Bank which could give trained farming labourers is also one of the plans of the company. They are also

planning to launch a new product named 'Breakfast Cereal', a value added product from the organic rice cultivated by them.

Impact

The banking agencies, who were reluctant to provide any loan support to women in the past, are now rating these women groups as the most credit worthy ones. The proactive credit support rendered through JLG Scheme and its rigorous management by women collectives are cornerstones in transforming the women as commercial farmers in Kerala. The initiative is giving a reasonable standard of life to the 500 women farmers and had changed their life altogether.