

SHGs turn jackfruit remains into value-added products



Cashing in on jackfruit: Participants at the workshop which was held by Aranya Forest and Sanctuary Organisation at Poothurai near Puducherry. Photo: S.S. Kumar

SHG women leaders around Auroville participated in a workshop

Puducherry: The spiky hard exterior enclosing a sweet core is not only a summer hot favourite, but its many parts that are thrown away without a second glance can make for delicious dishes.

Rural women from villages around Auroville are all set to cash in on the jackfruit for small business that involve processing and packaging jackfruit-based snacks and preserves. While state of Kerala is famous for its jackfruit gardens, the fruit is also abundant in certain parts of Tamil Nadu including Panruti and adjoining areas.

The Aranya forest and sanctuary, an organization that has been carrying out conservation and afforestation activities in Poothurai village near Auroville, has initiated the project of turning jackfruit remains into value-added products.

Workshop

As an initial step, as many as 15 women leaders of various self-help groups in and around the region were introduced to the various possibilities of using jackfruit in a workshop on Friday.

C.D. Suneesh, from the Ruchie Farmers Network, Wayanad, trained the women in separating the fruit, cleaning it and preparing various dishes.

By lunchtime, the women laid out a feast of cutlets, payasam and juice with jackfruit as the primary ingredient.

“While Kerala and Karnataka have found ways to resourcefully use the jackfruit, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry are yet to do so”, feels D. Saravanan, of Aranya.

The products prepared on Friday are those with a limited shelf-life but a training of three days and more was required in preparation of preserves, jams and the like, said Mr. Saravanan.

The jackfruit value-added training was the first activity launched under the Biodiversity Conservation and Educational Centre, launched on Friday.

The project was initiated with the assistance of Sri Aurobindo International Institution of Education and Research (SAIIR).

The centre was inaugurated by N. Balabaskar, secretary, Auroville Foundation. The centre will give impetus to environmental education and conservation by working with children, self-help groups and the local community.

Nature camps will be conducted regularly and there is a plan to offer certificate course related to conservation.

Rural women are all set to process and package jackfruit-based snacks and preserves

Organic farm at Spices Board office

KOCHI, March 24, 2014 - : Employees and officers of Spices Board has launched an organic farm at the Board headquarters here with help from Kerala State Horticulture Mission. The venture was meant to promote the concept of organic farming, said a press release from the Board here on Sunday.

Board chairman A. Jayathilak inaugurated the farming venture, which involves use of 350 grow bags, of which 250 were provided by the State Horticulture Mission. Slurry from the bio-gas plant functioning outside the canteen of the Board headquarters will be used as fertilizer for the farm. Spinach, lady's finger, green chilli and brinjal are being grown in the organic farm.

The second phase of the organic farming venture will involve planting of spice trees and plants within the Board office premises. The Board also planned to distribute grow bags to Spices Board employees with the help of the Horticulture Mission, the press release added.

Website to improve farmers' lifestyle

The site will feature initiatives in various fields

The Deccan Development Society (DDS), an NGO based in the district and working on improving the standard of living of farming community as its motto, has taken up another initiative.

Along with Kalpavriksh, Shikshantar and Bhoomi College, the DDS has established Vikalp Sangam/ Alternatives India, a website dedicated to the creative work that people across India are doing as alternatives to the current models of destructive development and self-promoting governance.

The site will feature initiatives in the fields of sustainable agriculture, pastoralism and fisheries, community health and learning, decentralised governance, social justice, dignified and sustainable livelihoods, decentralised water and energy production, equitable access to social services, producer and consumer control of the market, creative media and arts in the service of sustainability and justice, and democratic conservation.

Case studies

The site covers stories, case studies, perspectives, events, and resources on the above; it will also be linked to one or more discussion forums. Initiatives covered will feature on a map of India.

As far as possible, contact details of those involved in these initiatives will be provided to enable people-to-people contact. Most importantly, the site enables anyone to contribute material on initiatives they are familiar with or working on.

Site name

One can visit www.vikalpsangam.org or www.alternativesindia.org to have further details. "This is aimed to promote creative works done by people across India. Not only that, anyone can contribute about their initiatives," said a DDS representative.

Hazare to address farmer rally on April 1



Akshaya Kumar (right) of Navanirman Krushak Sangathan addressing the media in Bhubaneswar on Sunday.

Social activist Anna Hazare and water right activist Rajendra Singh will address a massive farmers rally here on April 1. Farmers' rally will prod political parties those have already sent agricultural as an issue to backburner to give priority to agriculture, said Akshaya Kumar, convener of Navanirman Krushak

Sangathan (NKS), a farmer's organisation, here on Sunday.

Mr. Kumar said NKS members had completed 50-day-long padyatra in 10 districts to know the issues being confronted by farmers.

"The situation is really worse. In constituency of State Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister, farmers are forced to make distress sale. In Agriculture Minister's constituency, lands hardly get irrigation water.

In Nayagarh district, sugarcane farmers are cursing their fate for entering into farming," he said.

NKS convener said, "all mainstream political parties including Congress, Biju Janata Dal and Communist parties do not have any concrete strategy for development of agriculture. We want parties espouse cause of farmers."

The rally to be addressed by Mr. Hazare along Mr. Singh and land rights activist P.V. Rajagopal will focus on assured income for farmers.

Vegetable prices inch up



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, March 24, 2014 - As winter stock of vegetables dwindles, the prices of a few of them have begun to show slight variations over the past week. The cost of ginger has begun to touch Rs.100 a kilogram at retail stores in the city, and its wholesale price is currently Rs.80. Tomatoes cost Rs.15 at certain outlets at Connemara Market but their price varies depending on the quality. Murukesh, who runs a

retail store at Sasthamangalam, says that the juicier ones now cost between Rs.22 and Rs.25 while the small, local varieties are on sale for less than Rs.15-17.

The price of cluster beans, which also increased since February, is in the Rs.40-Rs.50 range now. "This is noticeable because it had gone down to an all-time low of Rs.28 a month

ago,” said Murukesh. The price of onions, which made many a consumer shed a tear across the country in November 2013, has receded to Rs.20. Kerala was relatively shielded during the time with the price never crossing Rs.55.

The cost of brinjal has also marginally gone up from Rs.15 to Rs.20 now. This, according to vendors, is the sign of an early summer. The wholesale price of potatoes in Chala and Palayam markets is Rs.24 and Rs.26 in retail stores. The cost of okra has also seen an increase from Rs.24 to Rs.30 at stores in Palayam. In some retail stores it costs nearly Rs.40. This is expected to come down once the next harvest arrives in the market, vendors say. “Considering how hot it already is, we have reason to worry about the next few months. If it rains at least intermittently in April and June, the harvest should not be overly affected,” said K. Shibu, a vendor at Connemara.

Rejitha, a resident of Vattapara, who was shopping at his store in Palayam, says she usually buys from HortiCorp stores because of the subsidies they provide, a relief in times of sharp hikes.

Changing needs

Wholesale stores have lost their sheen, Shibu adds, with the government introducing ‘Haritha’ stalls and HortiCorp outlets across the city. “It is either that or the small retail stores in their neighbourhoods or the retail giants and supermarkets. Very few come to wholesale markets like Palayam or Chala,” he says, adding that they have long supplemented their stores with ‘non-traditional’ products such as spring onions, chou chou, capsicum, lettuce, red cabbage, and celery to cater to changing market needs.

“A lot of north Indians demand them,” he said, recalling how seven years ago, cultivators in Tamil Nadu had given such items for free in a bid to build a market for them.

Water level

The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 48.83 feet on Sunday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 862 cusecs and the discharge 1,000 cusecs.

Exotic fish species displacing local varieties from Wayanad: experts

Vechur cow conservation golden jubilee celebrated

SULTHAN BATHERY, March 24, 2014 - A rise in exotic fish species in inland water bodies including rivers, paddy fields, and low lands of the district is threatening the existence of local fish varieties here, an expert has said.

Deposits of fish fingerlings of exotic varieties such as Rohu, Katla, Mrigal and Tilapia were being increasingly found in the Kabani River and its tributaries, which were once treasure troves for endemic fishes, K.C. Shaji, a conservation biologist, said at a seminar on biodiversity organised by the Wayanad Prakruthi Samrakshana Samiti in connection with the golden jubilee celebration of the Vechur cow conservation on Sunday.

Not just that, even the presence of carnivore fishes such as cat fish and Pacu, a fish species similar to the Pirana, was also being reported, he said.

The water bodies in the district were a major habitat of different species of fishes. As many as 58 species of fresh water fishes had been reported from the water bodies here, and some of them could be called endemic, he said.

But for the last two decades, many fish species including ‘Barbus milli’ and ‘Clarias dayi’ could not be spotted, Dr Shaji said.

Also, according to the recent IUCN assessment, the ‘Hemibagrus punctatus’ species found here was now in the critically endangered species list. Considering all these, there was a

need to control the proliferation of exotic fish species in fresh water bodies in Wayanad. The massive conversion of paddy land had resulted in the loss of breeding ground of the fishes, Dr Shaji said.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Monday, Mar 24

Max 32° | Min 24°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 62

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:10

Sunset: 06:20

Barometer: 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast



Sunny

Tuesday, Mar 25

Max 35° | Min 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday
Mar 26



35° | 25°
Sunny

Thursday
Mar 27



28° | 23°
Overcast

Friday
Mar 28



29° | 22°
Cloudy

Saturday
Mar 29



31° | 22°
Cloudy

Sunday
Mar 30



30° | 23°
Partly Cloudy

THE TIMES OF INDIA

TNAU to help govt for spreading organic farming

COIMBATORE: Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) will act as knowledge partner for the state organic farming policy. The draft of the policy which was released recently, will be implemented after Lok Sabha elections in the state. As per the draft, the varsity will be responsible for identifying possible areas where organic farming could be practiced and other farming related activities. The draft policy which was released a month ago will help streamline the various policies associated with the organic farming.

TNAU vice-chancellor K Ramasamy said the varsity will associate in identifying suitable places for organic farming in the state. "Places like Tirunelveli and Gobichettipalayam in Coimbatore have already organic farms under private ownership. We will identify suitable places for farmers in other places also," he said. Apart from this, the varsity will also help in providing a support system for those interested, including subsidies, seed supply and training. There is a growing demand for organic products. Millet-based products are having

a high demand with most of them being sold like hot cakes," he said. With a proper orientation, organic products can get a better market and consumer base, he said.

TNAU now provides certification for organic farmers. Once fertilisers and pesticides are stopped, it would take three to five years for a farm land to get rid of these chemicals and be eligible for certification. In these areas the university will provide a stable support system for farmers during the transition period.

A clear policy could help farmers overcome some of the common problems they face while shifting into organic farming. One of the major challenges the organic farmers face is the increase in prices when compared to regular crops. Moreover, organic farming demands more manual labour. There have been instances where many farmers who shifted to organic farming could not find markets and abandoned the practice later. Experts say unless there is a government support in terms of subsidies for seeds and small machinery, farmers may not be able to find the farming profitable. A clear policy is expected to address many of these challenges.

THE HINDU Business Line

34% tea unsold at Coonoor sale on slack demand

Coonoor, March 23: The low sale scenario witnessed at the Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction in the last one month continued this week at Sale No: 12 when inadequate demand led to 34 per cent of the 12.68 lakh kg offered remaining unsold despite prices dropping by Rs. 3 a kg.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the CTC market when Tulip International bought it for Rs. 200 a kg. Crosshill Estate got Rs. 193, Vigneshwar Estate Rs. 184, Shanthi Supreme Rs. 183, Deepika Supreme Rs. 178 and Hittakkal Estate Rs. 175. In all, 45 marks got Rs. 125 and more per kg. Among orthodox teas, Chamraj topped at Rs. 241 a kg followed by Kodanad Rs. 240, Kairbetta Rs. 222, Havukal Rs. 215, Corsley Rs. 210, Prammas and Highfield Estate Rs. 195 each. In all, 42 marks got Rs. 125 and more per kg. Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging from Rs. 54 to Rs. 58 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 110 to Rs. 160 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged from Rs. 63 to Rs. 66 for plain dusts and Rs. 130 to Rs. 180 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Export purchase was limited to plainer less-priced teas. There was no purchase worth recording for Pakistan as exporters said that adequate stocks prevailed with their importers. Even the usual demand for brighter liquoring teas from upcountry buyers was less pronounced this week causing substantial withdrawal.
