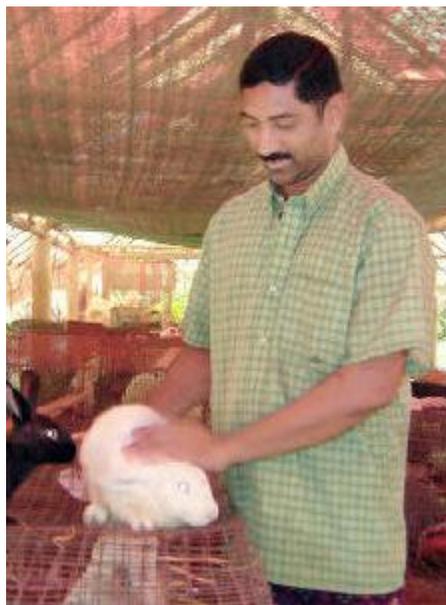


## Farm diversification provides more avenues for income



**Mr. Roy Thomas at his rabbit unit in Kozhikode district, Kerala.**

In Kerala, there are a number of educated youths who have been taking to agriculture in recent times. Compared to about two decades back when agriculture meant a farmer in a loin cloth ploughing his field, today's scenario has educated youth with a dedication to succeed in this line," says Dr. V.A. Parthasarathy, Director, Indian Institute of Spices Research, Kozhikode, Kerala. "Agriculture is a remunerative vocation. If done correctly, and if organic methods are practised, then the word failure becomes a past tense in present success," he says.

### **Proper guidance**

According to him, the case of Mr. Roy Thomas in Kozhikode district is a good example of how an educated youth, who could have easily taken up any job other than agriculture, chose to take up this avocation and based on the advice and guidelines by our scientists, has been earning nearly rupees two lakhs a year. In the 8 acres, Mr. Roy has planted 120 coconut, 400 areca palms and 100 cocoa plants in 6 acres.

### **Intercrops**

Fifty black pepper vines were also trailed on the coconut palms. Banana, ginger and turmeric are grown as intercrops and rubber has been planted in the remaining two acres. My main income is from coconut, areca nut, banana, ginger and turmeric. I have been able to get a gross annual income of Rs.1, 26,000 from these crops. Acting on advice from the KVK scientists after (attending training programmes) he applied for a loan under the Prime Minister's Rozhar Yojana

and constructed a shed and started growing rabbits. He has fabricated two types of cages. The big cages can accommodate 10 animals each and the smaller ones, 4 animals each. Presently he has 60 animals. Regarding feed for the animals he says.

“Rice bran, goat feed and green grass are being fed to my animals. I spend about rupees two per day per animal for food and medicines. A female rabbit gives birth to about 5-6 kids and the animals are ready for sale after 45 days at Rs. 350 per pair. “I have made a profit of Rs. 6,000 through the sale of the animals within a short period,” he explained.

### **Poultry**

He has also constructed two poultry sheds. Each shed can accommodate 250 to 350 birds. He procures day-old chicks of Kalinga or Gramasree breeds from the Government hatchery at Kozhikode or from the Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur and rears them for about 45 days. The chicks are sold to the local farmers after immunization. “I get a profit of Rs. 10 per bird. I have already reared about 3,200 birds in five batches and have so far made a net income of nearly Rs. 32,000, in 45 days” he says.

He has started an ornamental bird unit. The birds are reared under a coconut leaf-thatched shed, which is partitioned into compartments. Day-old-chicks are procured at Rs.70 per bird and are sold after 90 days at Rs. 400 per bird.

### **Good demand**

He spends around Rs.160 per bird towards feed and medicines. “I get a profit of more than Rs.150 per bird. I have sold 30 birds so far, making a net profit of Rs. 5,100 within four months,” he explains. Since the demand for the birds is very high, he is planning to strengthen the unit with more birds and breeds.

The animal wastes and dried leaves are used for making organic manures which are used in his farm. The waste from the rabbit unit is used for producing biogas for his domestic use. Mr. Roy has been awarded the best farmer award by the Department of Agriculture, Govt. of Kerala for his mixed farming model.

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