

## Technical support helps women sericulture farmers



Mr. N. Sakthivel from Srivilliputtur in Tamil Nadu and he was a Scientist & Head, of Research Extension Center in Central Silk Board. He said that the rural women seem to possess an acute sense of wisdom and talent compared to their male counterparts and if given proper guidelines and help, can become financially successful. Though it is true that agriculture incomes are dwindling and many farmers are selling their fields to commercial realtors, there are still some people like Mrs. S. Andal from Ramalingapuram village in Srivilliputhur who are earning a monthly income of more than Rs. 25,000 from their agriculture vocation and are able to provide job opportunities to several women. Traditionally, after her marriage she took care of her husband's seven acres land. Four years back, on the advice from the Department of sericulture (DOS), she decided to take up mulberry cultivation in three acres and constructed a silkworm rearing shed.

### **Monthly income**

Now, She interested in rearing silkworms as it offers a monthly income. Today she earn more than Rs. 20,000 a month and able to met family's needs and send her children to a good matriculation school. Mr. Sakthivel said that the success of sericulture mainly depends upon the infrastructure. The Department of Sericulture supports farmers by giving some subsidies to create the necessary infrastructures. After establishment of infrastructure sericulture can be taken up for many years continuously.

### **Harvesting figures**

At present, Mrs. Andal harvests about 250 kgs of cocoons that fetch her a gross income of more than Rs. 50,000. She gets a net profit of Rs. 25,000 – Rs.30,000 per crop (a crop consists of one month's harvest. The farmer harvests 8-10 crops per year successfully). Her economic success made her one of the leading sericulturists in the southern zone. Besides the silkworms, the farmer also does some inter-cropping in her mulberry garden. She claims that intercropping helps avoid weed growth and generates some revenue that helps meet the revolving expenditure such as buying inputs for mulberry garden, and wages for labour among others. The Central silk board

recently established a research extension center in Srivilliputtur, to extend technical support to the sericulture farmers in southern zone of Tamil Nadu. The southern districts form a non-traditional sericulture belt, but the sericulture boom is spreading rapidly as the farmers accept modern technologies.

### **Initiation**

The center mainly concentrates on introducing rearing of bivoltine hybrid silkworms varieties that yield international quality silk, and so farmers get more income than rearing of local breeds. Mr. Sakthivel explained that seri-business of Mrs. Andal succeeded only after her initiation to rear hybrid silkworms. Technologies such as platform rearing, mulberry shoot harvest, and feeding system, self mounting of matured silkworms for cocoon formation etc, introduced by silk board reduces the man power requirement as well as drudgery, and thus the industry becomes women-friendly.

### **Empowers women**

In the present situation, sericulture not only empowers the rural women like Mrs. Andal, but also provides excellent self employment opportunities to the educated youth including women from the rural community.

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