

51st APCC Ministerial Meeting Kick Starts at Kochi

The major coconut growing countries in the world should extend a helping hand to less developed coconut farmers in less developed countries, urged Shri. Mohanji Kalyanji Bhai Kundariya, Hon'ble Minister of State for Agriculture, Government of India, while speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the 51st Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC) Ministerial Meeting/Session held at Crowne Plaza in Kochi. He also opined that unless all the countries come together, progress would be limited. "Coconut is grown in 12.4 million ha of area and the annual world production of coconut is about 70 to 72 billion nuts. Over 20 million people across the world depend upon coconut for their livelihood. Like most of the coconut growing countries in the world, in India also coconut is a small and marginal farmer's crop. So, when the policy makers talk and think about coconut, our aim should be the progress of these small farmers," urged the minister. "In the last two decades due to efforts for development and research on coconut, technology for cultivation and product processing improved substantially. But these benefits of improved technology are not reaching down to the coconut farmers. All our efforts should be directed towards improving the farmers share in monetary terms," the minister added. The minister also praised the Coconut Development Board's initiatives to form Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and also opined that the FPOs can play a lead role in increasing production, productivity, augmenting production of good quality planting material, aggregation of the product for primary processing, better by product utilization and value addition through marketing and exporting. "The major achievement in India is the farmer producer organizations, which is a one-of-its-kind of an initiative taken by the Coconut Development Board (CDB). India is leading in the FPO initiative, which cannot be seen in any other country. I urge all the countries present here to take the idea from the Indian FPO's and apply the same in their respective countries. Co-operative system is the backbone of any system, which brings together people from all walks of life," opined Mr. Uron N. Salum, Executive Director, Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC). "Kerala is the only state which has started Neera production by amending the 112-year-old Abkari Act. Production of Neera would bring 10-fold increase in the grower's income. The farmer could earn a minimum of Rs. 15,000 from a tree per year. Neera sugar has been actively marketed in Indonesia and Philippines, which can be followed by the coconut producer societies across India too. The arrival of Neera would not only boost the coconut sector but also the economy of the state as a whole," said Mr. K. Babu, Hon'ble Minister for Fisheries, Ports and Excise, Government of Kerala. Neera can be used generously as a health drink and it is even good for diabetes patients, said Mr. K.V. Thomas, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Ernakulam. Root-wilt disease is one of the major issues the farmers in India have been facing for a long time. Researchers have been trying to find out a solution for the same for more than 100 years. But, have not been able to find out a solution yet other than replanting the tree. It is expected that the APCC Meeting would discuss issues like this. Healthy, economic cultivation and value-added products need to be discussed in the meeting. The time has come to think and grow together. A synergy of all the sectors like coconut, coir and other such sectors would help us grow more effectively and fruitfully, said Mr. Surendra Nath Thripathi I.A.S, Chairman, Coir Board. India looks forward to the sharing of knowledge, technologies and experiences with all the 18 APCC member countries during the five-day session, said Mr. T.K. Jose I.A.S., Chairman, Coconut Development Board in his valedictory remarks. The function also saw the release of APCC publications by handing over the same to Shri. Mohanbhai Kalyanji Bhai Kundariya. APCC has also felicitated three Indians for their outstanding contribution to the coconut sector. Dr. K.K. Haridas (posthumously), Mr. O.V.R. Somasundaram and Mr. C.R. Vijakumar were honoured during the function and Shri. Mohanji Kalyanji Bhai Kundariya has distributed mementos to the awardees. Mr. Inia Batikoto Seruiratu, Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture & Fisheries, Government of Fiji, Mr. Le Mamea Ropati Mualia, Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture & Fisheries, Government of Samoa, Mr. Sanjeev Chopra I.A.S, Joint Secretary, MIDH and Chairman, APCC, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India and Mr. T.K. Jose I.A.S, Chairman, Coconut Development Board and other APCC were present at the function.



