

Annam Rice from Palakkad

Kudumbashree Palakkad District Mission had come up with a new idea to help the JLGs in the district by procuring the rice produced by the Joint Liability Groups (JLG) in the agricultural sector in the district. They branded it as 'Annam Rice'. Even though 'Annam Rice' is in its budding stage, it had found markets and regular customers for its own. Annam Rice is on its way to success. Let's have a look into the story of Annam Rice that how it was evolved and its journey towards success look like!

Rice

Rice is the seed of the grass species *Oryza sativa* (Asian rice) or *Oryza glaberrima* (African rice). As a cereal grain, it is the most widely consumed staple food for a large part of the world's human population, especially in Asia. It is the agricultural commodity with the third-highest worldwide production after sugarcane and maize.

Rice is the most important grain with regard to human nutrition and caloric intake, providing more than one-fifth of the calories consumed worldwide by humans. There are many varieties of rice and culinary preferences tend to vary regionally.

Rice and Kerala

Rice is the staple food of the people of Kerala. The important rice producing areas in the state are Kuttanad and Palakkad. While the Kuttanad region in Alappuzha is endowed with a large system of backwaters, agriculture in Palakkad benefits from irrigation projects in Malampuzha, Chulliar, Meenkara, Walayar, Pothundi, Mangalam and Parambikkulam.

Within Palakkad district, Chittur, Alathur, Kuzhalmannam, Kollengode, Nenmara and Palakkad are the blocks in which paddy production is concentrated. There are many farmers in this region who cultivate rice in relatively large plots, ranging in size from 5 to 10 acres each, which is much above the average size of plots for paddy cultivation in Kerala as a whole. Among farmers who have plots of this size, the operational holding typically comprises self-owned land, leased-in land and land owned by relatives. Productivity in rice cultivation is relatively high in this region. Farmers and Krishi Bhavan (agricultural assistance office) officials observe that yield levels of 3,000 kg/hectare are quite common in this region, which is higher than the State-wide average (2,557 kg/hectare). There are also farmers who have achieved yields as high as 4,500 kg/hectare.

Kudumbashree JLG

Kudumbashree entered into the field of agriculture since 2004 with in the frame work of Community Based Organization. The community Development societies (CDS), Area Development Societies (ADS) mobilized the women farmers for lease land farming from Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs), the grass root level

organization. Many of the women under took farming as their own livelihood. The concept of lease land farming came when it was realized that women from Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs), especially the small and marginal farmers are interested in farming as their income source. Men as a whole moving out of agriculture and in the course of time big farmers transformed their cultivation from food crops to cash crops which is more remunerative. As Kerala is highly food deficit state it was found essential to bring agriculture back and thus the situation was congenial to organize women farmers in the sector. Kudumbashree put an effort to mobilize women farmers from the NHGs either for individual farming or organized to groups. Most of these women farmers are landless or having only marginal lands, they were motivated to take up the fallow land in their localities on lease. In order to facilitate their sustained existence Kudumbashree came up with the scheme to incentivize the farming sector with the assistance from State Government as well.

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana(MKSP) is a sub component of the National Livelihood Rural Mission(NRLM)announced by Government of India aimed to improve the present status of women in Agriculture and to enhance the opportunities for empowerment.

Kudumbashree, the programme implementing agency (PIA) for Kerala, has undertaken the project through the institution of Joint Liability Group (JLG) of women farmers. The project target was kept at promoting 30,000 JLG, with 1,50,000 women farmers undertaking cultivation in 24,000 Ha.

MKSP project focuses on capacity building of the farming community through the identification of best practices among the community. Resource persons are

selected from the community and act as the grass root workers of this programme. Trainings form an integral part of project aiming at providing scientific practices and solution to the door step of the farmers.

Branding Annam Rice

'Annam Rice' is the rice produced by the JLGs in the district. The paddy produced by the JLGs in the district is procured by Palakkad District Mission and is processed and is branded and is sold in the market. For the production of Annam Rice, 118 JLGs were identified as of September 2017.

A few JLGs are into paddy production and from them 2600 Kg of paddy was procured from Alathur, Malampuzha and Mannarcaud region. It was procured from JLGs at a rate of Rs 19 per Kg.

The average selling price of Annam rice is Rs 50 per kilogram. The rice is sold in 2 Kg and 5 Kg packets. Annam Rice is being sold in trade fairs and other markets. It is also planned to launch a regular sales outlet. During the pre onam market of 2017, around 600 Kg of Annam Rice was sold. Rice flakes of Annam Rice are also available for sale.

On visiting one of the JLGs in the district, the scope of the initiative was well understood. If implemented in the right way, the initiative is going to make a revolution. As the JLG's paddy is procured by the Kudumbashree District Mission, they are getting a satisfactory fare for their effort, rather than selling the same to Supplyco.

Thulyatha JLG from Kannadi, Palakkad had been cultivating paddy in 11 acres of land which had been leased from a land owner. The group consists of 7 members.

The leader of the group is Mrs Omana, who had once bagged Master Farmer Award. The JLG is also running a small catering unit which serves food to small family functions. The organic rice cultivated by them is used for the same that they are serving purely poisonous free food to their neighbours.

Even though the unpredictable climate in the district had adversely affected their cultivation, they are optimistic that they would get that their efforts will be paid off.

Future Plans of Annam Rice

As of now, the Annam rice is procured and branded by the district Mission. The process would be extended to the women entrepreneurs and it is planned to register the Annam Rice as a producer company, therefore the sales could be more improved and could find more market for the same. Now Annam Rice is being sold only through trade fairs and temporary markets set up as part of festivals etc. It is planned to start a regular outlet.

It is the dream project of Shri. K.D Prasenani, MLA, Alathur to launch a store 'Nira' to sell agricultural products. Therefore, Annam Rice could also be sold through those stores which would help it find new markets.

Once Annam Rice would be launched as a producer company it would undoubtedly make a rice revolution in the district. Let us hopefully look into it.