

Report on Farmers' Training conducted at Pattambi on 26-03-2010

Introduction

Palakkad district is situated in the South West Coast of India, bounded on the North by Malappuram, in the East by Coimbatore of Tamil Nadu, in the South by Thrissur and in the West by Thrissur and Malappuram districts. It lies between 10°21' and 11°14' North latitude and 76°02' and 76°54' East longitude.

Though Palakkad district is one of the fourteen revenue districts of Kerala, it has certain peculiarities of itself. The district is rightly described as the "*Granary of Kerala*". The district is situated almost in the centre of State. It has no coastal line. The district opens the State to the rest of the country through the Palakkad gap. The *Western Ghats* is perhaps the most influential factor for the unique characteristics of the district such as climate, commercial as well as cultural exchanges between the State and the rest of the country. The district's economy is primarily agrarian in nature.

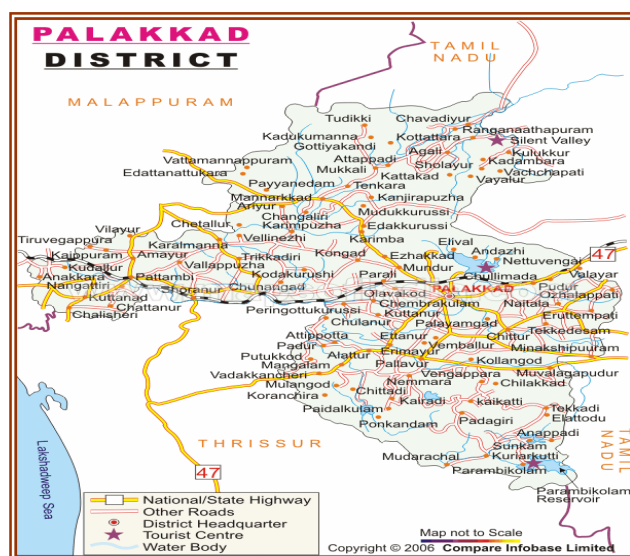


Plate 1. District Map of Palakkad

The total geographical area of the district is 4480 sq.km, representing 11.53 per cent of the State's geographical area. Around 88 per cent of the district's population is rural in nature. Agriculture engages more than 65 per cent of the workers. There are five taluks, 163 villages, 13 community Development Blocks.

Pattambi is a major developmental block in the district. It has an area of 224 sq.kms., comprising of 11 panchayats, 13 villages and two major towns. Agricultural sector continues to be the main source of employment. Apart from paddy, coconut occupies a very important place from the income point of view. It covers an area of over 2,800 hectares; of which only 106 hectares are brought under irrigation.

It was under these circumstances that a farmers' training programme was jointly organized by the Agricultural Market Intelligence Centre (NAIP) of Kerala Agricultural University, attached to the Department of Agricultural Economics, College of Horticulture along with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Pattambi on 26-3-2010. The KVK, Pattambi was established on 22nd October 1979 under the Kerala Agricultural University and it is functioning under the sponsorship of Indian Council of Agricultural Research since November 1982. The operational area of KVK includes the whole of Palakkad district. Representative farmers were selected from across Pattambi, Ongallur, Vilayur, Koppam, Anakkara and Chalisserry Grama Panchayaths.

The inaugural function formally started at 10 am with Dr. Shaji James, Programme Coordinator, KVK, Pattambi welcoming the gathering. Smt. S. Sangeetha, President, Pattambi Grama Panchayath presided over the function. In her presidential address, Smt. Sangeetha expressed her anguish over the low participation of women in the developmental activities in the area. She was happy to note the large turn out of women participants for the training programme, and urged to use women empowerment to solve many agricultural marketing problems in the area.



Plate 2: Sri.V. Ahammed Kunju inaugurating the training by lighting the traditional lamp. Smt. Sangeetha, President, Pattambi Grama Panchayath can also be seen

The training programme was inaugurated by Sri. V. Ahammed Kunju, President, Pattambi block Panchayath by lighting the traditional lamp. In his inaugural speech, Sri. Ahammed Kunju, emphasized on the need for formulating new strategic options for coconut marketing. He was happy that the training programme was organized with a thrust on practical aspects like providing market intelligent inputs to coconut farmers.



Plate 3: Inauguration address by Sri. Ahammed Kunju

Dr. M.C. Narayanan Kutty, who was officiating as the Associate Director of Research (ADR) of the Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS), Pattambi felicitated the function. He stressed on the need for providing timely market intelligence to the coconut farmers in Kerala, who were facing a major crisis due to price fall in the recent past.

The inaugural session concluded with Smt.T.Premalatha, Assistant Professor (Horticulture), KVK, Pattambi proposing the vote of thanks.

After the intersession tea and refreshments, the technical session commenced with a class on “ Strategic Options in Agricultural Marketing: The Role of Agricultural Market Intelligence” by Dr. K. Satheesh Babu, Professor & CCPI of the Agricultural Market Intelligence Centre, National Agricultural Innovation Project, Kerala Agricultural University.

This was followed by a demonstration of price forecasts made by the Centre, and its validation. The farmers were introduced to the sites of Kerala Agricultural University and the College of Horticulture for accessing the market intelligence inputs with out time delay.



Plate 4: A glance of the attentive audience



Plate 5: Sri. George. N.L, explaining the AMIC - IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Ltd. tie up

After this, Sri. George. N.L, Head-Sales and Marketing, IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Ltd., explained the usefulness of AMIC- IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Ltd.to the farmers. He explained the importance of getting Green Card Mobile connections for availing timely market intelligence inputs as voice messages. He also demonstrated how to access the recorded voice messages from the Green Card Mobile connection and introduced other product facilities for the sake of farmers assembled.

This was followed by the feed back session. The farmers gave their feed very enthusiastically. Sri. K.H. Johnson, who had started new initiatives like minimal processing of tender coconut and coir pith composting admitted that though he had attended many farmers' training programmes in the past, this training programme was a new experience. He thanked the organizers for arranging such a training programme, which was relevant, timely and practical in the current hours of crisis faced by the coconut farmers.

All participants were provided lunch at the end of the session. All the doubts of the farmers were clarified during the interactive session after this.

In all, 62 farmers attended the training programme.

The training programme was reported in the local channel, viz., Pattambi Cable Vision (PCV) in the prime time news on 26-3-2010.