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RHWE – Success Story

The raising demand for nutritious healthy intake has led many entrepreneurs to give a shot on growing fruits like Apple, Dragon fruit, Date palm, Tissue culture Teak and Coconut in Tamil Nadu. Apple cultivation, long associated with the Himalayan foothills is heading south to the tropics. India is the largest importer of dates in the world. Cultivation of Date palm in India is very limited. Now Date palm can also be grown in southern tropics. With the suitable varieties a farmer can grow any crop anywhere. The time has come for the farmers to move forward with different crops.

INTRODUCTION

Vijayakumar (39) is working as a manager in Gmmco Ltd in Chennai. In search for a healthy sustainable lifestyle, he prompted to start his own organic farm. He owns 7 acre of land in Orathy village and ventured into cultivation of Apple, Date palm, Dragon fruits, Teak and Coconut as a mixed cropping in his orchard. He opted for the crops which requires less labour, high demand in the market and fetches more prices. In 2018, he started developing his orchard with Date palm and Dragon fruit as intercrop. The next year, He planted Apple seedlings and Tissue culture teak seedlings as border crop.

DATE PALM

He bought the Date palm seedlings variety Barhee from UK at the price of Rs.4800 per seedling. There are around 370 trees. The offshoots produced by Date palm after five years can be used for propagation. The major pest identified is Rhinoceros beetle. He employs indigenous technical knowledge for controlling the beetle with naphthalene balls, tobacco leaves, salt and borate inside a polythene bag. The polythene bag was then tied in the trunk. Two to three holes are punched in the bag and salt is added in order to volatilize the naphthalene balls. This method repels the beetles away from the Orchard.

DRAGON FRUIT

He stepped out from the crowd by cultivating dragon fruit. There are two varieties namely Malaysian pink flesh variety and Srilankan white flesh variety. 570 poles of pink flesh and 100 poles of white flesh



variety are planted. He also propagated the plants by grafting the pink flesh variety on white flesh variety. According to his observation he found pink fleshed variety as best both in size and quality. The important aspect to be followed in dragon fruit cultivation is that less irrigation should be given during March – April to prevent yellowing Dragon plant starts bearing from July to December. A fruit weighs around 650g. Since the cacti are resistant to pest attack, there is no fear of them destroying the yield.

APPLE

His efforts to cultivate a crop alien to the region have borne fruit, literally. He bought the apple seedlings from Chhattisgarh. He bought various varieties of apple like Granny smith, Golden, Gala, HRMN99. After months of pilot study on various varieties of Apple in his home, he selected the best surviving variety and planted in the field. He found HRM99 variety as promising one. Initially, he faced the

mortality of the seedlings due to irrigation problem, poor seedling quality and root disease. Only 60% of the seedling survived. He was sceptical if the crop would survive without chemical fertilizers in the harsh climate. Undeterred, he overcame the hurdles and he was able to see the fruits successfully. Summer pruning and pruning in the month of December is a mandatory. He planted tissue culture Teak and Coconut variety Ram Ganga along the borders and in between the field. He raised these crops organically by preparing the manures in his field itself. The main components of the manure include humic acid, metarhizium, waste decomposer and goat manure.

It is a new venture in the district and he has recorded its success. As many entrepreneurs are joining the fray, the commodities are getting its premium prices and encourage farmers to shift to a modified farming lifestyle. He exploited an untapped opportunity and transformed the dynamics of crop production.