

Tribal self-help groups undergo training to make soilless growing medium

Aug 7, 2018

COIMBATORE: The scientists at the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB) are training tribal women to make a soilless growing medium they have formulated. They will also help the women to sell the product to nurseries and gardeners. The disc-shaped medium, made using processed coconut fibre waste, can be used to grow fruits and vegetables instead of soil, the scientists said. "Coconut fibre is dried and processed with manure. People just need to plant saplings in it and water regularly," IFGTB director Mohit Gera said. "It is expected to be popular among nursery owners and terrace gardeners. In terrace gardens, one disc can hold one plant in a pot, but in nurseries, they can hold multiple plants," he said. The discs are made using coconut fibre decomposed with micro organisms and growth promoting bacteria, tanned and again decomposed with farm manure, said N Senthil Kumar, who invented it. "To make bulk transportation of the discs easier, we can press them and make them smaller. Originally, they are 20cm tall and 15cm in diameter. But once pressed, they become just 2cm tall and 10cm in diameter. They expand when water is added," Kumar told TOI. "The medium has been found suitable for growing rose plants and vegetables. A rose nursery owner in Vellore bought 1,000 discs and gave a good feedback." The medium, which was invented in 2013, recently got a shot in the arm when the government approved

sharing the technology for the upliftment of tribal women earlier this year. The department of science and technology sanctioned the project, under which IFGTB scientists can transfer the technology to tribal women self-help groups, allowing them to earn a living. The scientists want to select three tribal villages or village clusters in Coimbatore district that have self-help groups of tribal women. "We have selected a cluster of five small villages, including Taliyur at Anaikatti, a village in Palamalai and another one in Pollachi so far," said Kumar. They are waiting for funds to buy raw materials and a hydraulic press, Gera said. "We will share the know-how and inform the women groups about places from where they can buy large quantities of coconut fibre, how to process it and also connect them to buyers to start the business," he said. The institute has recommended selling the discs for Rs 50 for five. "But it is up to the women to decide the market price," Gera added.

Source:- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/coimbatore/from-lab-to-market-tribal-self-help-groups-undergo-training-to-make-soilless-growing-medium/articleshow/65299158.cms>