

Wood seasoning unit boon for farmers

Nov 21, 2020, 04.32 AM IST

Coimbatore: A wood seasoning and preservation unit has been set up at the Forest College and Research Institute (FCRI) in Mettupalayam for the benefit of tree farmers.

The unit removes moisture from wood in a controlled condition, so that it can fend off fungus and insects, and extend life.

FCRI dean K T Parthiban said most trees, when cut, contain 30% to 40% moisture. “Ideally, we need to reduce the moisture content to 8% to 12%, where it reaches below fibre saturation point, so that there is no swelling or shrinkage. Many untreated wooden doors will expand during the rainy season and shrink during the winter,” he said. “Moisture also makes them prone to attacked of termites, insects and fungus.”

The unit consists of a solar-powered kiln, an electrical kiln and a treatment plant. “Wood is placed inside the kiln, and we circulate air with a higher temperature inside it. When the air passes through the kiln, it removes moisture from wood. This process is done repeatedly with the temperature gradually increased. Once the moisture level is reduced, the wood is treated by applying a copper-based chemical composition. This treatment prevents termite and fungal attacks,” Parthiban said.

The process is critical for all types of woods, which are used for timber, except teak. “This includes mahogany, subabul, vaagai, soft woods like Melia dubia used for furniture carving and rubber wood.,” said the dean.

While the institute plans to offer the facility to tree farmers for a fee, the main idea is to conduct demonstrations, so that youngsters can look at it as a business venture.

“We aim to create one such unit in every district. It costs Rs 16 to Rs 20 lakh to set up one. An entrepreneur can charge Rs 90 to Rs 140 to treat 1cft of wood. They can expect a profit of Rs 30 to Rs 40,” Parthiban said.

