

Coir: Future Fiber of India – A Beacon of Hope for Waste to Wealth Management

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Coir is the thickest and most resistant of all commercial natural fibers. Coir is considered as one of the most versatile fiber because it has good resistance to microbial action and salt water damage and needs no chemical treatment. It is believed that from 1000 coconuts it is possible to obtain 10 kgs of coir. It has low decomposition rate means is a key advantage for making durable geo-textiles. Coir has multitude of applications, it touches every facet of man's life and activity, ranging from doormats, mattings, mattresses, tufted products, geotextiles, garden articles and wood substitutes. While the stakeholders are looking for solutions to problems of sustainable development, the coir industry can offer a win-win solution. There are two types of coir: the more commonly used brown fiber, which is obtained from mature coconuts, and finer white fiber, which is extracted from immature green coconuts after soaking for up to 10 months. White coir is used to spin into yarn and commonly used in the manufacturing of rope and due to its strong resistance to salt water, it is in fishing nets. Brown coir is much stronger and more widely used than white coir in the industries. Applications of brow coir include sacking, brushes, doormats, rugs, mattresses, insulation panels and packaging. Coir Products are frugal and eco-friendly and have "Eco Mark" certification by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.

Coir Industry is an excellent agro-based rural industry providing employment to over 7 lakhs workers in the major coconut producing states of the country. Processing activities related to coir provides employment opportunities to people in rural areas. Thus, due attention and a policy framework is required to be for the promotion and development of coir products. Coir products helps in maintaining environment sustainability as Coir pith are used to save water, Coir Geotextiles are used to save soil and Coir Wood is used to save trees and forests. Coir is considered to be good growth medium for vegetables and flowers. It has excellent moisture retention capacity. When stakeholders are looking for alternative strategies for



sustainable agricultural practices utilizing waste coir can be a boon to farming sector. Realizing its tremendous potential, advancements of the sector through developmental activities has been undertaken by the Central and State/UT Government initiatives. Need of the hour is to change our mind-set in favour of accepting an alternative strategy for sustainable development i.e. Eco-development. In this regard, uses of coir products can be scaled up through research and development initiatives, skill based training programs, extending financial support for setting up of coir units, domestic as well as export market development, welfare measures to the workers, etc.

