

**Report on the participation of Coir Board in the International Horticulture Fair held at Amsterdam, Netherlands from October 31 to 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2006 by Shri.A.C.Jose, Chairman, Coir Board, Kochi, Shri. M.Sudhakaran Pillai Joint Director, Coir Board Bangalore and Dr.Anita Das Ravindranath. Scientific Assistant Coir Board, Kalavoor.**

The International Horti Fair 2006 was held at the RAI Exhibition and Congress Centre in Amsterdam. This year's Fair attracted 49,837 horticultural professionals from over 110 countries and had a record number of 1,005 companies from 51 countries. Coir Board had set up a pavilion at Hall 10.01.07 and displayed the horticultural products produced in the coir sector viz. coir pith bales in different dimensions, coir pith soil conditioner, cocolawn derived from coir, coir geo-textile, coir grow bags, coir hanging baskets and coconut husk chips, and edible products from coconut. The pavilion attracted a large number of visitors who evinced keen interest in the displayed products and expressed desire for their import from India. Details of name and address of the interested people were noted in the Visitors Book for pursuing correspondence to meet their requirement by Coir Board. The enthusiasm about the quality of the visits is confirmed by the provisional results of the visitor survey. Over a quarter of the visitors came to the Horti Fair with definite plans for purchases.

In order to revive the application of coir material in car upholstery use a visit was made in the A.N. of 30<sup>th</sup> October 2006 to M/s. ENKEV Natural Fibres, Enkev bv, De Toek 2. Postbus 3, 1131 PB Volendam, Holland. Discussions were held with Mr. Marc Doktor, Commercial director and Mr. John Van Den Hout, Technical Director.

M/s. Enkev is one of the oldest companies which use coir for manufacture of diversified products in combination with other natural fibres



like camel/hog/horse hair. Coir Board stated that a large market existed in earlier days for application of coir in the form of hop yarn which needs to be revived. The potential of using ‘cocodiscs’ as antiweed for pineapple plants and existence of potential for export of coir geotextile from India to Netherlands were briefed to Mr.John, Technical Director. It was informed by Mr.John that there could be new market avenues for coir geo-textile in Holland. Mr.Marc Doktor suggested that the use of coir in specialized markets like packaging of blades for windmills etc can be explored but this requires technical and market development. Coir is a natural material and it is renewable, environment friendly and can be used to produce packaging material which can be recycled/ reused. Products like coir wood substitutes and cocolawn were of interest to the directors of Enkev who expressed their desire for collaboration with Coir Board for overall development of coir market and perfecting of technologies for application of coir in diversified end-use. It was concluded that the further course of action will be persuaded with Coir Board officially

The Foundation R.H.P. (Regeling Handels Potgronden) is an organization for quality control of substrates in the Netherlands Zuidweg 42, 2671 MN Naaldwijk. The Foundation R.H.P. checks peat products, other raw materials, and substrates according to established standards and requirements. After analyzing and approval the substrate receives the R.H.P. hallmark.

The quality standards and requirements have been formulated by the Technical Commission of the R.H.P. which consists of the substrate experts of the Horticultural Research Stations and other leading substrate experts in the Netherlands.



A visit was made to the RHP Foundation- Stichting RHP at Zuidweg 42, 2671 MN Naaldwijk in the A.N. of 31st October 2006. The RHP was founded decades ago as a quality mark organization that has its aim to guarantee growers a safe substrate. RHP is a leading knowledge and innovation centre with a broad range of services. RHP has 40 members in Holland and others in parts of Europe (Germany, Sweden, Belgium, and France) and one in India. Companies pay RHP

on a yearly basis for which it provides the quality mark which is important for marketing of substrates for potting. The market on which RHP operates is dynamic and requires a party which not only closely follows the developments but also translates these into focused advice for the suppliers and their buyers.



Discussions were held in detail with Mr. Hein Boon, Director and Marco Zevenhoven Technical Advisor regarding the quality of coir pith as substrate for horticulture and floriculture. The RHP mark is essential for marketing coir pith in Europe/Netherlands. There is a large market for coir pith as substrate as there are over 10,000 growers of potted plants and only 30 potting soil producers who make tailor made media for the customers (plant growers). Chairman enquired whether any cooperation is possible between Coir Board and RHP and it was stated that for RHP Quality mark an analysis has to be made to check the process and product. The laboratory also should have ECAS/RHP recognition and the reports of analysis done needs to be sent to RHP for assessment and communication.

A visit to the laboratories of the RHP was also made and the infrastructural facilities noted for incorporating inhouse R&D facilities in the

research institutes of Coir Board. Setting up of standards as stipulated by RHP would help improve the quality of coir pith produced in India and increase its exports in the European and other international markets.

The Common Fund for Commodities, Stadhouderskade 55, 1072 AB Amsterdam, Netherlands is an inter-governmental financial institution established within the framework of the United Nations. The Fund's specific mandate is to support developing countries that are commodity dependent to improve and diversify commodities production and trade.



The Fund's projects typically have a market development and poverty alleviation orientation; and through a variety of project-based initiatives, the Fund places a high premium on development of commodities-based economies upon which the producers and exporters depend for their livelihoods.

The Fund currently has a membership of 106 countries. Institutional members include the European Community (EC), the African Union (AU) and the

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). The Secretariat is based in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.



Visit was made to the organization and had discussions with Amb Ali Mchumo, Managing Director and Sietse van der Werff, Senior project manager regarding the coir industry in India which provides sustainable lively hood for the rural with rural employment, gender empowerment, poverty alleviation meeting the requirements of millennium development goal of United Nations. CFC has expressed their satisfaction in the advancement of the technologies developed by India in the coir sector as compared to the rest of the coconut growing countries. However they also expressed for joint project with other countries with Indonesia and Philippines can be explored. It was informed to participate in the Joint Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group on Hard Fibres (Thirty-fourth Session) and of the Intergovernmental Group on Jute, Kenaf and Allied Fibres (Thirty-sixth Session) will be held in Rome, Italy, 1 and 2 February 2007 and also to present the proposals. It will be preceded by the Fifteenth Session of the Sub-Group of Sisal and Henequen Producing Countries on 31 January 2007, and by a

Consultation on Natural Fibres on the afternoon of 31 January and the morning of 1 February 2007. The matting tray developed by the research institute of coir board was presented to the managing director of CFC which was appreciated for the development of the product from the matting to the composite boards.. it was explained that the development is only an initiation and further product development such as table tops, school benches, desks and other derivatives which can protect the forest resources and the usage of natural timber.



Possibilities of coir pith, coco chips, and short coir fibres were explored by visiting fres-Q and Lans in Netherlands for the application in horticultural plants and vegetables.



It has been observed that these companies are using peat moss, rock wool, wood bark, coco chips and coir pith. Peat moss and rock wool excavation in Netherlands and European countries are banned due to the environmental constraints and retain the ecology. As such the scope for the usage of coco chips and coir pith are encouraging. Now a days the material are being imported from Srilanka and very small quantity from India. Looking into the potential of the green house of the Fre-Q where they have about 511 hectares of production in 155 locations the requirement of the substrate such as coir pith, coco chips are very huge. To meet the requirement of coir pith, coco ships and short fibre for the above mentioned application the products produced from India should meet the standards of the RHP foundation for which each of the Indian suppliers should equip in-house facility to maintain the quality of the product. In the tomato cultivation in green house the grow bags are being replaced once in every three years as such the requirement of grow bags are continuous.





Called on Indian Ambassador Mrs. Neelam Sabharwal and had detailed discussion with the officials of the Embassy. We appraised them of the immense possibility for coir pith exports to the Netherlands. She had assured their co-operation.

During the hortifair several enquiries were received, the copies are annexed with the report and it revealed that there is a huge scope of coir pith, coco chips and short coir fibres for exports in the horticultural applications and it is highly necessary for the board to participate for the forth coming 2<sup>nd</sup> international Ukrainian international exhibition for flower business, horticulture, nurseries, landscape design and floresty at Ukraine on 17 – 19 April 2007 as well as 6<sup>th</sup> International horticulture, agriculture, floriculture and technologies fair from 30<sup>th</sup> Nov to 03 Dec 2006 to promote the coir pith coco chips, coir short fibres for its application in horticultural and agricultural usage in green house.

**FINDING OF THE TOUR:**

## 1) PEAT MOSS AND ROCK WOOL.

There is a ban on the above items and the coir pith, coir short fiber, coconut chips have already used in green houses in very small quantity which generally being procured from Sri Lanka. These materials are bought as commodities with least value added and modified for suitable use for rose garden, tomato, and orchids etc. There is a huge potential for the Coir Industry to Cater to the entire Horticulture application as seen in the exhibition. This would allow to create a 'ZERO WASTAGE' such that higher rural employment is generated. Hence Coir Board could take collaborate project for value added products for various specious of plants and vegetables in 'GREEN HOUSES' application. The estimated business would lead to more than US \$ 10 million of exports per annum from India provided the Coir Industry adopt the specified product required for the end user in Europe.

## 2) TESTING FACILITIES

The Foundation R.H.P. checks peat products, other raw materials, and substrates according to established standards and requirements. After analyzing and approval the substrate receives the R.H.P. hallmark.

The quality standards and requirements have been formulated by the Technical Commission of the R.H.P. which consists of the substrate experts of the Horticultural Research Stations and other leading substrate experts in the Netherlands.

Support has to be provided to Coir Pith manufacture/Exporters to establish INHOUSE testing Laboratories to maintain the consistent standards as per the RHP requirement. Only RHP approved materials are being used and hence

facilitating the test houses at their premises will enhance the export to US\$ 10 million.

### 3) NEW MARKET POTENTIALS

It is highly necessary for the Coir Board to participate in international exhibition for flower business, horticulture, nurseries, landscape design and florestry for new market potentials and application of coir pith and its other coir products.

- **FLOWERS & HORTECH UKRAINE 2007**  
2nd International Ukrainian Exhibition for the Flower Business, Horticulture, Nurseries, Landscape design and Floristry  
TUESDAY APRIL 17 - THURSDAY APRIL 19, 2007  
KIEV, UKRAINE
- **6<sup>th</sup> International horticulture, agriculture, floriculture and technologies fair from 30<sup>th</sup> Nov to 03 Dec 2007**
- **“HORTIFLORA ETHIOPIA 2007”**  
Wednesday March 21 - Friday march 23, 2007  
Addis expo center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- **HORTEC COLOMBIA 2007**  
Sunday September 30 - Tuesday October 2, 2007  
Megaeventos, Bogota, Colombia

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