

FAIRTRADE PREMIUM IMPACT



PRODUCER NAME: MANARCADU SOCIAL SERVICE SOCIETY (MASS)

FLO ID : 32973

COUNTRY: INDIA

PRODUCT: COFFEE, SPICES, COCOA, FRUITS, MEDICINAL PLANTS, CASHEW AND COCONUT.

FAIRTRADE CERTIFIED SINCE: 2008

ABOUT THE PRODUCER ORGANIZATION:

Founded in the year 2001 with the intention to help small scale farmers of Idukki and Kottayam districts, Manarcadu Social Service Society (MASS) encourages and provides farmers with regular training to practice organic farming. A wide range of produce such as coffee, spices, cocoa, fruits, cashew and coconut are procured from the farmers for further processing and storage. Today MASS is a strong community of 31 subgroups comprising 1360 famers who benefit from premium projects by Fairtrade.



Manarcadu Social Service Society

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FAIRTRADE PREMIUM PROJECT ON ADOPTION OF ORGANIC FARMING

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Prior to the project the farmers in the region were not aware on the effect of chemicals they were using on the field, owing to the lack of scientific knowledge. They blindly followed instructions given by the pesticide manufacturers with the hope of increasing the yield. Soon, it led to contamination of water bodies and innumerable health issues, the soil got acidified due to depletion of the organic matter and the stench of the chemicals were felt while breathing.

Since, most of the farmers were uneducated, it was difficult to make them understand the quality standards required for exporting globally. Frequent natural calamities and climate change had made it difficult for the plants to grow and obtain the expected yield. One of the major challenge, was to stop the practice of plastic usage and to bring back the culture of recycling. In the initial years of MASS, organic farming was considered as an impossible practice by the local farmers, it was difficult to change their opinion and include people in the transition.



Figure 1 Organic Compost



Figure 2 Fairtrade Premium Committee Meeting

Additionally, farmers also lacked bargaining powers when they operated alone. They were paid less than what they deserved and there was not much left for the farmers to take home as most of their earnings were spent on chemical fertilizers and other expenses for the farm.

Therefore, Manarcadu Social Service Society was started with the intention to help small scale farmers. With the help of Fairtrade Premium funds, several projects were implemented to fulfil the needs of farming. From sowing the seeds to selling the produce, MASS works hand in hand with the farmers. Regular meetings were conducted for each sub-group, where farmers were counselled and trained on Fairtrade standards.

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MASS provides proper training and necessary help for the farmer to practice organic farming. Today, it has helped farmers to get trade justice by providing Fixed Price Policy.

With the help of Fairtrade Premium Funds:-

- A poly house worth Euros 12500 was built to grow seedlings. These seedling will be distributed to the farmers who have lost their plantations during the flood that occurred last year.



Figure 3 Poly House - Premium Project

- Kerala, India receives a significant rainfall in for most part of the year, which makes drying the produce such as cardamom and pepper difficult, therefore a mechanical spice drying unit was constructed for Euros 645. Today irrespective of the weather, farmers can process their produce within 24 hours of harvesting.

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Figure 4 Mechanical Spice Drying Unit

- MASS also provides Scholarships for deserving children of the Fairtrade certified farmers.
- A cocoa fermentation facility, a coffee processing facility, an industrial kettle and an indoor crane are the other facilities procured for approx. Euros 5000.



Figure 5 Coffee Processing Facility

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Babu Thomas and Roy Thomas are brothers, who have been practising multi-crop farming, in their four acres, for the past thirty years. They grow cocoa, pepper, cardamom, nutmeg and coconut.



Figure 6 Babu Thomas- farmer at the Co-op

“Change in climate, crop failure and paltry price for the produce had made it difficult for us to survive. There was nobody who could save the farmers. With the decline in income, my brother Roy Thomas, had to work part time as a Carpenter. It was during that difficult period, that I came to know about MASS, who suggested us to opt for organic farming, which would enable a sustainable development. The minimum price paid is higher than the local market price in addition to the premium funds for community development projects and scholarships for

students.”- says Babu Thomas a quinquagenarian.

“MASS provides us with saplings, organic manure, training and facilities to process our produce after harvesting. Scholarships have been received by both of my children, which was an encouragement for them. Today cow-dung compost and neem cake are the only manure I use in my farm”. *When asked about the one thing that is of great help from MASS, Babu replied, “It is the Hope!”*



Figure 7Gopi- A Fairtrade Farmer

“Before Fairtrade, the farmers barely had any earnings left for themselves after paying for the seeds, saplings, fertilizers and labours. The torments of drastic fluctuations in the market price takes a toll on our dreams. Fairtrade helps the farmer to improve their economic state, which is utmost importance. Now we get paid better than what we used to” says Gopi who is a Fairtrade farmer for the last four years.

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MASS actively believes in involving women in all of its programs. Sindhu Jebu, a Fairtrade farmer for the last four years grows cocoa, coffee and spices – “MASS gave us training on organic farming and work safety. Their staffs regularly visit’s our farm for assessment and consultation for improving the yields. We are paid a better price than what we get in the market”, *says Sindhu Jebu.*



Figure 8 Sindhu Jebu



Fig 10: Women working at the Co-op

She has become an entrepreneur lately with the encouragement from Mr. Bijumon, the President of MASS- “He noticed my skill for making traditional South Indian snacks, which I was preparing in a small scale for the nearby shops. Today, after expanding the scale of production and distribution, I earn about approx. 950 euros / month from the business”- *contentedly tells Sindhu.*

“All our dreams could become a reality if we have a proper vision, which should be followed by a mission and finally to execution. A single farmer can’t make a great difference but, a collective approach of farmers can make a revolution”

Mr. Bijumon Kurien- President (Manarcadu Social Service Society)

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