



## PRODUCTION PROBLEMS FACED BY COIR CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES: A STUDY IN ALAPPUZHA DISTRICT, KERALA

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### ABSTRACT

*Alappuzha District is the main centre of coir industry in Kerala. Both the men and women are engaged in the different phases of production of coir. The yarn spinning is generally handled by the women workers and the involvement of men in the weaving sector of coir production. The value added products are mainly focused export market. The non-conventional products can play a major role in the future of the coir industry. The major problems faced by coir industry are lack of raw material, lack of skilled and cheap labour, power supply, acceptance in the domestic market etc. The coir board, the governments and the coir cooperative societies need to create awareness and to provide training, guidance in order to promote the production of the value added products.*

**KEY WORD:** Coir Industry, Workers, Coconut Fibre, Production Problems.

### INTRODUCTION

India is a largest coir producer in the world by contributing more than 80% of the production of coir fibre of the total world. In India, Kerala is the largest producer of coir and coir products. Coir Industry is originated in the state of Kerala and it is spread across other coconut growing states of India. Now, the coir industry is export and employment oriented. Over a hundred years ago the first coir factory in India, was started in Alleppey in 1859 by Mr. James Darragh. The factory was supposed to and produced coir mats, matting and other floor coverings. Coir industry attained the status as the largest cottage industry in Kerala by providing work opportunity to more than a million people. As the largest producer and exporter of coir and coir products were exported to more than 80 countries from India. United States of America is the biggest customer of export with a share of more than 40% of the total export. Coir geo- textiles and pith are treated as the future and innovative products of the coir industry. Coir pith is highlighted with its eco-friendly nature and can be used effectively for improving soil behaviours, preventing soil erosion, and in helping consolidation of soil. Coir is a 100% organic and bio-degradable fibre with less water absorption capacity. Coir has a definite mileage over and above the synthetic geo textiles. Coir geo- textiles has importance in the light of environmental aspects and issues. As a cottage industry, coir production



contributing and playing significant role in the economy of the coconut growing state Kerala. Alappuzha district is basically aquaculture society focused in coconut cultivation. As coconut cultivation is the major forming activity in to existence very early stage. More number of industries are on production of coir pith and fibre only form in this. Coir is a product of the coconut tree, *cocosnucifera*, and also known as coco fibre. Coir fibre is relatively water-proof and is one of the few natural fibres resistant to damage by salt water. The history of coir industry in the world indicated that the modern coir industry was started in

England. The golden textured Indian made coir fibre captured the European and world markets. From there the success of Indian coir industry was started and there were no need of looking back. The corporate will established coir factories Kerala, especially in Alleppey, Kollam, Kozhikode, and in Kochi. Kerala occupying the major position of the coir industry among the important traditional cottage industries in the south western coastal belt of India.

**The products manufactured in cluster units are:**

- Mats (Rod mats & Brush mats), Fiber mat, Creel mat, Bit mat, Cord, Cable or ribbed mats)
- Matting
- Matting rugs
- Carpets
- Rubberized coir products
- Others (Ropes, Screens, Acoustic ceiling, Rubberized coir mattresses, Acoustical back panels).

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Like every industry the coir industry also faced different problems and issues. The main problems are as follows:

1. Industrial problems are the problems of finance, labour, materials and the problem of modernization etc.
2. Location Based problems are the problem of short supply of labour during peak agricultural seasons and the problem of drying fibre during rainy seasons may be taken to form the location-oriented.
3. Marketing problems are derived from the nature of the process of production.

The problems can be again grouped as categorised as: (a) Raw material, (b) Labour, (c) Power, (d) Production and (e) Marketing.

**a. Raw material**

It is found that the primary reason for raw material is frequent price fluctuation that distresses them to do business, secondly non availability of required fibre for production, thirdly undesirable suppliers and seasonal variations in affecting the availability of fibre, finally the delay in supplier of raw material.

**b. Labour**

The problem perception on labour is identical in nature among the spinning units. The following are the common issues for a labour is inadequate skilled labour supply, huge advance payment, higher rate of absenteeism, immoral activities like smoking, alcoholism among workers during the working hours. It is inferred that majority of the respondents has stated that on-job training is the best method to overcome shortage of the labour.

**c. Power**

This kind of problem is identical for all the units as it's closely associated with the government norms and few voltage fluctuation, difficulties in getting connection, uneconomic power traffic, unannounced power cut were few issues for spinning units.

**d. Production**

The production is primarily affected by non availability of raw material, skilled labour, power supply, lack of modernization, inadequate working capital. The researcher has made an attempt to analyze some selected variables to overcome the prevailing production problems.

### e. Marketing

The problem of marketing of almost all the small units were identical associated with the intermediaries , lack of media applicability, no brand identity ,lack of government support, lack of professional marketing ,absence of diversified product.

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Coir industry is one of the most important agro-based employment oriented traditional cottage industries in Kerala. Kerala is the largest producer of coir in India. It is concentrated mainly in the rural areas. Coir units are geographically confined to four districts of Kerala are Alappuzha, Kannur, Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram. Cherthala in Alappuzha district has a unique position because of its largest clustering of coir manufacturing units. The concentration of coir manufacturing units of Cherthala in Alappuzha district is the rationale behind selecting this area as the field of investigation under the study. Employment potential of coir industry in Kerala depicts that about 6.57 lakhs of workers are engaged in this industry and out of which 80 percent are being represented by rural women. It is seen from earlier studies that the workers in the coir industry are the socio-economic problems, trade relations of coir products and working and health conditions. This makes the study relevant and significant in the contemporary rural economy of Kerala.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

**Pillai, Kumarasamy (2005)** in his article, Towards self-reliance in Coir Fibre Production|| stated that it might not be possible to utilise the entire coconut husks produced in the country for coir production due to a variety of reasons such as lack of a well-defined mechanism for collection of husks, increased cost of transportation, lack of awareness among the coconut producers, dealers and domestic households about the economic value of husk.

**Chandaran (2005)** in his article, The Indian Coir Industry|| pointed out that the high labour cost in Kerala forced the manufacturers to take the coconut husk to the neighbouring state for defibering and bring it back as fibre to Kerala which was another reason for the increase in the price of fibre. Further, he observed that when demand had gone up on account of short supply of fibre to the production centers, there had been an unprecedented increase in the price of fibre.

**Menon, Kavitha (2005)** The problem of husk shortage was prevalent in the industry even during 1970s. The government of Kerala implemented the Husk Control Act, for ensuring the availability of husk for coir industry through the primary coir cooperatives and to the licensed husk dealers, The problem of husk shortage in spite of enactment of the Act and its implementation could not be addressed effectively and therefore a three point levy system was introduced in the coir industry subsequently by the government of Kerala.

**Amma, Gouri (2005)** The major issues existing in the coir sector are the lack of fibre and the non-receipt of coolie for the women working in the basic level. Women workers engaged in the defibering processes are now not willing to do such works. Further, husk retting has almost ceased because of the pollution threats and health hazards.

**Mohanasundaram (2015)** stated that the coir industry is also prone to problems and constraints. Both at the state and at the national levels the problems like inadequate finance to meet the increasing cost of production, non-availability of raw material such as coconut husk in the years with scanty rainfalls, obsolete production technology, difficulties in the adoption of modern technology, labour scarcity during the harvesting periods of agricultural crops, absence of an effective marketing system, lack of marketing infrastructure, concentration of markets and demand in select regions, production in only sunny days, irrational selection and mismanagement of human resources in all its functional areas, environmental problems and unhealthy competition between mechanised units and non-mechanised units and lastly the not-so encouraging government support, apply brakes in the further growth of this sector in the country. The industry in Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu, also witnesses the major problems seen at the macro-level

but at varying degrees. Hence, this study is an attempt to study major production problems faced by coir units in Thanjavur District.

**Aswathy and Ajithjumar, Saranya (2018)** The economic importance of this traditional industry is significant in terms of income, employment and foreign exchange. This traditional cottage craft provides, in Kerala, Employment to 2.13 lakhs families and approximately 4 lakhs people. In Kerala people, the coir industry is the second largest single source of non – agriculture employment for the rural poor. Alleppey is the nerve center of Kerala’s famous coir industry. This paper addresses the social and economic profile of coir workers in kerala based on the survey conducted in Cherthala taluk in Alappuzha district.

**OBJECTIVES**

- To study the problems faced by coir co operative societies, Alappuzha.
- To analyze the future prospects of coir co operative societies, Alappuzha.
- To identify the new avenues to be exploited by the coir co operative societies.

**Profile of the Area**

The Alappuzha district is the hub of the coir industry of Kerala India.

**Research Methodology**

This paper aims to analyse production problems faced by coir co –operative societies of Alappuzha District, Kerala. This section describes the study in a systematic and scientific way as follows.

**Research Design**

The design study was made in accordance with the data collection and analysis. The study consisted of descriptive and exploratory analysis.

**Data Collection**

The data was collected from both the primary and the secondary sources. Specially designed questionnaire was used to collect the research data.

**Primary Data:** The opinion of the workers and the official designatories from the coir industry, working in different clusters, was collected through the questionnaire.

**Secondary Data:** Secondary data was gathered from various Publishing sources including Magazines, Journals, News Papers and Online resources containing past studies on coir industry.

**Sample Design**

For the study survey sample size was taken, by choosing convenient sampling method. The questionnaire distributed was 125, out of them only 94 questionnaires were received back and among them 6 were incompletely answered.

**Sample Size**

The sample size consisted of 86 numbers; consist of 20 officials and 66 workers from the coir industry.

**Data Analysis**

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Details of the Respondents**

S.No.	Particulars	N	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage	
1.	Gender	Male	28	29	100
		Female	58	71	
2	Category	Office staff	20	23	100

		Workers	66	77	
3	Marital Status	Married	78	91	100
		Unmarried	8	9	
	Status of the workers	permanent	31	36	100
casual		55	64		
4	Status of Office Staff	Permanent	15	75	100
		Temporary	5	25	
5	Awareness on coir Industry Problems	Yes	80	93	100
		No	6	7	

\*Source: Primary Data.

Table-1 depicts that the majority of the workers are female 58 (71%). Majority of the respondents are 66 (77%) workers. Majority of the respondents are married 78 (91%). Majority of the respondents are casual workers 55 (64%). Majority of the office staff are 15 (75%) permanent. Majority of the respondents are 80 (91%) aware about the problems of the coir industry.

$H_0$ : There is no difference between the factors of production problems among the coir co operative societies.

**Table 2: Problems faced by Coir Units**

Particulars	p-value	Significance
Shortage of labour	p-value - .170	Not significant
Inadequate supply of green husks	p-value - .165	Not significant
Heavy machine maintenance expenses	p-value - .656	Not significant
Inadequate finance	p-value - .710	Not significant
Erratic power supply	p-value - .169	Not significant
Traditional methods of production	p-value - .854	Not significant
Drying of fibre during rainy seasons	p-value - .111	Not significant
Lack of Governmental Support	p-value -.074	Not significant
Inadequate Market Information	p-value - .102	Not significant
Heavy Commission	p-value - .121	Not significant
Lack of Finance	p-value - .529	Not significant
Lack of Storage facilities	p-value - .321	Not significant
No direct contact with industrial users	p-value - .321	Not significant
Scarcity of workers during peak agri-season	p-value - .656	Not significant
Lack of industrial work culture	p-value - .121	Not significant

\*Source: Primary Data

\*Significant at 0.05 level

Inadequate finance, shortage of workers and inadequate supply of green husks. Shortage of workers, inadequate supply of green husks and heavy machine maintenance Expenses. Heavy transport cost, lack of governmental support, inadequate market information and heavy commission scarcity of workers during peak agricultural season, lack of industrial work culture, absenteeism and absence of workers union are significantly associated with the problems of production of the coir co operative societies.

## FINDINGS

- Majority of the workers are female 58 (71%). Majority of the respondents are 66 (77%) workers. Majority of the respondents are married 78 (91%). Majority of the respondents are casual workers 55 (64%). Majority of the office staff are 15 (75%) permanent. Majority of the respondents are 80 (91%) aware about the problems of the coir industry.
- Inadequate finance, shortage of workers and inadequate supply of green husks. Shortage of workers, inadequate supply of green husks and heavy machine maintenance expense, heavy transport cost, lack of governmental support, inadequate market information and heavy commission scarcity of workers during peak agricultural season, lack of industrial work culture, absenteeism and absence of workers union are significantly associated with the problems of production of the coir co operative societies.

## LIMITATIONS

There was no separate study made for the co operative societies having small, medium and large scale operations. The study is not covered the influence of e- marketing or the possibilities of information technology in the operation of these societies. The in depth analysis of the production problems of the coir societies were not taken.

## CONCLUSION

The coir industry is one of the traditional, agro based businesses in Kerala. The industry is challenged by many production and post production issues. The industry is contributing majority of the output of the country's total coir products production. The workers and the coir co operative societies are looking forward for a positive and continuous growth of the industry.

## SCOPE FOR FUTURE STUDY

The coir industry still awaiting rejuvenation in different areas of the production. The current study recommends the future studies about the effective labour welfare, facility to provide ample raw materials and use of modern technology to create a change towards value added products.

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