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Coir a crucial component for Eco-Sustainability

- In Sanskrit, the coconut palm is called “kalpa vriksha”, which is defined as “the tree which provides all the necessities of life.” Even the renowned explorer of ancient times Marco Polo has mentioned the method of fibre extraction from the coconut husk in his journals. India is the home of coir where coir weaving started developing since 1859 in Alleppey from where it spread to different parts of India. The coconut fibre extracted from the husk of coconuts is one of the hardest natural fibres and is much more advantageous in different application like soil erosion control, reinforcement and stabilization of soil and is preferred to any other natural fibres. Coir is a sufficiently Eco-friendly product and so its application will never sustain any damages to environment and so is far free from resentments. In fact, coconut coir cannot be really termed as a by-product of the coconut industry. It is a waste product recycled for its beneficiary characteristics to produce the fibre and spun/woven products from there. It is one of the innumerable products of the coconut palm known to India.

- Coconut husks are cultivated in 93 countries in the world and India is the largest coconut producing country in the world. Even though production of coconut is confined to 18 states in the country, coconut and their products enjoy consumer demand throughout the country. Coir has been traditionally used as rope and floor coverings like mats and matting. Apart from these, now coir is finding new applications as eco-friendly substitutes like coir Geo-textiles, garden articles, coir wood furniture and coir toy products etc. by developing technologies for manufacturing coir fiber composites to substitute wood and synthetics.

- One such universal technology is the coir pith; a by-product of the coir processing, is proving to be a source of wealth from waste. The potential of non-traditional products is now well

established but they are yet to gain their due recognition. This in turn has lead to creation of more employment opportunities particularly in the rural areas.

- However, it is their mechanical reliability, durability, recyclability, end of the life disposability and above all cost effectiveness are the factors that determines the preference for use of coir composites. The lack of awareness about the advantages of the product, reluctance of contractors and carpenters to use them, non-availability of a critical mass of these products in the market are some of the obstacles on their way to getting popular with the potential customer.

- While the world is seeking solutions to the rising pollution and the havoc created by deforestation. The coir industry is the answer to sustainable development. What is now needed is a change in our mindset in favour of accepting an alternative strategy for sustainable Eco-development.