

Lakshadweep first UT to become 100% organic

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After Sikkim, Lakshadweep is the first Union Territory to become 100 per cent organic as all farming is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, providing access to safer food choices and making agriculture a more environment-friendly activity. The ministry of agriculture has declared the island as organic.

“Lakshadweep can benefit much from marketing organic products such as desiccated coconut and coconut milk. The organic tag will allow farmers to realize a premium for the farm produce there,” said OP Mishra, Secretary, agriculture, Lakshadweep.

Coconut is the only major crop on the islands. There are eight lakh coconut trees that produce 11 crore coconuts in a year. Besides, horticulture crops such as brinjal, spinach, Banana, Drumstick, Pumpkin, Chillies, Snake Gourd, Cucumber, Beans, Ladyfinger, Ridge Gourd, Papaya, Watermelon are grown but in very small quantities. As per data, 1500-2000 tons of vegetables are grown through natural processes. The coconut palms are grown under natural surroundings. As per data, there are 12450 farmers in the island.

In a communique to Secretary, (agriculture) Lakshadweep, the agriculture ministry said, “After going through the evidences and certificates provided by the administration of UT, competent authority has approved the proposal for declaration of the entire territory of Lakshadweep as organic”.

Mishra said that despite organic certification in 2012, Coconut farming which is the mainstay on the islands, but neither nuts nor copra fetch a premium, falsifying the belief that organic farming will bring fortune to the farmers.

According to Mishra, that the coral island has been certified as the 100 percent organic on the eve of 55 formation day of the UT on November 1.” Actually one third of its area was documented and certified as Organic since 2012 as per US/EU standards for organic coconut farming but the department of agriculture was struggling to bring 100 percent area under the certification owing to one or the other reasons. Now the central sector scheme of Paramparagath Krishi Vigas Yogana launched by the central government and the financial assistance earmarked for Lakshadweep under this scheme became a breakthrough for farmers of this territory,” he said.

“Now more than 12,000 coconut Farmers and about 100 million coconuts produced from this territory as well as value added products made from them will get a premium status and price in the consumer market,” Mishra added. Agriculture is confined only to specific areas around habitations. The soils are medium to deep, alkaline in reaction and low in soil fertility. The land use is dominated by plantation crops like coconut and arecanut. The important crops grown are rice and pulses under rainfed conditions

India’s smallest Union Territory Lakshadweep is an archipelago consisting of 36 islands with an area of 32 sq km. It is a uni-district Union Territory and comprises 12 atolls, three reefs, five submerged banks and ten inhabited islands. The islands comprise 32 sq km. The Capital is Kavaratti and it is also the principal town of the UT.

In January 2016, Sikkim became India’s first “100 percent organic” State.

First published by

Daily Pioneer

on 28 Oct. 2020