

## **Proceedings of Consultative Meeting on Community Enterprise Development for Eco-Friendly Bamboo Straw Manufacturing**

A consultative meeting was held at FRCLE (A unit of RFRI, Jorhat, Assam), Agartala, Tripura on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2021 in collaboration with Tripura Bamboo Mission to discuss the prevalent status of production and trade of bamboo straw with the artisans/craftsmen trained by FRCLE, Agartala with funding support from Tripura Bamboo Mission. The meeting was attended by Shri T. K. Chakma, IAS, State Mission Director, Tripura Bamboo Mission, Shri Ajoy Debbarma, Scientist-B & HoO, FRCLE, Shri Subhas Chandra Das, Additional Mission Director, TBM, 01 Master trainer, 02 Bamboo traders and 13 artisans/craftsmen from North and West Tripura districts.

### **Agendas**

- To ascertain the current status of Bamboo straw manufacturing/productions and trade by the trained artisans/craftsmen and traders.
- To identify issues pertaining to marketing/market linkage for the artisans/craftsmen.
- To take stock of the prevalent supply chain of bamboo straw and existing regulatory mechanism for hassle free movement of finished/value added products.
- To discuss the availability of raw materials for bamboo straw manufacturing round the year.
- To facilitate obtaining Certificate of Origin (CoO) for bamboo straw produced in Tripura.

### **Deliberations**

Based on the discussions made on the above agendas, following submissions and deliberations were made:

- Several artisans/craftsmen submitted that though there were productions, the demand and sale of bamboo straw has declined due to the existing COVID-19 restrictions.
- The artisans/craftsmen also submitted the absence of a proper market linkage to sell their products. Few artisans revealed that some of their products have been supplied to high-end hotels in Bangalore.
- Several artisans/craftsmen and few traders who attended the meeting revealed that lack of local distributors/buyers for export and absence of proper storage facilities resulted in the deterioration of product quality. They opined that proper treatment and storage technique needs to be made available to improve the shelf-life of bamboo straws produced.
- Traders who were in attendance said that there were hindrances due to restrictions imposed by Forest Department at the level of Sub-divisional Forest Officers to Beat level Foresters while transport of the bamboo straws, a finished/value added bamboo product; movement of which are suppose not to be restricted as per Sub-rule (iv) of Rule 12A of the Tripura Forest Transit (5<sup>th</sup> Amendment) Rule, 2019. They expressed that this hindrances are caused even after payment of total royalty of 8% to JFMCs, BMCs and TBB while sourcing of the raw materials, 5 % GST and an additional export duty when exported. The HoO, FRCLE expressed that the said hindrances could be due to loopholes in the interpretations/implementation of existing regulations by some forest officers which could be addressed through consultation among all the stakeholders. The Addl. Mission Director, TBM deliberated that in order to avoid the said hindrances, people could be encouraged to cultivate in their private lands which should ensure availability of raw materials round the

year for production. Most of the artisans/craftsmen and traders argued that the raw materials for Muli (*Melocanna baccifera*) bamboo straw are sourced from abandoned jhum lands having secondary Muli bamboo patches that do not develop into mature culms as a result of slashing and burning cycle during shifting cultivation in the hills and are not extracted from mature Muli bamboo patches. They informed that the raw materials are also not available round the year for harvest/collection.

- On the Certificate of Origin (CoO) for bamboo straws produced in Tripura, The Addl. Mission Director, TBM expressed concern about the traders in big cities importing bamboo straws and claiming origin of the product. He further informed the artisans/craftsmen and traders that the authority to provide Certificate of Origin from Tripura is with Purbasha, Department of Handloom and Handicrafts, Government of Tripura and encouraged the producer artisans/craftsmen to obtain it.
- The Mission Director, TBM remarked that FRCLE, Agartala could undertake a pilot study on the past and prevalent trade of bamboo straws by artisans/craftsmen - beneficiaries of Tripura Bamboo Mission which the HoO, FRCLE consented to take up positively.

The meeting ended on a positive note with all attendees agreeing to further invite the attention of the appropriate authorities to address certain loopholes and improve the ease of doing bamboo based business and to encourage artisans/craftsmen to explore markets and enlarge the business scope of eco-friendly bamboo straws and other bamboo based products of Tripura.

### Clips of Consultative Meeting



\*\*\*\*\*