

'Improved Bhattis' Enhanced Colour and Aroma of Large Cardamom

Farmers of Sikkim's Dozing area have long been using 'local bhattis' for curing large cardamom which is one of the major cash crop of the region. However, growers could not get good colour and aroma of this important spice till they cured large cardamom in 'improved bhattis' designed by Indian Cardamom Research Institute (ICRI).

Improved bhattis were provided to local growers selected as beneficiaries under the NAIP Livelihood Project of ICAR. Bhattis were constructed as per the design supplied by ICRI, Spices Board, Tadong. In each bhatti, 400 kg fresh capsules could be cured at a time. By curing in improved bhattis, large cardamom retain better colour and aroma, and hence command premium price in the market. These improved bhattis were also given to local SHGs and various NGOs working in the State of Sikkim for the welfare of farmers.

'If further support in terms of infrastructure and marketing is provided, our cardamom can reach to foreign countries and can fetch higher price due to its better colour, aroma and flavor', said some local farmers. ICRI's improved bhattis have been constructed as long term assets on the project site. Linkages with North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Ltd. (NERAMAC) for marketing of large cardamom with other farm produces helped local farmer to get maximum profit. Each intervention has been planned in such a way that it should bring sustainable development among growers even after completion of the project.

Due to attractive income, now farmers have started cultivating large cardamom scientifically. Scientists are providing necessary advice and intervention to farmers on their fields. Nurseries for production of high quality planting materials of large cardamom are established which were not in practice before. Multiplication units established in collaboration Spices Board, Development Departments and NREGA are producing high quality plantlets. Planting materials are used for domestic as well as for marketing purposes. Improved Bhattis have transformed the cultivation of cardamom into a profitable venture ensuring quality livelihood to farmers.

(Source: NAIP, Mass Media Project, DKMA with inputs from ICAR-RC-NEH, Barapani)