

Marico's slick solution helps farms tide over dry spell in Pollachi tract

LN REVATHY

Pollachi, January 27

After feeling the pinch of buying water to save his coconut trees for two years in a row, S Subramaniam, a farmer near Kinathukkadavu on the Coimbatore-Pollachi route consulted Marico Ltd, a private company that is spearheading water conservation initiatives in Pollachi region, and constructed a farm pond to harvest rainwater.

Water Stewardship

This was in mid-2018. "We have not looked back since. There is enough water in the farm pond, the groundwater around one km radius is showing signs of recharge and the water level in the two wells in my farmland has risen significantly. This is despite the fact that the area did not receive ad-

equated rainfall during the last season," he said.

Further away near Udumalpet, another farmer Prabhunathan said that wells and borewells used to go dry by January-end as the place receives scanty rainfall.

"I have managed this year as there is water in the farm pond created in August last. I will be able to manage till the next south-west monsoon season with this water as also from the well," he said.

Farmers in the region were aware of the depleting water table.

Cost-sharing

Gopalswamy, a coconut farmer near Pollachi said, "We could not afford the cost of constructing farm ponds and we also needed some guidance."

Udayraj Prabhu, Executive Vice-President and Head (CSR), Marico Ltd, said that though several water conservation efforts were initiated by the company, the biggest pull was from construction of farm ponds.

Eighty per cent of the cost of making the farm pond is borne by the company under the aegis of Parachute Kalpavriksha Foundation and the balance by the farmer.

Through this initiative, the company has completed building 61 farm ponds (with 6-crore-litre capacity) in and around Pollachi and is targeting 110 farm ponds with conservation capacity of 10.5 crore litres by the end of this fiscal. "Our annual allocation for water conservation projects is ₹2 crore," Prabhu said.