

# Farm ponds prove saviours in parched Pollachi

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Coconut farms require water throughout the year - S SIVA SARAVANAN

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 for harvesting rainwater.

## Water Stewardship

This was in mid-2018. Subramaniam was one of the early beneficiaries of Marico's Water Stewardship Initiative. "We have not looked back since. There is enough water in the farm pond, the groundwater around one kilometre 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 adequate rainfall during the last season," he said.

Further away near Udumalpet, another farmer Prabhunathan pointed out that wells and borewells used to go dry by January-end as Udumalpet 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 southwest monsoon season with this water as also from the well," he said.

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Udumalpet incidentally received just two spells of heavy rain last year.

Though farmers in the region were aware of the depleting water table and irregular spells, they never really bothered to conserve water earlier. "In the first place, we could not afford the cost of constructing farm ponds and we also needed some guidance," said Gopalswamy, a coconut farmer near Pollachi.

## Cost-sharing

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.

"Our efforts are aimed at making a difference in the lives of every stakeholder and making water available throughout the year to meet agricultural requirements. Over the last 2 -3 years, we have explored various ways of conserving water by building trenches, micro-irrigation, recharging borewells and aquifers, de-silting of dams and so on," Prabhu said.

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.

