

# Farm ponds bring more water to coconut groves

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
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Many of the coconut farmers in and around Pollachi feel they may not face water problem in summer this year. Good monsoon rains last year coupled with farm ponds are helping them.

R. Raghunathan, a farmer from Udumalpet taluk, says his land received two good rains in the last couple of months and that has filled the farm pond on his land. It is helping him now and he is confident that he will not face water problems in summer.

R. Gopalasamy at Kollapatti says two borewells and two wells on his four acre farm are seeing higher water levels because of the farm pond that was dug two months ago. It is benefiting the farms for nearly one km around.

Marico takes up water conservation projects, through the Parachute Kalpavriksha Foundation, largely in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. It identifies farm lands, talks to farmers, and promotes different types of water conservation systems - farm ponds, bunds on small farm lands, desilting of dams, Bhungroo, Urdhvam and a combination of Urdhvam and Bhungroo (recharging borewells).

Raghunathan and Gopalasamy are among the nearly 500 farmers in Pollachi area who have one of these systems on their land, developed with the support of



A farm pond set up at Kollapatti, near Pollachi, by Marico.

the Foundation.

R. Marimuthu, who has coconut trees on 10 acres at Kollapatti, says the farm pond on his land has benefited nearby farmers too. "They visit my land to see the farm pond and are showing interest in having a similar system on their lands too," he says.

According to Uday Raj Prabhu, who heads the Corporate Social Responsibility projects of Marico, over the last three years, the company has spent Rs. 4 crore on water conservation projects. It has developed nearly 500 farm ponds in different States and by end of March, 175 of these will be in Pollachi area.

"The farmers seem to prefer farm ponds. We will focus more on it," he says. A farmer will lose 10 to 12 coconut trees to set up a farm pond. So, it can be developed only if the farmer has

at least four acres, he adds.

"A farm land will get rains for 90 to 100 days a year and that too only for a few hours on a day. Water percolation will not be 100 % and a lot of water is lost in a few days. Digging farm ponds will help conserve water and improve the ground water level," Mr. Prabhu says.

Marico bears 80 % of the cost in developing a farm pond. For the farmers, the company executives approach them and discuss the details, help in cost, and the quality of the work executed is good.

"It is alright to lose 10 to 12 trees for the benefit of 100 trees," says Mr. Raghunath.

Farmers cannot bear the entire cost for such works. But water is a necessity and these efforts encourages other farmers to look at the options available, says R. Amirtharaj, who has a Bhungroo set up on his land by Marico.