

Opening new vistas for agribusiness

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Central Plantation Crops Research is organising 'Startup Green', a workshop for aspiring agri-entrepreneurs

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MAHESH Bhat, a native of Kumbala, quit Ingram Micro, one of the largest IT products and services companies, to start his own firm. He soon found himself working with his agriculturalist father. Today, his virgin coconut oil Gencocus has a high demand in Karnataka. "I'm a small player with a production capacity of 30 litres per day. But I do have a niche market," he says.

Another agribusiness entrepreneur Siby Mathew from Kanhagad is on a course to touch a turnover of ₹2 crore next year. He makes and sells coconut chips and other coconut products, such as coconut-dry fruits laddu under the brand name Magicco Life Care Products.

Both the entrepreneurs bought technologies to run their busi-



Agribusiness entrepreneur Mahesh Bhat and wife Pavana Mahesh at their virgin coconut oil unit at Kumbala

nesses from Central Plantation Crops Research (CPCRI). "Successful agri-entrepreneurs make their businesses look simple and

products attractive," said K Muralidharan, principal scientist of CPCRI. "But like any business, agribusiness too is fraught with

mines and opportunities. A lot of hand-holding goes into making a successful entrepreneur."

As part of the continuous effort, CPCRI is organising 'Startup Green', a workshop for aspiring agribusiness entrepreneurs and those looking to diversify, he said. "We will be bringing together agribusiness incubators, entrepreneurs, executives, business experts and business students," Muralidharan said.

Bhat and Mathew are two of the several speakers who will provide a lowdown on agribusiness, he said.

He said the Agribusiness Incubation Centre at CPCRI focuses on coconut business ventures. "It provides structured and formal entrepreneurship programmes," he said.

Apart from that, the centre also provides technology backstopping, financial guidance and

technical consultancy to set up production and processing units. "More than 200 entrepreneurs have received assistance from this centre since its inception in 2013," said the scientist.

Mathew said he made an initial investment of ₹10 lakh and now had a turnover of ₹40 lakh. "The business was growing exponentially and was poised to touch ₹2 crore by the end of 2018," he said. "Marketing is as important as product quality. Extensive marketing studies in collaboration with CPCRI helped me identify outlets for my products."

Muralidharan said CPCRI's incubator provided facilities for making of virgin coconut oil, desiccated coconut, coconut chips, coconut sugar, and activated carbon. He said registration for the workshop to be held on January 7 may be done online at www.cpc-riagribiz.in.