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Kendu Leaf- Employment Provider amid Covid Adversities

Operations likely to generate Rs.100 cr Trade Surplus

Chief Secretary directed to do more bush cutting in convergence with MGNREGS

Bhubaneswar, 2 Dec

Amid Covid adversities, State Government have been able to provide employment to around eight lakh people through kendu leaf operations. Beating the adverse weather conditions in February and March along with covid lockdowns and shutdowns, the operations are set to generate a trade surplus of Rs.100 cr during the current year. This was known from State level Coordination Meeting held under Chairmanship of Chief Secretary Sri Asit Tripathy on digital mode from *Lokseba Bhawan* wherein Additional Chief Secretary Forest and Environment Dr Mona Sharma outlined the issues for discussion.

Reviewing different facets of kendu leaf operation, Chief Secretary Sri Tripathy directed to do more bush cutting in convergence with MGNREGS . He said, “Investing more in bush cutting will yield more production and procurement. It will also help in quality production of ‘processed leaves’ for which Odisha is known. Development Commissioner Sri Suresh Chandra Mohapatra advised the department to prepare a district wise bush cutting plan and workout the convergence with panchayati raj and drinking water department.

Presenting the updates, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Kendu Leaf) Sri Pravakara Behera said, “More than 60 lakh person days were created during the current year in the works like bush cutting, procurement of leaves, phadi repairing, leaf drying and storage, processing, binding, bagging and transportation. A total number of 7,54,631 nos. of Pluckers and 18, 223 binders were engaged in the work among whom nearly 80% were women”. Besides, 16,533 seasonal staff were engaged in the operations. Bush cutting was done in 5.37 lakh hectares and around 7176 phadies in different places were also repaired and maintained directly through the villagers.

Additional Chief Secretary Dr Sharma apprised that procurement of Kendu Leaves was taken up during April-May and near about 2 lakh quintals of leaves of worth about Rs.119.57 cr were procured from the pluckers. The cost of the leaves was directly disbursed to bank account of the pluckers. During the season, each individual member of a plucker family earned around Rs.1585/- only from the plucking. Dr Sharma added, the total sale value of the leaves procured during 2019 was around Rs.377 cr against which the sale value till end of November this year has reached Rs.321 cr. As of now, around 50,000 quintals of leaf are in process for sale which is expected to yield around more Rs.100 cr at the current trend. PCCF Sri Behera appraised that the investment against the operations till end of November was around Rs.266 cr which might increase by another Rs.50 cr at the trade closing. The entire operation might yield the trade surplus of near about Rs.100 cr.

Development Commissioner Sri Suresh Chandra Moahaptra, Additional Chief Secretary Forest and Environment Dr Mona Sharma, Principal Secretary Finance Sri Ashok Kumar Meena, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Sri Sandeep Tripathy along with senior officers of concerned departments participated in the discussions.

**** U.K.Mohapatra, PRO to Chief Secretary****