

Opening of Seed Cleaning Centre Muthur

The Muthur Seed Cleaning Centre at the 58 Mile Post, Barathipuram-Kiliveddy, on the A15 to Batticaloa, was officially opened on 7 September 2002 on the invitation of Mr S. Sivakumar, Assistant Director of Agriculture. Mr N.P.K. Nelumdeniya, Government Agent Trincomalee started the PET-KUS 541 seed cleaning and sorting machine which was funded by the IFSP-GTZ.

The opening of the centre took place in the presence of many guests amidst a large gathering of farmers and representatives of Farmer's Organisations from nearby villages. Present were Hon MP K. Thurairatnasingam, Deputy Chief Secretary NEP Mr Swaminathan, Secretary Ministry of Agriculture NEP Mr R. Thiyagalingam, President MPCS Muthur Mr M. Raseek, Divisional Secretary

Mallikaitheevu, Pallikudiyiruppu and from villages in the DS Divisions of Seruvila and Eachchilampattai can have their seed paddy cleaned, sorted and certified. Consumption paddy and other field crops could be processed. The increased quality of the produce should fetch better prices in the market.

The centre is open for all members from the Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim communities. Families and farmers from the former 'uncleared areas' are welcome. The core objectives of IFSP should contribute to a peaceful and prosperous coexistence and cooperation of the three communities. IFSP supports food security for villages and households with a focus to link villages to markets. The effect of the war has marginalised many villages and



GA Trincomalee starts the seed cleaning and sorting machine. This is the first visit of the GA to Muthur DS Division after the MOU.



Farmers examine and discuss the quality of the cleaned and sorted seed paddy.

Muthur, Mr A. Nadarajah, DS Eachchilampattai, Deputy Director Dept. of Agriculture NEP, Mr K. Subramaniam and the Commander of the Palathoppur Army Camp. Hon MP Toufeek who was unable to participate in the opening ceremony delivered a welcome note.

The seed cleaning centre is the first agri-business established in the DS Division after the MOU became effective in February 2002. It is located in the middle of the rice growing areas of Muthur. Farmers from villages like Kiliveddy, Thoppur,

families. Paddy fields and structures were destroyed, neglected or abandoned and the paddy economy is at a low level. The lack of quality seed paddy is a major limitation to improve the paddy economy. The seed cleaning centre contributes to a commercially viable local paddy economy. More food will be available and people will have better access to food.

The intensive and invaluable work undertaken by Mr Sivakumar, Asst. Director of Agriculture and his team to promote seed paddy cultivation under an

IFSP supported outgrowing scheme in Maha 2001 and Yala 2002 has shown excellent results. Mr Sivakumar, in fact, was the driving force to promote guide this special project which is to be continued. Mr N. Pugendran, former PD IFSP and DD Planning supported this initiative from the onset. IFSP-GTZ has effected Rs. 800,000 as initial investment to promote seed paddy outgrowing.

Today 300 farmers are cultivating seed paddy at about $\frac{1}{4}$ acre each and 30 ha are close to harvesting. Estimating a harvest of about 4,000 kg per ha, a total of 120,000 kg seed paddy would be available. This quantity could cover an area of 1,500 ha. Assuming that the average holding is about 0.75 ha, about 2,000 individual farms families would benefit. The price for quality seed paddy is about 2.3 times higher than for consumption paddy. On an average, the input-output ratio should be 1:30, i.e. 1 kg of initial seed paddy produces 30 kg of seed paddy. This should allow very good financial returns.

The President of MPCS had consented in 2001 to accommodate the PETKUS 541 seed cleaner by reconstructing and equipping a formerly abandoned building. The centre is expected to be managed as a commercial enterprise through the MPCS in cooperation with the association of seed paddy outgrowers. MPCS Muthur invested about Rs. 800,000 into the building and structures.

The Seed cleaning centre has been established at a cost of about 2.5 million Rs. Of this, Rs. 1,649,371 were the cost of the PETKUS 541 seed cleaner which was imported from Germany and installed by the Department of Agriculture. The procurement of the machine was organised by Ms Gudrun Alpert, procurement manager at GTZ head office, Germany.

MPCS Muthur is a commercial enterprise and at the same time serves the people. It is the only competent organisation which was willing to invest a sizeable amount from own resources. The building which houses the PETKUS 541 is of very good standard. 3-phase electricity is available. The nearby MPCS's local market outlet attracts consumers.

IFSP, Department of Agriculture, MPCS and the association of seed paddy outgrowers will develop

a model for managing the centre. Costs of operation, use of the machine and pricing will be monitored.

New Project Director

Mrs Rohini Singarayer was appointed Project Director IFSP on 1 July 2002. She succeeds Mr Arumugarajah who is going on retirement. Mrs



Mrs Rohini Singarayer, Project Director IFSP delivers her address during the official opening of the seed cleaning centre Muthur.

Singarayer has an M.Sc. in Agriculture with specialisation in GIS and agricultural extension from the University of Melbourne, Australia and a B.Sc. in Agriculture from Peradeniya University. Mrs Singarayer has been with IFSP-GTZ since mid 1999 in the capacity of communication specialist and senior programme manager.

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