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Today, on World Environment Day, the **Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development Thiru KR. Periakaruppan** inaugurated the Product Exhibition by Producer Collectives and provide them with Green Awards and the Green Incentive Grant during the programme organised by the Vaazhndhu Kaattuvom Project

Vaazhndhu Kaattuvom Project, which is performing exemplarily under the guidance of the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, organised a programme today on the occasion of World Environment Day in Chennai to give away Green Awards and the Green Incentive Grant to Farmer Producer Organisations. The programme also included a workshop and an exhibition of FPO products

The programme was conceived by Vaazhndhu Kaattuvom Project. This project, funded by the World Bank and Government of Tamil Nadu is operational in 120 blocks covering 3,994 village panchayats spread across 31 districts of Tamil Nadu.

The Vaazhndhu Kaattuvom Project benefits women self-help groups and their family members, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, differently abled persons, youth and entrepreneurs. As many as 6,000 Nano, 500 Micro and 120 Small business units have been identified for providing technical training, financial support and guidance services towards starting up or improving their businesses.

Measures have been taken for the formation of Producer Groups, Enterprise Groups, Producer Collectives, Women Livelihood Service Centres. In fiscal year 2021-2022, over 2,000 Producer Groups, 500 Enterprise Groups, 25 Producer Collectives and 30 Women Livelihood Service Centres were formed. In this current fiscal year 2022-2023, plans are afoot to create 1,235 Producer Groups, 500 Enterprise Group and 25 Production Collectives and 12 Women Livelihood Service Centres.

Through the Matching Grant Program, 30 percent of the loan amount sanctioned to enterprises will be provided as grants. Through the Nano Enterprise Finance Scheme, Nano

loans to women entrepreneurs are disbursed through the Village Poverty Reduction Committee and Panchayat level Federations.

To encourage youth who migrate to bigger metros in search of jobs, where they need to adapt to the new environment, the Project has planned to establish Youth Development Centres and to train and equip youth for both self-employment and jobs. Skill training for over 22,000 rural youth through Community Skill Schools and training on agriculture and cattle farming for 80,000 members of Producer Groups through Community Farm Schools are planned for this fiscal year.

Moreover, through Vaazhndhu Kaattuvom Project, a total of 50 Producer Collectives comprising 40,000 producers would be formed with 80% of them being women members. Out of 50 Producer Collectives, 28 are operational currently.

22 Farmer Producer Organisations were selected based on adaptation of eco friendly practices such as application of organic/biological inputs, water conservation and recycling, waste management, application of renewable energy, energy conservation, etc. They are recognised with Green Awards and Rs. 3 Lakhs as a green incentive grant was given to 16 Farmer Producer Organisations who followed green practices and got A, B and C grades in overall rating by the Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development.

A total of 50 farmer producer organisations are in the Vaazhndhu Kaattuvom Project implementation area. These organisations aim to support livelihoods of farmers (especially that of small and marginal farmers, women farmers, landless farmers), through of support services such as quality input supply, value addition, collective marketing, channelling better extension services etc.

Earlier, a workshop for farmer producer organisations was held to create awareness about best practices followed by the organisations supported by World Bank, and for them to share their experiences.

The Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development inaugurated and visited the stalls exhibiting the produce of the farmer producer groups.

Tmt. Supriya Sahu, IAS., Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Forests, Tmt. P. Amudha, IAS., Principal Secretary to Government, Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Tmt. Pallavi Baldev, IAS, Chief Executive Officer, Vaazhndhu Kaattuvom Project, Tmt. M. Aruna, IAS., Chief Operating Officer (PM), Vaazhndhu Kaattuvom Project, Thiru, Samik Sundar Das, Task Team Leader, The World Bank, Prof. Sultan Ahmed Ismail, Teacher, Soil Biologist & Ecologist & Member, State Planning Commission, Govt. of Tamil Nadu, Mr. Aruljothi Arasan, Additional Director, Chief Operating Officer (PI), Vaazhndhu Kaattuvom Project, representatives of FPOs from Tamil Nadu Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and officers from Vaazhndhu Kaattuvom Project attended the programme.

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