

Panel Discussion

Bamboo Handicrafts Marketing, Design & Skilling for Sustainable Development & Livelihood



6th November 2020: This Panel Discussion had among panelists (LtoR) Mr. Ravi K Passi, Chairman, EPCH; Dr. Alka Bhargava (IFS), Addl. Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmer Welfare; Mr OP Prahladka, Chairman, HCSSC; Mr. Vishal Dhingra, President, BAA; Ms. Jesmina Zeliang, COA Member, EPCH; Dr. Arun Kumar Sarma, Director General, North East Centre of Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR); Mr. Manoj K Das Managing Director, The North Eastern Regional Agriculture Marketing Corporation Ltd. (NERAMAC) & DGM (NEDFI); Mr. Praveen Solanki, Associate Senior Faculty, National Institute of Design; Mr. PJ Aranador, Filipino International Lifestyle Designer from Manila; Dr. Abhinav Kant, Incharge, Bamboo and Cane Development Institute, Agartala (Tripura); Mr. Sonam Tashi Gyaltzen, Product Designer from Sikkim; Mr. R.K. Verma, Executive Director, EPCH; Mr. Rajesh Rawat, Joint Director, EPCH; and Ms. Amla Srivastava, Head Designer, EPCH.

Mr. Ravi K. Passi, Chairman, EPCH, welcomed all the panelists, participants and guests. In his opening remarks, he shared how Bamboo plays a very important role in development of domestic as well as international economics, being a major employment generation in rural region and connected to the livelihood of

providing opportunities to a large number of artisans, entrepreneurs and exporters involved in the process and also provided proper hand-holding for new product development, product design and new market access through domestic and international platforms.



many women artisans, especially in the NER region. He added that EPCH has actively promoted bamboo crafts exports from the NER region,

Then the discussion was initiated with a brief presentation from **Dr. Abhinav Kant, Incharge, Bamboo and Cane Development Institute.** He shared factual data of bamboo exports and imports with emphasis on the abundant variety of bamboo available in India, making it the second largest producer of bamboo with over 135 different species. However, despite this advantage, India is way behind its competitors, he said, citing reasons like lack of skilled labour, lack of technology intervention,



Design Intervention

- Cluster approach
- To provide new and innovative designs
- Improve the skills of the artisans



Recently Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj launched 22 bamboo clusters in 9 States i.e. Gujarat, MP, Maharashtra, Odisha, Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Uttarakhand and Karnataka.

- Market acceptable products
- Product specific clusters
- Market Linkages



training and development of labour, etc. He further added that many Councils and institutes are associated with the bamboo sector, improving the standards in products by engaging skill and training development activities. With more governmental intervention, India can gain advantage over its competitors.

Ms. Jesmina Zeliang, COA Member and Regional Convenor-NER, EPCH, carried forward the session highlighting some thoughtful insights on Bamboo from NER region. Elaborating on the topic, 'Bamboo Handicrafts - Marketing, Design & Skilling for Sustainable Development', she said, "with over 66% of bamboo resources located in NER the time has come to realise the importance of usage of bamboo products procured from NER. There are several government projects in progress, to improve the livelihood of bamboo farmers, exporters, artisans, etc. by providing knowledge sessions, training & skill development programs as well as trade promotion platforms, both domestic and international." Over the years EPCH has taken many initiative like sustainable livelihood for the development of sustainable handcrafted products.



Ms. Amla Srivastava, Head Designer, EPCH, in her presentation, showed the participants, design and trend prospects available in the market. "Entrepreneurs should invest in design development. Some research work and creativity can help them to tap new opportunities and new market with new products. This might also help them in brand building and positive customer feedback," she said.

CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT SEMINAR IN NORTH EAST STATES



Dr. Alka Bhargava (IFS), Addl. Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmer Welfare, in her remarks highlighted that earlier most of the bamboo as raw material was procured from forests. Now the time has come where focus should be towards the cultivation of bamboo wood for raw material. This will enable effective mobilisation of supply chain of raw bamboo for the production. In the beginning cultivation of crop should be in focus not the species. Cultivation should be done for the bamboo species for ready available market. Identification of these species can be done with the help of research institutes and for

design, EPCH and National Institute of Design (NID) can do training programs. Other skill training development, packaging techniques and regulatory compliances can be taught to the artisans, exporters or the entrepreneurs to get updated with international regulations.

Dr. Arun Kumar Sarma, Director General, North East Centre of Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR), shared about the work done by North-East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR). He shared that the Centre looks at harnessing and leveraging niche frontier technologies available with central scientific departments and institutions. In order to assist the north-eastern region, NECTAR ensures applications of appropriate technologies for development in the areas of biodiversity concerns, watershed management, tele-medicine, horticulture, infrastructure planning & development, planning and monitoring, and tele-schooling using cutting-edge MESHNET solutions, employment generation etc. through utilisation of local products/resources and associated skill development. He also said that more technology intervention is required in bamboo sector for proper utilisation of natural resources. There are several design integrated programs which are being conducted in NER. Also more focus is given towards development of technology centric centres across north-eastern region which help the beneficiaries to compete in market.

Mr. OP Prahladka, Chairman, HCSSC, in his remarks informed about the work done by Handicraft and Carpet Sector Skill Council towards training and development of bamboo artisans across India. So far 23,598 artisans have been trained. Currently 3 QPs are for the bamboo craft. Several meetings were conducted to increase these QPs for bamboo craft and soon a MoU will be signed DAC&FW department. He also said that council is already working on to train and update artisans with the latest technology and design perspective. There are programs to be conducted for training of trainers. More MoU's will be signed with international organisation to facilitate new methods, design development, skill development and technology development.

Mr. Vishal Dhingra, President, BAA, in his remarks said that there is huge potential and high demand of bamboo and cane products among overseas buyers and their demand is shifting towards sustainable products. But India is facing lot of challenge

like market penetration, market driven products, capacity development. India needs to overcome challenges as these are diverting business opportunities towards other Asian countries like China, Vietnam, Philippines, etc. More investment is to be done on technology design development and marketing.

Mr. PJ Aranador, Filipino International Lifestyle Designer from Manila, said trends have changed post covid. "There is a significant difference between pre covid and post covid. He also said that transformation in design is required. Design should be more home centric. More of cocooning approach is demanded by the buyers. Products which are rejuvenating in nature which has some feel and develops a connection are to be produced," he opined.

Mr. Manoj K Das Managing Director, The North Eastern Regional Agriculture Marketing Corporation Ltd. (NERAMAC) & DGM (NEDFI), highlighted the work done by NEDFI for the development of NER region for bamboo and cane. With support from the government more training projects have been implemented for bamboo craft. With the help of EPCH more NER exporters are able to access new markets through fairs like IHGF Delhi Fair and others outside India. "Many clusters have been developed for bamboo across country where artisans are able to earn their livelihood. These clusters have generated more than 50 crores of business," he said added that more emphasis should be given towards bamboo cultivation rather than depending on forest or wild bamboo.

Mr. Praveen Solanki, Associate Senior Faculty, National Institute of Design, highlighted the difference





folding bed



folding bed



between Indian species of bamboo and Philippines or Chinese species. He said, "Indian bamboo species are very hard in nature as compared to Chinese. So the delicateness of the products is missed. He also said Indians bamboo industry is confined majorly to baskets and manufacturers are unable to introduce new variety in product range." He also said, "we only look towards sustainability but forget about the opportunity, identity and collapsibility. These are the real issues which need to be addressed. Design needs transformation." With a compact presentation he showed some innovative designs and ideas that can be incorporated to transform the feel and look of the craft.

Mr. Sonam Tashi Gyaltzen, Product Designer from Sikkim, said that more emphasis should be given towards protection of bamboo craft. One aspect of protection is design protection. Various new ideas are generated by master trainers and artisans. But these designs become open to the world and these are copied and sold in the market. So there should be govt. intervention towards design protection. Another aspect towards protection is packaging. No major intervention has taken place in bamboo handicraft products related to packaging. More logistics challenges are arising due to which shipments are delay and sometimes products are being damaged. He also shared some suggestion which will help in growth of bamboo craft like tapping new immediate market, new design development, sustainable products, cost effective products.



Mr. R K Verma, Executive Director, EPCH thanked all the panelists and participants. He said that EPCH has always made efforts to highlight NER issues in various government meetings. More programs are coming to the NER region towards skill development & design training. He also said that suggestion from the panelists have been noted and will be implemented towards for the betterment of bamboo crafts from NER. ■