

NIIST offers 'clear' banana fibre extraction knowhow

Our Bureau

Thiruvananthapuram, July 4:

The National Institute for Inter-disciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST) is offering a technology for clear extraction of banana fibre on a non-exclusive basis.

NIIST is an affiliate of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) based here.

PATENT SOUGHT

The indigenously developed process know-how is for 'clean extraction of banana fibre from pseudo stems and empty bunches' (leftover banana trunk after harvest).

An international patent has been sought for the process know-how vide PCT/IN2009/000075, a spokesman for NIIST said. It has already been licensed to three parties, including a foreign one (based in the Philippines).

NIIST would like to see the same being popularised locally, the spokesman said.

The banana fibre is in good demand and is used in making of cordage, yarns, paper and paper cups, tea cups and tea bags, cloth, handbags, purses and even shoes.

Banana fibres are generally extracted through a cumbersome manual process. By using a metal scraper (flat and blunt blade), the pseudo stem sheaths are scraped and the fibre is separated.

POLLUTION-FREE

An individual at work can expect to extract just about 500 gm in this manner; the mechanical process delivers 10 times more but with heavy damage to the fibre.

The NIIST process involves an anaerobic process mediated through microbial action and is completed in four to six days of soaking in water.

Organic wastes get converted into biogas in this process, which is pollution-free. Under optimum conditions, separation of the fibres gets completed in a week's time.

Water washing of the separated fibres removes residuals of the pith prior to drying. The clean fibres are dried in sunlight to bring down the moisture content considerably.

The fibre obtained is brilliant white in colour and has little pith residues. More details can be had on phone 0471-2515388 (NIIST, Thiruvananthapuram).

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