

# Kerala farmers' cooperative to launch café chain, push organic coffee

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**Kochi, March 29:** Kerala-based farmers' cooperative Manarcadu Social Service Society (MASS), which has more than 5,000 members, is all set to launch a café chain by the name 'Café de Monde', with its specialty brand of premium organic coffee. MASS is a first-of-its-kind farmers' cooperative in Kerala exporting organic and Fairtrade spices, cocoa and coffee to Europe.

"Café de Monde will be an exclusive top-of-the-line experience café chain. With this brand, we propose to redefine the coffee beverage segment through clear, differentiating factors," Bijumon Kurian, president, MASS, said.

"Café de Monde will strive to create a unique coffee-shop experience where customers can socialise and interact with one another in a great ambience, while enjoying the aroma and taste of freshly-brewed organic coffee. Only organic beans from virgin plantations will be used at the café," he said. The first flagship outlet will be launched next month in Kochi and followed by another nine stores in one year.

The society, incorporated in



2001 to help small-scale farmers, has been working in the field of organics and Fairtrade for a decade, especially coffee farmers for ensuring better market price for their products and sustainable business linkages. The farmers are certified under national and international organic standards, Fairtrade and other sustainable standards. Apart from coffee, the partners of MASS currently produce 12 other Fairtrade-certified products like cocoa, cinnamon, black pepper, white pepper, vanilla, cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, ginger, turmeric, coconut and pineapple.

**The total area under cultivation under the cooperative is 3,100 hectares, with an annual production of 4,000 tonne spices, 6,500 tonne of cocoa, 2,600 tonne of coffee and 1,870 tonne of fruits**

The cooperative runs an internal control system for mobilising 'organic' and 'Fairtrade' certification. MASS was instrumental in empowering more than 5,000 farmers to

achieve organic certification and export their produces like spices, coffee and cocoa to Europe keeping Fairtrade and organic standards, sources said. The society exported agro-products worth ₹20 crore in the last fiscal achieving 20% annual growth, sources said.

The total area under cultivation under MASS is 3,100 hectare (ha) with an annual production of 4,000 tonne spices, 6,500 tonne of cocoa, and 2,600 tonne of coffee and 1,870 tonne of fruits. Recently, the government of Kerala, through the state horticulture mission, has awarded a 3,000-ha organic adoption and certification project in the districts of Idukki, Wayanad and Kasargod.

MASS has plans for setting up an International Sustainable Academy for Fairtrade and Organic Farming in Idinjama in the Idukki district of Kerala.

"This academy will propagate the importance of Fairtrade and organic farming amongst the farming communities across India. This will be an institution for research and knowledge sharing for both resident and overseas students," Bijumon said.

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