

Thankachan's story

Coffee farmer Thankachan Kaduvanal's first name means "as dear as gold", and it's a term that would fit well with his enthusiasm for the rich soil on his farm since he changed to organic farming and selling to Fair Trade Alliance Kerala.



"There is a much fairer price but what I feel most about is I can protect my soil. It is full of earthworms. You dig anywhere and you will find them."

Thankachan is passionate about the land. "In every sense I grew up farming," he says. "My father farmed on this land before me."

Now his father, Ulahannan, lives on the farm with Thankachan and his family: wife, Lisamma, and daughters, Anitta (11), Ginitta (9) and Niya. The homestead farm of just over three acres provides a variety of crops: coffee, vanilla, coconut, some rubber, rice, ginger, turmeric, bananas, cardamom, cassava and cocoa.

There are 250 coffee plants which are providing fruit and 2500 of a new variety in the nursery.

Thankachan's coffee is certified organic, which is something that FTAK has helped him with. "The alliance has advised me about organic farming," he said. "I feel there is a lot more care going into our coffee. We get a lot of assistance on quality. Here we take great care."

Thankachan attends St Thomas Church in Marakavu, leaving at 7.15am on a Sunday morning to walk to the 7.45am service. His wife attends another neighbouring church with his children who go to the second mass at 10.30, followed by Sunday School.

Farming is a family tradition. His cousin farms next door and they are the second generation of the family to care for this land, taking over from their fathers.

"I hope I can maintain this level of farming," Thankachan said. "Because you are buying, we are able to have a market for our coffee."

About Fair Trade Alliance Kerala

Traidcraft's instant coffee is grown, processed and packed in India, providing additional income where it is needed most. Fair Trade Alliance Kerala (FTAK) is one of the groups who provides the coffee.

FTAK provides around 3,200 farmers growing coffee, cashew and spices with access to fair trade markets. The Fairtrade premium is helping communities across Kerala through a variety of projects, ranging from a fresh water system, powered by gravity, to a women's beekeeping project, providing additional income for around 60 local families.

Help more coffee farmers find a market

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