

## ICAR-CIARI to participate in Island Food Festival

**SRI VIJAYA PURAM, APRIL 16/--/** The ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute (CIARI), Sri Vijaya Puram, will participate in the Island Food Festival at ITF Ground from April 17-19, 2026. Alongside its diverse technological innovations, CIARI will present three distinctive products developed from local produce, offering island residents and visitors a chance to savour flavours deeply rooted in the region's biodiversity.

For decades, CIARI has been at the forefront of uplifting island stakeholders while safeguarding native biodiversity. A shining example of this mission is its pioneering work on endemic *Garcinia dhanikhariensis*- a species not found anywhere else in the world. Studies at CIARI revealed the presence of several bioactive compounds including antioxidants, anthocyanins and hydroxycitric acid in it and the species is being promoted as a novel fruit crop in the islands. To give an identity to this fruit at national and global level, the researchers at CIARI christened it as 'Andaman Kokum'. This makes the fruit even more special.

Limited natural population was a major cause of concern for its

further utilization. CIARI successfully addressed this issue by developing nursery protocol for its mass multiplication, and planting material is being regularly supplied to the island farmers through the Horticultural Plants Propagation Unit of the institute. In order to maximize the benefits of consumption of this unique fruit, team of researchers namely Dr. Pooja Bohra and Dr. Ajit Arun Waman, Senior Scientists, developed value added products such as Andaman Kokum Syrup, candy and dried rind which could not only be ready to use in nature but would also provide the nutritional benefits to the consumers.

Another innovation centres on Mango Ginger (*Curcuma mangga*), a native rhizome spice with a raw mango-like aroma. Studies at CIARI suggested that the rhizomes contain medicinally important curcumin and essential oils. However, the spice has largely remained underutilized. To explore the possibility of making value added products from it, Dr. Pooja and Dr. Ajit conducted series of experiments for over three years and the technology of ready to use culinary paste was developed. This product can enhance a wide range of dishes- from fried rice and biryanis to curries-

making it suitable for both households and the hospitality industry.

To ensure these technologies reach the wider community, CIARI transferred the technical know-how (a form of Intellectual property) in December 2025 to two educated women entrepreneurs, Ms. Sneha Horo and Ms. M. Venni of South Andaman. Together, they established- Island's Ras and Root, a firm registered under UDYAM and FSSAI. Their products were officially launched at CIARI's Kisan Mela in February 2026, receiving an overwhelming response from consumers. The firm will also showcase its limited-edition products at the Island Food Festival.

This initiative exemplifies CIARI's commitment under the leadership of Dr. Jai Sunder, Director (Act.) to conserving island biodiversity, fostering entrepreneurship, and creating livelihood opportunities- while bringing distinctive island flavours to both residents and tourists. The Island Food Festival will thus serve not only as a celebration of culinary diversity but also as a platform for showcasing how science, tradition, and enterprise can come together to benefit the island community.