

Welcome Address
by
SHRI AJAY JHUNJHUNWALA
President, The Solvent Extractors' Association of India
at Global Castor Conference 2024, 23rd February 2024, Ahmedabad

Good morning friends,

Welcome to this historical city of Ahmedabad for the 22nd Global Castor Conference-2024 organised by SEA, and supporting Organisations connected with Castor business both in India & abroad. Out of earlier 21 Conferences held till date 17 have been held in Ahmedabad, which shows the importance of Ahmedabad and Gujarat on the Castor map of the world.

We warmly welcome Prof. Vijay Paul Sharma, Chairman, Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India, for accepting our request to deliver the Keynote Address.

I am happy to mention that in the afternoon Plenary Session, Hon'ble Chief Minister, State of Gujarat, Shri Bhupendrabhai Rajnikant Patel, Shri Balwantsinh Rajput, the Hon'ble Minister of Industry, MSME, Civil Aviation and Labour & Employment; Government of Gujarat, and friend of the industry Shri Pasha Patel, a well-known Farmer Leader and Chairman, Agriculture Price Commission, Maharashtra, will grace and address the delegates.

I am delighted to welcome all our distinguished speakers and delegates, both from India and abroad. The overwhelming response to this conference, with a record number of registrations exceeding 400, is a testament to the growing international significance of the castor industry in India. Although we regret the absence of our friends from China due to visa issues, we are confident that the discussions today will be both engaging and enlightening.

Today is particularly special as we witness the launch of the Castor Sustainability Code by the Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Bhupendrabhai Patel and Hon'ble Minister Shri BalvantSinh Rajput. This initiative, spearheaded by Mr. Shailesh Baldha, Chairman SEA Castor Council, and Mr. Haresh Vyas, Convener Castor Sustainability Project, marks a significant step towards promoting sustainable practices in the castor industry.

Additionally, we are proud to acknowledge the efforts of the castor seed progressive farmers who will be honored with the 'Shri Vithaldas G. Udeshi Castor Innovation Awards'. Their dedication to adopting good agronomic practices has not only increased productivity manifold but also serves as an inspiration to others in the industry.

Friends, India mainly exports Castor oil amounting to over 6.0 lakh tons per annum and its derivatives. In the last few years, we have been focussing on value addition in Castor industry and I am happy to mention that today India is exporting nearly 1.75 to 2.0 Lakh tons of derivatives to various countries. To recognize the exporters of Castor derivatives, we are initiating to award the highest exporters of Castor derivatives from this year onwards.

We are confident that the entrepreneurial zeal of the castor oil producers coupled with scientific backing of the CSIR R & D institutions like IICT & IIOR; India would soon become a significant player in castor oil derivatives. We need to move from Trade to Technology. Let's utilise their knowledge for production of Castor derivatives in India in line with 'Make in India' call given by our Prime Minister.

We are glad to inform you that as compared to other oilseeds, the yield of Castor seeds in the country is much higher. Sustained efforts by Agri scientists have led to successfully developing a large number of hybrid varieties which can give upto 5000 kgs / hectare. However, there is further scope to improve agricultural practices for better average yield. In view of this, SEA launched 'SEA Castor Yield Improvement Project' in 2017. With its successful experience in the last seven years, in raising the productivity, this year the project was expanded to 9 districts of Gujarat and 2 districts of Rajasthan creating nearly 600 new model farms. SEA provided these farmers with good quality seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. It also monitored these farms with help of experienced scientists and motivators who continuously guided the farmers on good agronomic practices. This initiative involved showcasing model farms to castor farmers, illustrating effective practices to enhance productivity.

We are happy to mention here that we have attained much higher productivity of around 4500 kgs/ hectare against normal productivity of 1800 - 2000 kgs in these model farms. We can also have intercropping with groundnut and cotton crop. As a matter of fact, we are showing to the farmers that not only prices, their income can be doubled by improving productivity also. I would specially congratulate the progressive farmers, involved in Castor Model Farm project. Some of them are present with us, whom we will be honouring this afternoon.

We would like to compliment Mr. Haresh Vyas, Project in-charge, Dr. B.V. Mehta, Executive Director and Shri Bhavin Chhatrala, M.D. M/s. Castor Girnar Industries, for their excellent work and co-ordination with farmers for this project and particularly like to compliment Dr. Chirag Bhuva, Chief Coordinator of the project and his team for their active contribution and co-ordination with the farmers.

Also to assess the results of Castor Model Farms, we have appointed an Independent Auditor M/s. Ecociate Consultants Pvt. Ltd., Noida, whose findings will be presented this afternoon, for benefit

of the members and delegates. At this point, I take this opportunity to thank members who have extended financial support for this project and hope, would continue for the next year too.

Further, Castor meal is a natural organic fertilizer rich in the vital elements. However, the local usage for organic fertilizer is still very limited and we are compelled to export castor meal. With Organic Farming gaining prominence we should aggressively promote Castor Meal as Organic Fertilizer to improve productivity.

Lastly, I take this opportunity to compliment SEA Castor seed & Oil Promotion Council headed by Mr. Shailesh Baldha & Mr. Deepak Thakkar, as Chairman & Co-Chairman, Mr. Haresh Vyas, Convener, World Castor Sustainability Forum (WCSF) and the entire Council members and Dr. B. V. Mehta, ED & his team for the pains taken in organising this Conference. I am confident that the discussions today will contribute to the growth and sustainability of the Castor Industry.

Thank you, and lets look forward to an interesting & fruitful day ahead.

Jai Hind!!