

New huge cropping hopes



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Mowsam Hazarika 13 June 2017 Updated 13 Jun 8636 views

Crijaf Sona, a microbial formulation powder used for retting [jute](#) fibres, was [launched](#) in Guwahati on Monday.

The microbial formulation, developed by the Central Research Institute for [Jute](#) and Allied Fibres (CRIJAF), under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, is expected to increase the income of farmers. Nearly 80,000 farmers are engaged in [jute](#) cultivation in Assam and the annual production of [jute](#) fibre is 1.3 lakh tonnes.

Retting is the process of extracting fibre from a plant's stem and one way of doing so is the use of micro-organisms and moisture. Water or microbial retting is an old but the most popular process in extracting fine bast fibres. [Jute](#) stalks, after harvesting, are tied into bundles and submerged in soft running water. The stalk stays submerged in water for 20 days or less if the quality of [jute](#) is better.

Crijaf Sona is applied between the bundles [as](#) they are laid on top of each other. It helps to reduce the retting period by six to eight days, improves productivity by eight to [10](#) per cent and to also improves quality. This leads to additional income of farmers, between Rs 9,000 and Rs 11,000, from one hectare of land [as](#) fibre can be extracted easily from the whole plant. Labour cost is also reduced. It does not affect plant, [animal](#), fish or human life.

[Principal](#) scientist of the institute, Bijon Mazumdar, said: "Farmers will benefit from this product [as](#) 3kg or 4 kg is required per bigha, entailing an investment of around Rs 220 but the return is in thousands. We have been using it on a trial basis in Nagaon, [Morigaon](#) and Barpeta and the result is very good. Its use will eliminate discolouring of the fibre."

Next2Nature, a [jute](#)-diversified products manufacturing unit, has started manufacturing microbial formulation with support from Guwahati Biotech Park (GBP). Its CEO, Nishant Saraogi, said: "Initially we will manufacture around 1 lakh kg of Crijaf Sona this year. "

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BY MOWSAM HAZARIKA

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