

Muba 2006 Exhibition held at Switzerland from 17th to 26th February 2006 – report of Board's participation



Muba 2006 held at Basel in Switzerland is an annual feature. India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) organizes participation of Indian Companies / Commodity Boards and Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) in the Muba Fair regularly. It is the first time that Coir Board participates in an exhibition in Switzerland. Govt. of India approved the deputation of Shri R K

Bahl, Under Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Govt. of India and Shri P Ajidkumar, Joint Director (Planning), Coir Board for organising Coir Board participation in the exhibition. (Ministry's references F4(1)/2006-coir/123 and F4(1)/2006-coir/115 dated 7.2.2006 refer).

Switzerland is a highly affluent country having an open economy practicing the highest standard of living in the world. Muba 2006 (annual spring fair) is the largest and most successful consumer goods fair organised in Switzerland. The fair which is widely publicized, is organised over an area of 52000 Sq. Mtrs. with more than 2500 participants from various countries exhibiting their goods and services. It is held in the specially constructed exhibition pavilion in Basel in a prime location and well connected by public transport system.

Coir Board booked twelve Sq.Mtrs. space for its participation through India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO). Coir Board released an advertisement in a local swiss daily "Blick on 17 February 2006" announcing Board's presence in the exhibition. The Board's stand was located in India Pavilion along with 10



other participants from India. The officials deputed for organising the participation arranged an attractive display of coir samples comprising of door mats, floor rugs, garden articles and other products in the stand. Certain visuals on functional uses of coir products were also displayed in the stand, besides providing adequate number of catalogues, brochures and other literatures on coir for use of the public. Although seven exporters initially expressed their desire to participate in the Muba 2006, only one exporter viz. Techno Exports, Cochin had actually turned up for participation in the fair along with Coir Board. The requests of three exporters for VISA endorsement, it was reported, had been rejected by the Swiss Embassy. Moreover, participation of the exporters in large number in the trade fairs immediately preceding Muba 2006 viz. Domotex International Trade Fair held at Hannover, Germany from 14th to 17th January, Bermingham Fair held at UK from 5th to 9th February, Indian Handicrafts and Gifts Fair (Spring) held at Noida, India from 16th to 20th February and the Indian Carpet Fair held at New Delhi from 18th to 21st February also appears to have affected the prospects of exporters participating in Muba 2006.



Muba 2006 was more of a consumer fair and hence could not attract serious trade/business visitors as in the case of other international trade fairs. However, there was continuous flow of swiss consumers and those from neighbouring countries like France, Germany etc. all through 10 days of the fair. More than 3.5 lakhs visitors were reported to

have visited Muba Fair. Shri D B Snehi, Counsellor and Shri T J Joseph, Marketing Officer Embassy of India, Berne, Switzerland along with his team of officials visited India Pavilion on 20th February 2006. The counsellor held discussion with the participating organizations, particularly pertaining to promoting the Indian products in Swiss market.

Assessment of the market

Switzerland is a highly sophisticated consumer market. The interaction with the consumer public revealed that the swiss consumers prefer only natural colour products that too with comparatively less thickness. The usual fast colour combination appeared to have no place in consumer choice. A segment of the consumer public, who had visited Kerala as international tourists, was found to be familiar with coir and its range of

products. Most of the consumers expressed their preference for an outdoor mat which could withstand the extreme winter climate. A stenciled mat displayed in the Board's stand with moderately coloured chicken portrait against natural colour background evinced keen interest among fair visitors, particularly house wives.

During the course of the exhibition an informal market enquiry in the local Basel market could be made through window shopping and chat with certain retailers in Basel. It revealed that some of the retail shops stock and sell selected varieties of coir door mats manufactured in India and consigned from Germany. Creel coir mat of size 18 cm. x 30 cm.



having FOB value of Rs.200/- (Swiss Francs 6 approximately) was seen marked at swiss francs 55 in a retail outlet. The door mats were displayed in mat hangers specially made for the purpose. According to the exporter participant, the affluent swiss market could fetch very attractive price for Indian door mats. The door mats were seen in the retail outlets attached with paper handles with product description on it. This helps the consumer to carry it conveniently to the parking place of his/ her car.

Efforts towards promoting exports

Shri R K Bahl, Under Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Govt. of India along with representatives of KVIC and ITPO visited the Indian Embassy in Switzerland at Berne and held discussion with the Indian Ambassador there. Promoting India's export including coir to Switzerland was one of the subjects of the discussion. Shri P Ajidkumar from Coir Board along with the exporter participation in the fair visited Berne and held discussion with Shri T J Joseph, Marketing Officer of Indian Embassy in Switzerland with a view to explore the possibilities of finding market for selected varieties of door mats and other coir products from India. As per the guidance given by the Marketing Officer, efforts were made to introduce the product to major department stores like M/s Coop Schweiz, Manner, Migros, Loeb etc. The exporter's samples were also provided along with price quotation to M/s Migros in Zurich, which results in generating a

positive response from the Purchasing Department of the company. While at Basel, Shri Suresh of Techno Exports visited Geneva along with his samples to meet a buyer there on the basis of information from his company in Kerala. It is understood that the visit was fruitful and it would result in generating export orders in the near future. A better understanding of the consumer trend in swiss market, re-introduction of coir and its products to the consumer public, establishment of new business contacts that may result in business generation in the long run are some of the benefits of Board's participation in Muba 2006. Muba 2006 concluded on 26th February 2006.

Suggestion for future guidance



1. Before participation in a fair a feel of the existing market condition especially the size of the market, tastes and preferences of the consumers etc. in the country concerned would be advantageous. This could be collected through the Indian Trade Mission in the

country or discerned from the report of last year's participation or through internet.

2. Fair specific catalogues and pamphlets, if possible, may be used highlighting the product characteristics.
3. In the case of consumer/ retail fairs participation need be organised only if the exporter/ traders come forward to sell their product.
4. Unless of specific interest on the part of the consumer, introduction of the product through catalogue would be rather difficult. Generally the visitors do not accept catalogues/ literatures particularly, when the exhibition fails to offer a carry bag to put the catalogues.
5. Emphasis should therefore, be to communicate product message to the consumer through visuals, blow ups, video films as far as in local languages.
6. Only limited number of printed catalogues, exporters directory etc. need be carried for international fairs in western countries.

7. The officer concerned deputed for organising Board's participation should be equipped with laptop having CD writer facility with data base on export directory, product information, product catalogue etc. In that case the interested consumers could be provided forthwith with a CD with requisite information in it.
8. The visuals and blow ups displayed in the stall should have a local touch. Instead of using visuals exhibiting the product in use in Kerala background with local models, it would be advantageous if we could project the functional aspects of coir product in that country's context. This would enable identification of the product with the local context and better communication of product message to the consumers.



Before concluding, we take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to Coir Board and the Govt. of India for having deputed us for Muba 2006, Basel, Switzerland to organize the Coir Board's participation.

sd/-
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