At the request of Auroville ecologist Rauf Ali, Aureka has developed a press that will produce coconut milk in large quantities for use in the Nicobar Islands. This will substantially increase the income of the local population.

"We from FERAL decided on a project to improve their socio-economic status. The idea came to use this donation to develop a second-generation coconut grater," explains Rauf. "The electric grater makes so much noise that they can't talk to each other. So they said, 'We are very happy with the presses, but don't give us grates.'"

The final model of the "Deegan Press" was developed by Rauf at Aureka. It is a simple cylinder with fine holes drilled into the walls. Fresh shredded coconut is placed in the cavity into which a piston driven by a hydraulic press exerts a 20 tonne pressure. This causes the oil to get pressed out. "This is organic extra-virgin cold-pressed coconut oil," explains Rauf. "It's a cold process, and the oil comes out very high quality." Eight presses have now been manufactured. Six have been shipped to Car Nicobar, where a youth group called DOSITI which has representatives from each of the 15 villages in Car Nicobar, will take charge of them. "They will conduct training camps on how to use these machines, and they will own the machines."

Another two machines have already been independently ordered. One machine will go to Middle Andaman and one will remain in Auroville’s beach community. Auroville has successfully experimented with the machine. "For the future development of the project the forest development corporation in Little Andaman has expressed interest in the project. They plan to take over the supply of the machines, the marketing of the oil and everything else."

"The Deegan Press is in process of being patented, a so-called 'creative commons patent' which means that anybody can make and use the press." The only condition will be that if you make any modifications for commercial purposes, you have to make those modifications available to the public within a year. The best way to do that is to publish the modifications on the website.

"The project hasn't particularly increased Rauf's status in the Andamans. ‘I am not very popular with the coconut dealers right now,’ he laughs. ‘A lot of their income will now flow into the hands of the Nicobarese.'"