

PALAKKAD, May 27, 2012

Technology vital to food security: Swaminathan



Strides in farming: M.S. Swaminathan, agriculture scientist, inaugurating the Perumatty Agro Service Centre at Chittur in Palakkad on Sunday

Introducing modern technology and bringing in educated youth in the primary agriculture sector will help Kerala produce its annual requirement of four million tonnes of rice from the one million hectares of land under paddy in the State, M.S. Swaminathan, visionary agriculture scientist, said here on Sunday.

Inaugurating the Perumatty Agro Service Centre in Chittur, near here, Dr. Swaminathan said modern agriculture practices, such as precision farming, would help convert his concept of “evergreen agriculture revolution” into a reality.

He said such high-tech agriculture technology could attract the educated youth to agriculture, helping create skilled jobs in rural areas. Farming should be made profitable for farmers with remunerative prices for their produce.

He said the Union government, after a study on the crisis in the agriculture sector, had included Palakkad, Wayanad and Kasaragod among the 35 districts selected for a special agriculture package. Later, Alappuzha and Idukki were included. This should help Palakkad and Kuttanad regain their glory as the “rice bowls” of Kerala.

Dr. Swaminathan said that developing the primary sector by bringing in new technology and skilled labour were of paramount importance to the country as the revolutionary Food Security Bill would soon be passed in Parliament. The provisions in the Bill, which would match the Right to Information Act in its impact, would be of great help to end hunger and poverty.

He said the agro service centre started by the Perumatty grama panchayat would address three major challenges affecting agriculture in the State — two of those were related to ecology and economy and the other was attracting educated youth to agriculture.

He said the centre would provide modern agriculture implements at reasonable costs, high-tech agriculture knowledge, agronomic support and agriculture extension services and help with farm planning and crop management, allowing farmers to increase their net income.

Dr. Swaminathan offered financial assistance from his MP's Local Area Development Fund to set up a farm school in Chittur.

Presiding over the function, Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan said that though the government provided many benefits to farmers, these were not reaching them because of the attitude of some officials. Officials who did not take an interest in implementing projects to help farmers would face stern action.

He said that whenever farmers came with innovative schemes and ideas, the Agriculture Department was ready to adopt and develop them for the benefit of the State.

He said the government had sanctioned a Rs.153-crore vegetable cultivation project for Attappady. Another such scheme was being implemented in Idukki for making Kerala self-sufficient in vegetables.

P.K. Biju, MP, inaugurated the second phase of precision farming taken up in a big way in Chittur.

K. Krishnankutty, former MLA, presented the idea behind the agro service centre.

MADURAI, May 28, 2012

Training programme on millets tomorrow

STAFF REPORTER

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A training programme on 'millet-based value added product' will be organised here on Tuesday by Madurai District Tiny and Small Scale Industries Association (MADITSSIA) Business Information Centre.

Association president V. S. Manimaran said that the course would provide training on preparing project reports, government schemes, machinery manufacturers, raw material suppliers and export opportunities.

The increasing demand for processed ready-to-eat products from millets has created opportunities. Hence, the Business Information Centre was organising this programme in collaboration with Department of Home Science Extension, Home Science College and Research Institute, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Madurai.

The seminar would be conducted between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Technical sessions including theory and demonstrations would be held. Certificates of participation would be issued by the TNAU.

Further information could be obtained from MADITSSIA, telephone no: (0452) 253 9474, mobile no: 97881 67027, says a press release.

TIRUCHI, May 28, 2012

Inspections at private fertilizer outlets

Officials of Agriculture and Revenue departments conducted surprise inspections at various private fertilizer wholesale outlets and complex fertilizer mixing units across Tiruchi district on Saturday and have suspended sale of nearly 300 tonnes of fertilizers for various irregularities.

The checks were conducted to ensure that fertilizers were sold at the government stipulated price and compliance with the Fertilizer (Control) Order and the Essential Commodities Act. Besides, the exercise was also intended to check whether adequate quantity of fertilizers were available in the district, officials said.

The checks were conducted by 14 teams in wholesale outlets at Andhanallur, Tiruverumbur, Lalgudi, Pullampadi, Manachanallur, Thuraiyur, Uppilliyapuram and Thottiyam areas. Ten complex fertilizer mixing units were also inspected.

According to an official release, about 917 tonnes of urea, 539 tonnes of di-ammonium phosphate, 1287 tonnes of potash, 232 tonnes of super phosphate, 44 tonnes of ammonium sulphate, and 2,460 tonnes of complex fertilizer stocks were checked.

Irregularities such as failure to maintain proper records, stock information, notification of price list and discrepancies in stock registers and actual availability were detected in some places leading to the suspension of the sale of about 298.26 tonnes of fertilizers.

Departmental action was being initiated against traders who had violated the provisions of the Fertilizers (Control) Order.

Traders were instructed to sell the fertilizers at the government stipulated rates and warned of stern action against violations.

MACHILIPATNAM, May 28, 2012

Supply cotton seed to identified farmers: Collector

District Collector S.A.M. Rizvi has directed the agriculture officials to supply cotton seed only to the farmers who have identity cards.

Speaking at a review meeting here on Saturday, he directed the officials to take steps for proper distribution of the seeds in all mandals. The officials should give information to the farmers on at what time the staff will be available for farmers in the office.

Mr. Rizvi asked the officers to put the list of seed distribution centres, quantity to be supplied to each dealer and which mandal was allocated to each dealer and other details in the computers.

Only two packets would be given to each farmer and the officials should test the quality of the seed before distribution, he added.

BIDAR, May 28, 2012

Farmers urged to adopt integrated farming system

Integrated farming system will protect farmers from the vagaries of the market, according to B.T. Pujari, Director (Research), University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur.

“Depending only on agricultural crops may cause losses as the prices of agricultural produce keeps fluctuating. Farmers should, therefore, take up horticulture, animal husbandry, goat and sheep rearing, poultry, inland fish rearing and other activities. These will not only insulate them from losses, but also keep them busy throughout the year,” Mr. Pujari said during the Monsoon Seed Mela at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra here on Friday.

He urged farmers to save input costs by growing and saving seeds, and by using compost manure.

Three decades ago no farmer bought seeds. But now, it has become a common practice. However, it has increased costs and reduced profit.

Therefore, there is a need to go back to the traditional method of seed saving, Mr. Pujari said.

“You should adopt advanced cultivation practices that have been developed by the universities and other research institutions. Such a professional approach to farming will reduce costs and increase profits”, he said.

Adequate stock

Joint Director of Agriculture Department P. Lakshmikant said there was enough stock of seeds and fertilizers in the district.

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It's clean-up time for Indian economy: Analysts

Amid concerns over a perceived policy paralysis in India, a leading domestic research firm has expressed hope that the much-criticised recent actions of the executive, judiciary and regulators would actually prove to be a 'clean-up' job and help economy's revival in long run.

"Investors may worry about a bigger role of the Indian executive, judiciary and regulators in business affairs and find it retrograde and interventionist.

"We view this in a positive light, as necessary cleaning up of an archaic system that thrived on contacts, corruption and cronyism," senior analysts of Kotak Institutional Equities said in a new report.

While admitting that the current state of policy inaction could make India pay a price for past excesses through lower GDP growth over the next 1-2 years, the analysts said they "see this as a cross to bear to get rid of a system that fostered corruption in all facets of economic activity."

The strongly-worded report by Kotak Institutional Equities, one of the largest equity research firms in the country, has come at a time when most analysts and financial market research firms are criticising the so-called policy inaction in the country in the strongest possible manner.

Incidentally, Kotak Institutional Equities is one of the few domestic entities among the top institutional equity research firms in the country, which mostly includes foreign players, and would be probably be the first to have seen some silver lining in the prevailing situation.

Besides, overseas financial services sector entities and consultancies, a host of local corporate giants as well as industry leaders and economists have also been criticising the slow pace of reforms in the country.

The issues like retrospective amendments to some tax rules and decisions like cancellations of telecom licenses have faced strong criticism by many, who have termed them as steps that are 'retrograde' in nature and as detrimental to the country's economic growth.

Taking a contrarian view, Kotak Institutional Equities termed the scenario as "a brave new India" and said it sees some of recent actions of the "Indian executive, judiciary and regulators as an attempt to restore the primacy of law and democratic institutions in India."

"We hope for an equitable, inclusive and transparent development model after eradication of a system based on corruption, cronyism and dysfunctional systems. It may have resulted in strong economic activity but it also extracted very high invisible costs from the Indian economy and society," the report said.

Many of the recent decisions, no matter how retrograde they may appear, were vital to restore the credibility of India as a serious investment destination and should be seen as measures for rectification of past mistakes, Kotak analysts noted.

A top executive at a foreign equity research firm, which has substantial presence in India, conceded that there were some flaws in strong lobbying against various recent actions taken by the government, regulators and other authorities.

"The actions are mostly being opposed because of their immediate impact on foreign investments having been made or to be made in India," said the executive, who declined to be identified.

"If the government persists with these decisions, the foreign players could be hit in the near future, but these could be helpful in creating a strong domestic investment climate in India," he

said, adding that the steps could be ahead of time due to lack of any such climate in the country.

Kotak analysts said they "hope the current period of policy inaction in India reflects a transition to a better system of doing business in India, a system based on transparent policies, processes and regulations."

"We welcome the eradication of certain business practices that exploited regulatory and policy deficiencies in certain sectors," they noted.

Among the global financial sector giants, Nomura recently said that MNCs repatriated FDIs worth \$10.7 billion by sale of their Indian assets in 2011, amid problems like slowing economic growth, rising business costs and regulatory uncertainties and noted it was not a "good sign".

Government data shows that India attracted foreign direct investment (FDI) worth \$27.57 billion in 2011, higher than \$21 billion in 2010.

Joining the league of doomsayers, Goldman Sachs and Bank of America-Merrill Lynch last Friday steeply scaled down their GDP estimates for the Indian economy to 6.6 and 6.5%, respectively.

These estimates came within days of Morgan Stanley and StanChart revising downwards the country's growth forecasts for the current fiscal to 6.8 and 7.1%, respectively.

All these forecasts are drastically lower than the government forecast of 7.6%.

Goldman Sachs had revised forecast "largely due to a weaker investment outlook in part driven by domestic policy uncertainties and more back-ended and lesser monetary policy easing, and in part by prevailing global uncertainties."

While Morgan Stanley analysts said, "With policymakers continuing to delay action to address the unsustainable bad mix of growth, we now think that GDP growth is likely to face another leg down."

Kotak Institutional Equities said India's political leadership must choose between politics and development and the current "halfway model will neither eradicate corruption nor result in strong economic growth."



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<p>Today's Weather</p>  <p>Monday, May 28 Max Min 42.8° 29.9°</p> <p>Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs Sunrise: 6:35 Humidity: 42% Sunset: 18:03 Wind: Normal Barometer: 1002</p>	<p>Tomorrow's Forecast</p>  <p>Tuesday, May 29 Max Min 40° 30°</p>
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Extended Forecast for a week

<p>Wednesday May 30</p>  <p>40° 30° Rainy</p>	<p>Thursday May 31</p>  <p>39° 30° Cloudy</p>	<p>Friday Jun 1</p>  <p>40° 30° Partly Cloudy</p>	<p>Saturday Jun 2</p>  <p>39° 30° Cloudy</p>	<p>Sunday Jun 3</p>  <p>40° 29° Cloudy</p>
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Cheers for cherry lovers with bountiful Himachal crop

SUNDAY, 27 MAY 2012 22:10

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Cherry lovers can expect a good supply of the luscious fruit this season. Good production of red cherries has once again brought cheers on the faces of its growers in Himachal Pradesh, with production of the fruit expected to be over 520 tonnes this season.

The growers have begun harvesting with expectations of a bountiful crop this season compared to last year, the State horticulture department said.

The department is predicting that over 520 tonnes of fruit will be picked this season against 433 tonnes in 2011-12. In 2010-11, the State saw a record production of 1,039 tonnes of cherries.

Horticulture department director Gurdev Singh told IANS that the total yield this year was normal. "Last year, the production was down owing to bad weather. This year also, it was hit, but not much," he said.

The higher reaches of Shimla, Kullu, Mandi, Chamba and Kinnaur, at an altitude from 6,000 to 8,000 feet above the sea level, are ideal for cherry cultivation. The hub of cherry cultivation is Narkanda, Kotgarh, Kotkhai and Thanedar in upper Shimla.

At least 10,000 small farmers in the State grow over 20 varieties of cherries on 480 hectares as an alternative high-value cash crop.

"The fruit is fetching a price of Rs 100 to Rs 275 per kg in Delhi's Azadpur wholesale fruit market these days," Gopal Mehta, a prominent cherry grower of Kotgarh said.

He said the best varieties of black cherry picked from organic farms were selling at Rs 250 to Rs 350 per kg in the Delhi market this year.

These varieties had however fetched between Rs 350 and Rs 400 last year.

“Last year the production was less but the fruit’s prices were shooting. So far the market has been comfortable. By the end of this month, the prices are expected to tumble due to arrival of the crop from neighbouring Jammu and Kashmir,” Mehta added.

Traders say local varieties have been selling at Rs 100 to Rs 150 per kg in retail in Shimla depending upon the quality and packaging, while imported varieties like ‘deuro nera’ are being sold for Rs 250 to Rs 275 per kg, ‘merchant’ and ‘stella’ at around Rs 200 per kg.

Cherry harvesting in the State will continue till July 15.

SP Bhardwaj, former joint director at Dr YS Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry in Solan, said cherry cultivation was picking up in the State due to the higher value it fetched in the market than apple.

“As the production of apple is declining due to aging orchards, the growers are switching over to high-yielding cherry rootstock,” Bhardwaj said. The economy of Himachal Pradesh is highly dependent on horticulture, apart from hydroelectric power and tourism, with the annual fruit industry worth about Rs 2,000 crore.

The total fruit production in the State during April-December 2011 was 3,28,000 tonnes, of which apple accounted for 2,75,000 tonnes.
