

14.05.2015

THE HINDU

Inculcating agricultural skills in younger generations



An ambitious programme called Mukulam from CARD-Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Pathanamthitta district has been inaugurated as an educational tool to create awareness among school children to grow crops in their school gardens as a supplemental instruction to their regular studies.

The programme, launched in the year 2010, aims to provide a platform for students for showcasing their talents in nurturing nature and building awareness of their role in contributing to the nation's food security.

Last two years

Upper primary, high school and higher secondary levels that have eco-clubs functioning for the last two years with 25-30 members each and 5-10 cents of cultivable land formed the part of the programme. The best school is awarded a cash price of Rs. 5000 and a rolling trophy and citation.

“It was conceived mainly to create awareness among school children about need for promotion of biodiversity conservation and food security. It provides an atmosphere that includes hands-on activities and strengthens academic, personal, and social skills,” says Dr. C.P.Robert, Programme Coordinator at the institute.

The institute organised a variety of programmes such as seminars, students meet, quiz competition, drawing cum painting competitions and traditional food fest.

It also supported the participating schools with technology training, planting materials, seeds, organic inputs and garden tools, so that school clubs put in their effort to develop a garden in five cents of land.

“In this five-year journey through Mukulam, we could instil a culture of safe farming among more than 10,000 families through 1,500 school children from 46 schools, who participated in this programme. The schools' eco clubs demonstrated their commitment towards the cause by working in the school garden even on holidays,” explains Dr. Sindhu Sadanandan, specialist at the Kendra in charge of the project.

Garden maintenance

Besides participating in every activity, the school gardeners cultivated a variety of vegetables, fruit crops and medicinal garden — all grown organically. Club members in relay maintained the garden and attended to the plants in a scheduled manner before and after school hours.

The programme instilled a sense of responsibility in the younger generation to conserve nature and contribute to food security.

“Participating schools on an average harvested over 500 kg of vegetables, part of which was shared for school mid-day meal purpose. Besides this, the clubs also earned Rs.10,000 from the sales of vegetables each year contributing to a turnover of Rs. 4,60,000 in these five years, which added colour to the programme called earn while learning,” says Ms. Sadanandan.

Eco safe programme

Seeing the success of the programme, the institute introduced eco-safe sustainable vegetable production through ultra density portable rain shelter in the schools in 2014.

“Portable rain shelter with drip irrigation system for ultra density vegetable cultivation in the schools proved to be unique for growing safe vegetables from a limited area round the year,” says Ms. S. Leelamma, Headmistress of N.S.S English Medium School which bagged the first prize and won the rolling green trophy this year.

According to Mr. V. Sreejith, a teacher, “the programme is unique and inspired the children to understand need for growing healthy food without chemicals.”

The programme is one of its kind with a focus on school children to enable them to acquire skill and knowledge in agriculture.

Made aware

“Programmes like this can be conducted across the several hundreds of schools across the country. Students should be made aware about the importance of agriculture and from where they get their food. If we fail in this most important task, then future of agriculture and food security is a bog question,” says Dr. Robert.

For more information please contact Dr. Sindhu Sadanandan on mobile: 09946090961, email: sindhu@kvkcard.org, CARD-Krishi Vigyan Kendra-Pathanamthitta District, (Farm Science Centre, Indian Council of Agricultural Research(ICAR), Kolabhagam P.O., Tiruvalla (Via),Pathanamthitta district, Kerala, phone: 0469 2662094 and 266182, Extn-11/12, website: www.kvkcard.org

Botanical garden all set to host flower show

All arrangements are in place for the 119th annual flower show which will be held from May 15- 17. The show will feature national flowers from about 200 countries. Over 1.5 lakh visitors are expected to visit the show.

The Government Botanical Garden has been hosting the show every year since the first one was organised in 1896. The Garden spans 22 hectares and lies at an altitude of 2,400-2,500 metres above the sea level on the lower slopes of Doddabetta Peak.

The Garden itself is considerably older and was established in 1847 by Marquies Tweeddale, the British Governor of Madras Presidency who started the Horticulture Society.

In the gallery, nearly 15,000 plants belonging to 185 species will be displayed.

Forest Department's float wins first prize in boat pageant



The float of the Forest Department won the first prize in boat pageant that was organised at the Ooty Lake on Wednesday, as part of the Nilgiris Summer Festival. The float with a mountain, forest and models of panthers and a monkey was the key attraction for tourists among the five floats that took part in the competition.

The float of the Tourist Department on global warming won the second prize and a float of Udhagai Municipality on generating electricity from waste won the third place.

Floats of the *Mahalir Thittam* on various schemes for women and women from the Badaga and Toda community performing their traditional dances in traditional attire and the float of the Tibetan Association with Tibetans settled in Udhagamandalam on the boat in their traditional attire won consolation prizes.

Assistant Tourist Officer of Udhagamandalam, K. Durgadevi, said that the participating teams were given boats for the competition a day before the competition.

District Collector of The Nilgiris P. Shankar flagged off the competition earlier that day. Prizes were distributed to the winners by the Field Director of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve Srinivas R. Reddy. District Tourist Officer (in-charge) P. Vijayakumar, Regional Manager of Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation G. Sankar and officials from Forest and Revenue Department were also present during the event.

National Innovation Foundation and ICAR join hands

National Innovation Foundation – India (NIF) entered into an understanding with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) recently to verify, validate and promote innovations from the agricultural sector.

The agreement was signed by Prof Anil K Gupta, Executive Vice Chair, National Innovation Foundation – India and Dr.S. Ayyappan, Secretary, DARE and Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research at New Delhi.

Working areas

NIF, an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology, Govt of India is engaged in scouting, documentation, augmenting and adding value to the innovations at the grassroots level whereas ICAR is engaged in conducting research and development in agriculture and allied sectors in a number of institutions spread all over the country.

Under the agreement, NIF will share with ICAR, promising technologies from its database comprising innovative agricultural machineries, plant protection practices, improved plant varieties, farm practices etc., which will be verified and validated through ICAR's available R&D facilities. A Joint

Implementation Committee (JIC) chaired by Director General ICAR will monitor and steer the activities proposed under the agreement.

Expectation

This collaboration is expected to convert many of the ideas and innovations from the grassroots to the value added products and generate wealth for innovators, and value for society. These technologies will also generate livelihood options for the youth and self- help groups in rural areas.

The ICAR has played a pioneering role in ushering in the Green Revolution and subsequent developments in agriculture in India through its research and technology development that has enabled the country to increase the production of foodgrains, while NIF's major contribution from the Honey Bee Network, has been able to build up a database of more than 2, 10,000 technological ideas, innovations and traditional knowledge practices (not all unique, not all distinct) from over 575 districts of the country.

Ryots' awareness camp today

Eastern Power Distribution Company of Andhra Pradesh Limited (APEPDCL) and Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) have launched the State's first AGDSM project in Rajanagaram mandal of East Godavari district. Under the project, as many as 2,496 old agricultural pump sets will be replaced with Energy Efficiency Pump sets (EEPS) free of cost. A farmer awareness work shop and inauguration ceremony for the project will be held on Thursday in Rajanagaram.

Tips for a better farm

The umpteen campaigns favouring organic farming and cultivation of essential vegetables at home may prompt some to take a fancy for cultivation but in reality, it is no child's play.

Organic farming or cultivating vegetables at home requires some know-how.

Help may have been scarce before but now, a website set up by a progressive residential forum in the city is offering tips online for such aspiring farmers.

The website, named *krishippura*, developed in collaboration with the National Institute of Technology, Calicut (NIT-C) as part of its community

service initiative, was launched during a public function on the institute campus here recently.

Under different heads, the website provides a comprehensive guideline on how to go about organically cultivating different items of fruits and vegetables suitable for different seasons.

Among other things, it provides a calendar for cultivation, crops details, instructions for soil management, and guideline for water management.

Under the link 'Crop Calendar,' one would get an idea of what to cultivate when and where. Specifications required for the soil bed (in case the cultivation is on a field), distance needed between the seeds, and other tips are also given in this section.

The site [http:// www.krishippura.niravu.com](http://www.krishippura.niravu.com) was developed by K. Arun and Akifa Rahman, two computer science students from the NIT-C. residential forum, which is hosting the site.

Jackfruit-processing factory to be opened in Kinfra Park on Saturday

An array of products will roll out from the jackfruit-processing factory set up at the Kinfra Industrial Park at Nadukani here, which will be inaugurated by Agricultural Minister K.P. Mohanan on May 16.

Artocarpus Foods Private Ltd. has set up the unit to produce value-added products from jackfruit under the brand name 'Hebon.' The factory is expected to be an answer to the problem of jackfruit yield hugely exceeding demand.

Company managing director Subhash Koroth said at a press conference here on Wednesday that the factory had the capacity to process 300 jackfruit (3,000 kg) a day. He claimed that Artocarpus was a pioneer in the country in jackfruit-based industry.

Initially, the company would produce 10 products, including dehydrated jackfruit, jackfruit powder that can be used for making bakery products, curry powders from jackfruit seed, porridge from jackfruit seed, jackfruit chips, and processed tender jackfruit, among others.

Mr. Koroth also said that the company was also in the process of exploring the prospects of exporting the products to Australia. Fifteen people were now employed in the factory. More people would be roped in when the company scaled up production.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

[‘Land banks staffers under 50 can apply for govt jobs’](#)

Employees of Land Development Bank and Maharashtra State Cooperative Agriculture Rural Multipurpose Development (MSCARMD) Bank, who are facing an uncertain future due to liquidation of the financial institutions, can apply for a state government job, announced chief minister Devendra Fadnavis.

"Those who are under 50 years will be eligible for applying for state government jobs for the next three years," Fadnavis tweeted on Tuesday.

The government will take a decision on the voluntary retirement scheme for 1,046 employees of the banks and a provision of Rs 70.12 crore has been made. In the open category, the age limit for state government jobs is 33 years, for applicants from the reserved categories it is 35 years.

Loans of farmers totalling Rs 713 crore have been waived.

On Tuesday, the state government decided to shut down loss-making land development banks in Maharashtra. The bank's property will be taken over by the government. The decision was taken by the cabinet after it found that the banks had accumulated losses of Rs 2,800 crore.

[Farmers demand utilization of budget allocation](#)

Rubber farmers and farmers unions in the district have come up demanding immediate intervention from the part of the state government to address the issues of rubber farmers. Demand for proper procurement of rubber sheets from farmers by paying the government fixed supportive price is also being raised by the farmers.

The state government, in 2014-15 budget had allocated Rs 300 crore for preventing price fall of rubber, said Johnson Kulathingal, district president of Kerala Karshaka Union (M). However, the government is yet to start the procurement of rubber from farmers, he alleged.

Over 12 lakh rubber farmers in the state are facing huge financial crisis owing to the price fall of rubber, alleged the farmers.

The agriculture policy of the government is prepared by officials without collecting recommendations from farmers and this trend has to be changed to bring in comprehensive change in agriculture sector, they demanded.

Even though the government declared supportive price and other pro-farmer measures, many of these benefits do not reach the farmers in the grass root level, complained K Johnson, a farmer from Koombara. Middle men and agencies those procure rubber and other cash and food crops when government declare supportive price snatch away the financial benefit from the real farmer, he alleged.

Minister for cooperative sector and minister for agriculture should make strict interventions to help farmers, said the Johnson Kulathingal.

Officials also should take positive measures and should be vigilant not to deny the farmers their right by raising technical reason, he added.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Foodgrain production likely to fall by over 5%

(In million tonnes)

Falling foodgrain output		
Crop	(June 2014- July 2015)	2013-14
Rice	102.54	106.65
Wheat	90.78	95.85
Coarse Cereals	40.42	43.29
Pulses	17.38	19.25

The country's foodgrain production in the current season ending June is likely to decline by 5.4 per cent from a record output of 265.04 million tonnes (mt) the year before.

Weather vagaries

According to the third advance estimate released by the Agriculture Ministry here on Wednesday, total foodgrain output will be 13.92 mt lower at 251.12 mt for this season, the lowest since 244.49 million tonnes produced in 2010-11.

Rice output is estimated at 102.54 mt, down from 106.65 mt last season, while that of wheat, the main Rabi crop, which was damaged across swathes of northern, central and western India due to unseasonal rainfall and hailstorms between end-February and early-April, has been pegged at 90.78 mt from 95.85 mt last season, the lowest in the last three years.

Total production of coarse cereals is expected to decline by 2.87 mt to 40.42 mt, while the estimate for key pulses stands at 17.38 mt – down from 19.25 mt.

“It may be noted that production of Kharif crops during 2014-15 suffered due to bad monsoon. Unseasonal rains/hailstorm during February-March 2015 had significant impact on production of rabi crops. As a result of setback in Kharif as well as Rabi seasons, the production of most of the crops in the country has declined this season,” said an official release.

Production of oilseeds is also likely to be lower by 5.37 mt – from 32.75 mt to 27.38 mt, while cotton output will also likely decline marginally to 35.32 million bales (of 170 kg each) but will be “higher by 2.85 million bales than the average production of last 5 years.”

Only sugarcane production is likely to rise by 4.42 mt to 356.56 mt from 352.14 mt, which could further depress prices of sugar in the domestic market with a fifth consecutive season of surplus production already in the offing.

Contingency plans

According to the Met Department, this year could witness another below normal monsoon due to the El Nino weather effect even if the rain is likely to arrive on time and hit the Kerala coast by June 1.

Minister of State for Agriculture Sanjeev Kumar Balyan said on Wednesday that the Centre is ready with contingency plans for 580 districts in case of acute weather disturbances.

Fishermen sceptical of Centre's rejection of Meena Kumari report



Despite the Union Agriculture Ministry's clarification on Tuesday that the Meena Kumari Committee report recommending letting foreign vessels to fish in India's Exclusive Economic Zone has been 'thoroughly rejected' by the Centre, fishing unions in the coastal States are not convinced.

"The Agriculture Ministry's statement is the result of the constant struggles and forceful resistance by the fishing community against foreign vessels exploiting India's fisheries resources," Charles George, President of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi (forum of fishworkers' unions), told *BusinessLine*.

"But the government has not scrapped the November 28, 2014, guidelines for deep-sea fishing by large ships."

He said that the Department Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries had on November 28 issued revised guidelines for fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone (200 nautical miles from a coastal State's 12-nautical mile territorial waters; that is, an area of the sea between 22 km from the shore and 370 km).

The guidelines allowed large vessels (longer than 15 metres) to apply for letter of permission to do deep-sea fishing for five years.

The vessels could be owned or acquired by Indian entrepreneurs or they could be joint ventures with up to 49 per cent foreign investments.

The revised guidelines followed the report submitted by the expert committee headed by B Meena Kumari, Deputy Director-General of the fisheries division of the Indian Council of Agriculture.

“As India is currently lacking in adequate expertise or resources to exploit water beyond 500 metres,” the eight-member committee recommended, “technology transfer through acquisition of foreign fishing vessels and, or, joint ventures/leasing, etc. may be considered for this area till the domestic capacity is fully developed.”

The committee wanted fishing by big vessels to be encouraged in the EEZ.

This was to facilitate turning Prime Minister Modi's 'Blue Revolution' dream, the committee stated in its report.

The fishing community, which saw this as a excuse for multinational fishing companies as well as those owned by Indians under the garb of joint ventures to exploit the rich resourced, cried foul.

Fishing unions in the coastal States launched an aggressive campaign against the move.

“We will carry on with our agitations until the government withdraws the November 28 guidelines,” George said

India to seek Chinese market access for non-basmati rice



New Delhi/Bengaluru, May 13:

India is hopeful that China will provide market access to its non-basmati rice – blocked till now as quality norms have not been defined between the two countries – during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit later this week.

“The solution to the problem is simple. We have suggested to China that the protocol that exists for exporting basmati rice should be adopted for exporting non-basmati rice as well,” a Commerce Ministry official told *BusinessLine*.

China, which began importing rice four years ago and annually imports about 5 million tonnes, has not granted access to Indian non-basmati rice. The absence of defined phyto-sanitary norms between the two countries is cited by the China as the main reason for not importing from India.

China, however, has been sourcing its rice from countries such as Pakistan, Vietnam and Thailand. In fact, the steady increase in its purchases from these countries has kept the Vietnamese prices firm.

“We see a potential to export up to one million tonnes of non-basmati rice to China, provided they grant us market access,” said BV Krishna Rao, Managing Director, Pattabhi Agro Foods Pvt Ltd, the country’s largest non-basmati rice exporter.

Rao, who represents the Agri Exporters Association, said India can offer better quality, price and a wider variety to China.

The Commerce Ministry has already sent the documentation for establishing the quality protocol by the AQSIQ – the Chinese quality management institute that gives approvals for a variety of imports – to Beijing.

“The AQSIQ required certain documents to extend the protocol existing for basmati rice to non-basmati, and we have already sent them,” the official said.

When the Prime Minister visits Beijing on May 14, India is hopeful that the required quality protocol would be implemented.

Though China has opened up its market for Indian basmati in 2012, hardly any direct shipments have taken place, industry sources said. China is still in the process of registering the Indian mills, although some basmati rice shipments are being exported indirectly through Hong Kong.