

30.08.2016

THE HINDU

Kagodu urges farmers to go in for crop diversification practices



Given the low water storage in most reservoirs in the State owing to scanty rain, it is time for farmers to re-contemplate on paddy monoculture and opt for crop rotation and crop diversification practices, said Revenue Minister Kagodu Thimmappa on Monday.

He was speaking after inaugurating a workshop for farmers on economic utilisation of water, held by the Bhadra Command Area Development Authority (CADA) and the University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS), Shivamogga, at the Suvarna Samskruti Bhavan in the city.

Paddy is cultivated in traditional semi-aquatic and water-intensive methods in the command areas of reservoirs in Karnataka. The State is witnessing water scarcity for the second straight year and the storage in most reservoirs is low. Instead of water-intensive

crops, farmers should take up cultivation of pulses and oilseeds, which will bring them more income, the Minister said.

He said as paddy is cultivated by flooding the fields, the problem of soil salinity has been reported in many parts. It is necessary to create awareness among farmers on judicious utilisation of water through water users' societies. Mr. Thimmappa called upon CADA officials and UAHS scientists to develop demonstration plots on cultivating crops with economic utilisation of water.

Working out crop pattern

Addressing the gathering, C. Vasudevappa, Vice-Chancellor of UAHS, said that a cropping pattern should be worked out for the command areas in a scientific manner after undertaking a survey on water availability, soil quality and climatic conditions. Instead of flooding the paddy fields, it is necessary to popularise System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and other methods under which water is provided for the crops on an 'on-and-off' basis. When there is shortage of water in reservoirs, farmers should be directed to cultivate short- and medium-term paddy varieties and less water-intensive crops such as ragi, pulses and oilseeds. He also stressed the need to adopt drip and sprinkler irrigation methods in command areas, and to undertake regular maintenance of the canals to ensure proper utilisation of water.

K.B. Prasanna Kumar, Shivamogga MLA, Sharada Poorya Naik, Shivamogga Rural MLA, R. Prasanna Kumar, MLC, Jyothi Kumar, zilla panchayat president, and others were present.

Agri-business consortium rolls out credit guarantee fund scheme

The Small Farmers' Agri-business Consortium (SFAC) has announced a roll out of a new equity grants and credit guarantee fund scheme to empower farmer-producer groups. The scheme has been developed following the announcement of matching grants for these bodies and creation of a fund to cover banks giving loans to farmer-producer organisations.

The SFAC has started organising special camps in Rajasthan to generate awareness among agriculturists about the scheme. The first camp was held in Bundi on Monday, while more such camps will be organised in Kota, Chittorgarh, Pratapgarh, Banswara, Udaipur, Sirohi, Jalore and Jaipur in the coming days.

In addition to several banks which will form part of the camps, they will be attended by the representatives of the State government's Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry Departments as well as some pharmacy companies with their respective research institutions.

SFAC Managing Director Vasudha Mishra said here on Monday that the equity grants and fund scheme would enable the eligible farmer-producer companies to receive a grant equivalent in amount to the equity contribution of their shareholder members, subject to a cap of Rs.10 lakh, thus enhancing their overall capital base.

The scheme aims at enhancing viability and sustainability of farmer-producer companies, increasing their credit worthiness and expanding shareholding of members. Ms. Mishra said the equity grant would be a cash infusion equivalent to the amount of shareholder equity subject to a cap of Rs.10 lakh.

The initiative is expected to create strong linkages of farmer-producer groups with the banks and catalyse private investments in promoting them up, which in turn will provide assured market to producers for increasing rural income and employment.



Advance Marketing Intelligence Wing to be set up: CM Parkash Singh Badal



To tap the marketing potential of fruits and vegetables from the state, Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Monday gave his nod for setting up of an Advance Marketing Intelligence Wing for Horticulture (AMIWH) in the state. The decision was

taken by the chief minister while presiding over a meeting with a delegation of Kinnow growers from the state in Chandigarh on Monday, said an official spokesman.

He said now when food production has reached a point of saturation the need of the hour was to maximise fruit and vegetable production to supplement the income of farmers. Badal said though many progressive farmers were making concerted efforts by adopting cultivation of fruits and vegetables they were facing major challenges due to lack of marketing infrastructure and techniques.

He envisioned that AMIWH would fill in gaps to facilitate farmers for marketing their products across the globe. He said AMIWH along with the reconstituted Post Harvest Technique centre at PAU Ludhiana would act as catalysts to bring fruit and vegetable revolution in the state.

Acceding to the demand of Kinnow growers, the chief minister also announced that the state government would provide subsidy to Kinnow growers for setting up small cold rooms along with their waxing centres, so that they could export Kinnows from state.

Likewise, Badal also spoke to Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh requesting him to expedite the case of importing fungicides through the Central Insecticide Bureau (CIB) so that Kinnow growers could get it well in time, before their season to boost export potential of the fruit. He also assured full support and cooperation to Kinnow growers for their genuine demands.

Food for thought: Tamil Nadu villages sow seeds of a ‘pulses revolution’



At a time when prices of pulses have hit the stratosphere, depriving the common man of his favourite source of protein, farmers in five villages of Pudukottai district in southern Tamil Nadu have sown the seeds of what could be the solution—produce more.

The experiment, launched by agricultural scientist and Father of 60s’ Green Revolution, MS Swaminathan, has shown encouraging results.

In the first attempt, the five villages produced 745 kg per hectare, close to the national average of 781 kg.

For Swaminathan, this could be beginning of a revolution.

“I hope 2016 marks the beginning of a pulses revolution,” the scientist told HT.

RS Shanthakumar, director, eco-technology centre, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), is also on the same page, saying it is a project that can be replicated elsewhere and scaled up.

All these began on April 22, 2013, when farmers gathered at a pulses panchayat held by Swaminathan and his team at Edaiyampatti village in Illuppur taluk, and pledged to grow pulses.

They were grouped in 71 teams and trained in seed selection, use of technology and implements and application of bio-fertilizers and enriched manure.

For 43-year-old Lakshmi of Kathavampatti village, who took up black gram cultivation in three-fourths of an acre, the 300 kg-yield and net income of Rs 21,400 was simply unbelievable.