

21.02.2017

THE HINDU

Agri science congress begins today

The aim is to prepare a plan of action to make Indian agriculture 'climate smart'

About 2,000 agricultural scientists from across the country and some from outside will congregate in Bengaluru for four days from Tuesday to prepare a plan of action to make Indian agriculture 'climate smart' and insulate it from the vagaries of weather.

This will be the agenda at the 13th National Agricultural Science Congress being held at the campus of the University of Agricultural Sciences-Bengaluru (UAS-B) at a time when drought and floods are affecting agriculture and food production.

The congress, being held for the first time in Karnataka, is being jointly organised by the UAS-B, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

Bengaluru declaration

S. Ayyappan, former chairman of NAAS, told reporters on Monday that the congress will come out with a 'Bengaluru declaration' on ways of making Indian agriculture climate smart. It is expected to become part of the policy initiatives of the Centre and various State governments, which are keenly looking at measures to ensure that food production is not affected due to the vagaries of weather.

UAS-B Vice-chancellor H. Shivanna said the main theme has been divided into six sub-themes of climate change and variability, adaptations for climate change, mitigating its impact, farmers' innovative methods to mitigate climate change and capacity building for climate resilient agriculture & policy issues. The idea is also to learn from the best practices in handling climate change in different parts of the country, he added.

He said there was a dire need to make agriculture climate smart as drastic changes in climate is threatening food security, especially when the country needed to sharply increase food production to feed the increasing population.

Climate change may lead to more pests and pesticide residues

The phenomenon of climate change, which is set to impact agriculture, is also expected to increase the menace of pests, leading to increased use of pesticide as well as more pesticide residues in the crops for consumers.

Participating in a technical session at the ongoing Agricultural Science Congress here on Thursday, Dr. J. Padmaja, scientist from the Food and Drug Toxicology Research Centre, observed that increase in carbon dioxide level in the atmosphere due to climate change was paving the way for increase in pest population.

New varieties of pests were also expected to surface as a result of this impact, she pointed out.

In fact, the cotton bollworm, which devastated large tracts of cotton crop, was also a result of the increase in carbon dioxide level, she noted.

Similarly, the population of nematodes, which are the harmful bacteria in the soil, especially those affecting banana crop was expected to increase, she warned.

While the temperature variation due to climate change was bound to affect the quality of crop such as fibre content, the quantum of weeds was bound to increase.

This is going to be a testing situation for farmers as the increase in temperatures due to climate change would make them tired, making it difficult to toil in the field, the scientist said.