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# THE HINDU

## Drone maps Aranmula puncha



### **Aerial mapping of 300 hectares done by Noida-based firm in 5 hours**

The Agriculture Department has carried out the State's first detailed topographical survey of farmland using a highly sophisticated agricultural drone in the Aranmula puncha.

The farmland survey was done in Aranmula by a Noida-based firm hired by the Kerala Centre for Pest Management (KCPM) at Mankombu in Alappuzha on Wednesday.

The Special Officer appointed by the government for monitoring the paddy cultivation as part of the Mission Green Aranmula programme, J. Sajeev, told *The Hindu* that the drone was equipped with an autopilot using GPS and a standard point-and-shoot camera controlled by the autopilot. The software on the ground could stitch the aerial shots into a high resolution mosaic map.

It took five hours for the expert team from Noida to complete aerial mapping of the Aranmula puncha spread across nearly 300 hectares.

The team would submit the detailed report to the department. The high resolution images of the farmlands can be classified as per the respective survey numbers. The department could keep separate records, demarcating the wetlands, streams, fallow lands, land under cultivation, converted lands, etc., Mr. Sajeev said.

### **A first**

Digitalisation of food and water sources is being taken up for the first time in Kerala, according to official sources. The KCPM has been making use of the service of the Noida firm for pest management.

### **Cheaper**

Compared with the satellite imagery, the survey using precision agriculture drones was much cheaper and offered higher resolution, said Mr. Sajeev.

The airborne cameras could take multispectral images, which could highlight differences between healthy and distressed plants in a way the naked eye could not, said experts.

The survey will be of help in maintaining a scientific data on the total area, type of soil, slopes, wetlands, exact positioning of the streams and canals, etc.

Shyla Joseph, Deputy Director of Agriculture; Sudheesh V. John, George Bobby, Assistant Directors, and P.R. Ratheesh, Agriculture Officer, were also present.

## **Go for exotic fruits as intercrop, coffee growers told**

### **Scientists advocate these varieties as they will be remunerative**

DINDIGUL: Conversion of cash crop fields like coffee farms into fruit yards by raising exotic fruits as intercrop, adoption of advanced irrigation techniques and good agricultural practices will not only make agriculture remunerative but also help farmers overcome labour shortage and pest attack.

This was the main point stressed by scientists and research scholars at a workshop on 'New crop diversification options in coffee-based cropping system in south India' held here on Tuesday.

In his special address, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Professor M. Anandan said the ideal climate condition on Lower Palani Hill helped farmers harvest pepper twice a year whereas it was a single crop in other parts of the world. At present, 95% of the area under coffee cultivation was rain-fed, and the remaining area irrigated.

Cultivating fruits such as avocado, longan, rambutan, egg fruit and mangosteen as intercrop for coffee would help farmers get additional income. Avacoda was an ideal crop for Lower Palani Hill. The fruit also commanded a good market. Besides, citron, chow-chow and beans could be grown in coffee farms for the first three years. Later, fruit plants could be grown as they would help maintain shade in the farms, he added.

Pechiparai Horticulture Research Station head R. Swarna Priya suggested cultivation of bush pepper instead of creeper pepper. Bush pepper could be grown in pots and in fields. Vietnam, which had been raising bush pepper as the main crop, topped in its production and productivity, and exported the commodity to other countries.

Ms. Swarna Priya said while Vietnam harvested two tonnes of bush pepper per hectare, Malaysia harvested one tonne. India's production was 275 kg.

Retaining aged plants, improper shade management, competition from companion crops and low inputs were some of the reasons for low production. Bush pepper would scale down labour and production would be throughout the year, she said.

Other speakers said cultivation of exotic fruits had become popular in Kerala and Karnataka. These fruits were highly remunerative. Expanding markets, possibility of value-added products and exports were the advantages of cultivating them. Banana and orange were high water-consuming products, they said.