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Steps sought to combat bug in papaya

Coimbatore: The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has advised farmers to take up integrated pest management measures to prevent the spread of papaya mealy bug, as the disease is likely to assume 'serious proportions' if left unchecked.

"The incidence of the mealy bug in papaya, which is moderate at present, is likely to escalate if left unchecked," TNAU Vice-Chancellor P. Murugesa Bhoopathi, said and asked farmers to take up integrated pest management (IPM) measures on a war footing.

E.I. Jonathan, Director, Centre for Plant Protection studies, TNAU, said mealy bug was a polyphagous sucking pest infesting crops like cotton, papaya, tapioca, mulberry and jatropha.

Prevailing high temperature, low relative humidity, dry wind without rain had led to increased incidence of the pest, he said — PTI

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Farmers demand more copra procurement centres

Tirupur: Demands for more copra procurement centres and a marketing complex for promotion of coconut and value-added products derived of it, dominated the proceedings at the farmers grievances meeting organised by district administration here on Friday.

The farming community requested Collector C. Samayamoorthy to open at least three more copra procurement centres with two in Pongalur block and one at Udumalpet block.

MSP

"This will help us get attractive minimum support price (MSP) for the produce," they pointed out. Officials sources said that Tamil Nadu Co-operative Marketing Federation (TANFED) had now been entrusted with the procurement of copra from the farmers.

Another plea of the farmers was the need to set up an exclusive marketing complex in the district to help them market coconut and its value-added products.

The suggestion put forward by the farmers was to construct the complex at Pethappampatti in Gudimangalam block.

During the meeting, the Collector distributed subsidy assistance worth Rs. 2.94 lakh to 32 farmers for replacing old pump sets with new models.

The amount was earmarked under the Energisation of Pump Sets scheme.

"Under the scheme, a total of 250 farmers had benefitted in the district during the current fiscal," Agriculture Engineering department sources told The Hindu.

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"Farmers cannot bear any more fertilizer price rise"

Any further rise will force us to give up farming, they say

Prices of farm inputs have risen phenomenally in the past two decades

"Take into account the grim situation of food production in the country"

MADURAI: Farmers cannot bear any more increase in the price of fertilizers, according to Madurai District Farmers' Association.

In an appeal to the Centre, the association president, M. Pandian, said, "Farmers are already frustrated with prices which have increased phenomenally in the last two decades. Any further increase will only force us to give up farming," he said.

The Centre must give up the move to increase prices of fertilizers taking into account the grim situation of food production in the country.

Mr. Pandian said that the farmers had made India self-sufficient despite natural disasters, fall in prices of agricultural produce and increase in prices of farm inputs.

He pointed out that a bag of 50 kg of urea which was selling at Rs. 121.50 in 1990 had gone up to Rs. 251.16 in 2008. Similarly, the price of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) which was sold for Rs. 148.98 in 1990 touched Rs. 486.20 in 2008.

The price of super phosphate rose to Rs. 210 in the same period from Rs. 49. The price of other fertilizers had also gone up manifold.

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"Government should set up organic farming university"

Marketing centres with freezer facility sought by farmers

Nagercoil: Member of Lok Sabha J. Helen Davidson assured the farmers who used organic farming (eco-friendly) instead of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in connection with the multi-point charter of demands passed in the 11th organic farmers conference held recently.

The farmers who participated in the conference urged the Government to allocate common fund by the Central Government for the development of agriculture.

The also requested the utilisation of State and Central Governments' entire assistance through panchayats to them.

A comprehensive agricultural policy for fair distribution of agriculture land, agriculture inputs such as distribution of cent per cent quality germination seeds, organic manures and bio-pest repelling solutions should be made available to the organic farmers.

They also demanded the Government to take necessary steps to procure the agricultural produce, especially paddy, based on the production cost, including the cost of men power invested by the farmers.

In connection with the establishment of marketing centres at taluk level, they demanded the Government to establish procurement and marketing centres with freezer facility in all taluk headquarters and mobile procurement facilities from the farmers directly.

G. Nammazvar, organic scientist from Thanjavur, said that the Government should come forward to supply cattle feed through the public distribution system and animal husbandry allowance.

The supply of 60 kg of cattle feed per animal through public distribution system under subsidised price and the payment of Rs.500 per animal, as animal husbandry allowance to the small and marginal farmers would be a helping hand to them.

He also demanded the Government to establish 'agriculture mitigation fund' at the central, state, district and panchayat level to mitigate the suffering of farmers during natural calamities, if any, in future.

Government should establish the organic farming university at the state level, organic farming colleges at the district level and the organic farming training centres at taluk level, said founder of the Kanyakumari district Organic Farmers' Association, A.Maria James.

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Landscaped aquariums

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CHEENNAI: Ok, so you love keeping fish as pets. You even went all out to splurge money on a fancy fish tank with the prettiest colour pebbles, plastic plants that look almost real, and colourful water toys. But despite all your heedful efforts, if your fish are popping off unnaturally early, then what they probably need is some natural habitat.

A new trend in aquarium technology in the city, which comes much to the relief of environmentalists and fish enthusiasts is the biotope aquarium; a one-of-its-kind artificial set up for the fish that is modeled on their natural habitat. And with the dedicated efforts of two city-based guys, Sundar and Balaji, these tanks are only gaining popularity.

"The concept is simple," says Sundar. "We simply replicate the natural habitat of the fish — say a river bed or a sea bed — on a much smaller scale. So, the tank will have the plants, the temperature, the water type and even the microorganisms that are a natural part of the fish's ecology."

Sundar and Balaji broadly categorise biotope aquariums under two styles — the Dutch and the Japanese. Says Balaji, a B-Tech graduate, "The Dutch style aquarium has shorter plants in the foreground, taller plants in the midground and the tallest ones right at the back in the background. The Japanese style, introduced by Japanese photographer and aquarist, Takashi Amano, is simply a creative landscape set up in the aquarium. For instance, if you would like to recreate a scenery in your aquarium, you could do it; but with all the bionomics compatible to your fish." However, a biotope aquarium with all its detailing is certainly a high-maintenance option. "And expensive too," points out Sundar.

"A basic set up would cost about Rs 10,000 to 15,000. And because of this, most of our clientele is corporate firms and not families." And Balaji adds that the cost is apt for the kind of work that goes in.

"There is so much detailing that goes into one set up. We have complex apparatus attached underneath every tank which help in filtration, maintain appropriate temperature and provide the required gases. And the water plants have to be sourced too," says Balaji.

Their company, named Aquapro, includes aquatic plant production as well. "Our business partner, Jayaseelan, does the largest aquatic plant farming in India in Pondicherry," says Sundar. "We are now steadily venturing into making Terrariums — a tank with real terrestrial plants on top and water plants below." Sundar and Balaji are also into the production of aquarium medication and fish food under the brand name, Soleil. "It involves constant research and practical expertise. Next in line, we'd like to do something about our indigenous dog breeds. They are rapidly nearing extinction," says Balaji with an earnestness that's hard to miss.

To place your own orders for a biotope aquarium, you could get in touch with Sundar or Balaji at 9444458872 or 9710434084.