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## 'Use of bio-fertilizers, key to sustainable agriculture'

COIMBATORE: The use of bio-fertilizers is the key to sustainable agriculture. It is estimated that the use of bio-fertilizers could help the State save Rs. 189 crores annually. Hence, there is a need to augment its production, P. Subbian, Registrar, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, said here recently.

### Training

According to a release, inaugurating a training programme on "Mycorrhizal Systems for Sustainable Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry" at the university, he said the production of Arbuscular Mycorrhize (AM) fungi, a bio-fertilizer, assumed great significance due to its occurrence in most of the vegetation types.

### Technical problems

"Tamil Nadu is the leading State in bio-fertilizer production in India with nearly 4,000 tonnes covering 36,000 hectares. However, the estimated annual bio-fertilizer requirement of the State is about 40,000 tonnes. The technical problems encountered in production and application of bio-fertilizers such as identification of effective crop-specific strains, mass production and quality control, also need to be addressed," the Registrar said.

D.J. Bagyaraj, a microbiologist, stressed the need for employing alternative means in the days of fertilizer shortage, especially phosphatic fertilizers.

## Microbes

He explained the role microbes played in plant nutrition, especially mycorrhizal fungi, which in symbiotic association with plants could mobilise many essential elements needed for growth.

R. Samiyappan, Director, Centre for Plant Molecular Biology, and K. Kumar, Head, Department of Agricultural Microbiology, of TNAU, spoke.

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## Rubber Tappers Bank to be launched

*The first of the banks will be opened at Poothrukka*

KOTTAYAM: The Rubber Board will launch a Rubber Tappers Bank as part of its efforts to find a solution to the problem of acute scarcity of rubber tappers.

The first of the banks, under the auspices of rubber producers' societies (RPS) will be opened at Poothrukka RPS, near Kolencherry, in Ernakulam district on March 29, a press note said.

Chairman Sajen Peter will inaugurate the new venture at a function to be chaired by vice-chairman Siby Monippally.

Rubber Tappers Banks have been envisaged as self-help groups (SHGs) of 20 to 30 trained tappers working under the RPS. Farmers will get the service of skilled tappers on payment of fee. .

The bank will also pay incentives to the tapper for additional produce realised by him by way of tapping. They will get additional

financial advantage such as insurance coverage and savings under the Group Life Insurance-cum-Terminal Benefit Scheme of the Board.

They can also enrol for the Personal Accident Insurance Scheme under the Price Security Fund Trust. The Board will provide them uniform and monthly allowance for maintenance of their implements, the press note said.

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## **Accord priority to loans for irrigation systems, bankers told**

KRISHNAGIRI: A Rs. 1,432-crore Annual Credit Plan was released for Krishnagiri district for 2010-11 was released by V.K. Shanmugam recently. The first copy was received by M. Vijayakumar, Manager, Reserve Bank of India.

The plan envisages Rs. 1,299-crore bank loan projection under the priority sector, which is 19.76 per cent higher increase than the over the last year's. plan.

Releasing the Credit Plan at the district consultative meeting here, Mr. Shanmugam directed the officials of the Mahalir Thittam and Non-governmental Organisations to identify credit rated groups before the end of April 2010.

### **Groups**

Such credit rated groups would be segregated by the district administration in all the blocks and they would be linked to the banks.

He asked also urged the bankers to accord priority in extending loans for drip and sprinkler irrigation systems, precision farming, cut flower cultivation and other allied sectors of agriculture.

Of the total credit outlay, agriculture sector gets the lion's share of Rs. 786.06-crore including a crop loan of Rs. 457.53-crore, 29.80 per cent higher than last year. Rs. 328.53-crore has been projected for agricultural term credit. Of this, Rs. 29.78-crore has been allocated for minor irrigation and land development, Rs. Rs. 80.18-crore for horticulture and Rs. 5 2.45-crore for allied activities of horticulture.

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## **Farmers protest against frequent power disruption in Erode**

ERODE: Irked over the frequent disruptions in power supply in Chennimalai block, over 600 farmers, students and general public gathered in front of the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board office in Chennimalai town and staged a demonstration on Friday.

Large-scale power supply disruptions coupled with oppressive heat made life miserable for people in a number of panchayats in the block.

People complain that power cuts that have been imposed upon them have far exceeded the announced timings.

The mercury in the district increased to unbearable levels forcing people to remain indoors and their woes doubled with erratic power supply.

Water supply in almost all the parts of the block remain affected as the motor pumps are running only for a few hours.

Consequently, it is not possible for the people to easily obtain the amount of water they need for daily consumption.

Students who are studying for their exams are the worst affected by the disruption in power supply.

They are unable to concentrate on their studies with the power failing so often.

“We are worried a lot as examinations are on,” students say.

The board had promised at least six hours of three-phase power supply to the farmers having pumpsets.

“But we experience frequent disruptions and are not able to carry out cultivation activities. If the situation remains the same for a few more weeks, the crops will wither,” farmers say.

“The board gives three-phase power supply during the night. As the board rarely follows the load shedding schedules, many of us sit near the pumps waiting for hours together for the three-phase power supply,” farmers lament.

The frequent disruptions had even affected the banking operations in a number of bank branches in the block.

The productivity of weaving units and other industrial units have come down drastically, people point out.

People in the region have urged the electricity board to initiate immediate efforts to ensure uninterrupted supply of power.

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## Export of fishery products progressing well: Director

*More value addition is being given for Cobia*



**INFORMATIVE:Speakers with the manual released in the workshop in Tuticorin.**

Tuticorin: The export of fishery products is progressing well and with the help of resources, more value addition is being given for Cobia, a species of fish, also known as (Kadal Viral), V.K. Venkataramani, Director of Research and Extension, has said.

He was addressing a workshop on 'Value Addition of Cobia Fish into Convenience Products for Domestic and International Markets,' at Fisheries College of Research Institute here on Friday.

The programme was organised under the aegis of the Indian Council of Agriculture and Research through National Agriculture Innovation Project. With the objective of promoting the export-oriented marine value chain for farmed seafood production using Cobia through rural entrepreneurship; the programme was conducted for the fisher folk and members of self-help groups.

“The frozen fish has recorded the highest annual growth rate of export but the shrimps and prawns constitute a major category of sea food. At the outset of modernisation to globalisation, the seafood industry has become more market-driven. Since the demand for the fishery products is high, the methods of hygienic preservation will be adopted. Utmost importance should be given to ensure hygienic handling and preservation of all species of edible fish as per the guidelines of World Trade Organisation. Once the quality of fish is good, the value of fish goes high”, he added. The enhanced quality sea food would certainly maximise the exporting capacity to a large extent. Hence, the value added fish products have gained more importance in the market.

There was a rapid growth of sea food export market during 2008- 09 in India. The European Union, which is the largest sea food market, had imported 1.5 lakh tonnes of seafood to the tune of Rs. 2, 800 crore from India. Pickles, noodles, tandoori, masala flavoured dry fish, makrooni, chips and burger could be made of Cobia fish, he said.

“Cobia fish is the talk of the day. There is a huge demand in Taiwan for Cobia and people of Taiwan are even celebrating “Cobia festival” with more enthusiasm”, M. Venkatasami, Dean (in – charge), FCRI, said.

“Value addition to any product is essentially required and it has become a vital factor for survival in the market. With good nutrition value, there can be a healthy and suitable trend for marketing”, P. Velayutham, Professor, Department of Fish Processing Technology, said.

P.J.K. Chandrasekar, Managing Director, Kondia Sea Fresh Foods Private Limited, spoke on the food processing techniques and methods of packing sea food, which were useful for exporting companies. Earlier, a manual was released.

K. Rathnakumar, Organising Secretary, and N. Felix, Consortium, Principal Investigator, were present.

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## Farmers' awareness programme

Tuticorin: With the objective of creating an awareness among the farmers of the importance of measurement of weather parameters, weather forecast and agro-advisory service, a programme was conducted by Agricultural Research Station, Kovilpatti, on Friday.

It was organised under the assistance of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) functioning under the Ministry of Earth Sciences. The programme benefitted the farming community to become more self-reliant in handling weather-related issues, according to a statement.

Experts from various districts spoke on the impact of weather in agriculture, weather forecast, selection of suitable crops for different times of onset of monsoon, weather insurance and the use of agro advisory service.

Under the agro-advisory service scheme, the IMD was giving weather forecast to many centres all-over India and Agricultural Research Station, Kovilpatti, was one among them.

Based on the forecast, agro-advisory bulletin was prepared. It had weather-based advisories that have to be adopted in farming in order to minimise the adverse impacts of weather on crop growth and yield.

Rain gauge (a device used for the measurement of rainfall) was distributed to select farmers and the farmers were trained in measuring rainfall. Farmers from Tuticorin, Tirunelveli and Virudhunagar districts participated.

C. Umamageswari, Assistant Professor (Agronomy), proposed a vote of thanks.



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## Farmers voice concerns



**debate:Farmers engaged in an argument at the farmers' grievance day meeting at Ramanathapuram on Friday.**

RAMANATHAPURAM: Confusion prevailed in the farmers' grievance day meeting held here on Friday for about half an hour when a few farmers brought the issue of non-payment of compensation for chilli crops.

Irked over a remark made by a farmer, the Collector (in-charge), K. Balasubramanian, who presided over the meeting, said a few farmers were crossing their limit while bringing issues to the authorities. The indiscipline could not be allowed. They should maintain decency in voicing their concerns.

R. Gnanavasagam said that Mr. Balasubramanian did not come to the grievance day meeting in time, the latter said that he had to attend many works as he was holding additional charge of Collector besides discharging the responsibilities and duties of the

District Revenue Officer. The activities of one or two farmers should not jeopardize the interest of others.

Mr. Balasubramanian said that the farmers could engage in meaningful discussion when they wanted to draw the attention of officials. The meeting progressed peacefully after other farmers intervened.

Later, raising the issue of land reclamation, K. Duraisingam of S. Keeranthai and N. Balasundaramurthi said though farmers had right to transport mud and gravel for reclamation of their lands, officials of mines, revenue and other departments were preventing them from doing so. Mr. Balasubramanian said that farmers were free to transport mud and gravel within the revenue village but they should intimate the authorities concerned.

Several farmers complained that the compensation for the failure of chilli crops had not been distributed to the farmers. Officials had not taken sincere steps to get compensation from the National Agricultural Insurance Corporation.

The Joint Director of Agriculture, N. Sathiamoorthy, said the horticultural officials had received information that 95 per cent of compensation for chilli crops had been released. Steps would be taken to receive the entire relief.

The Joint Registrar, Cooperatives, S. Babu, said that the agricultural cooperative societies had been allowed to procure paddy from farmers.

*By Rory Smith*

*27 Mar 2010 03:50:00 AM IST*

## No fishy business this

CHENNAI: Take a sunset stroll along Besant Nagar beach and you will find a cluster of fish stalls selling all varieties of seafood from crab and prawns to Pomfret and Shankara. Gajendran and Madurambal, owners of the fiveyear- old Pavan Sea Corner stall say, "The fish varieties we sell are all from Tamil Nadu. The catch is from in and around Chennai and sold in the market on the beach. Of all the varieties of fish, Shankara is the most popular," they inform, while furiously frying some fresh catch for a customer.

Once bought from the nearby market, the fish is then seasoned with spices.

"The masalas and the spices are added right here. We get them from home and mix them here to add the tangy flavour to the fish," Gajendran adds.

However, making a living off something as unpredictable as the sea is no easy task as Amudhan and his mother of Royal Seafood Stall describe, "We have been running this stall for three years now. Before this we used to be fisher folk. That wouldn't give us any profit. Sometimes we'd have a good catch, and at other times, we'd not get anything and would have to go hungry through the day. It's hard to sustain a family with just fishing." Although their turnover is about Rs 2000 - Rs 3000 on weekends and Rs 1000 - Rs 1500 on weekdays, the profits are minimal considering that the purchase price of the fish is relatively expensive.

From the customer's point of view, nothing beats a fish supper on the sun soaked sands of Besant Nagar beach.

Saravanan a frequent visitor to the stalls comments on the quality of the food, "When I was a bachelor, this stall was my dinner spot every day.

The fish here in Besant Nagar is so much fresher and tender than what you get in Marina. Also, this beach is cleaner and better. Now after marriage, my wife and I come here once in two weeks." Upon sampling the delights of both the Royal Seafood Stall and Pavan Sea Corner, both of which offered an impressive array of seafood, the Shankara proved to be a personal favourite. A dusting of masala protects the fish during the cooking process, resulting in a beautifully tender fish wrapped in a crispy coating of masala, onion and mint, which compliments the mild inherent flavour of the fish.

The stalls are well worth a visit and the method of cooking offers a pleasant alternative to what can sometimes be a rather dull and flavourless fish experience.

All the fish are cooked to order and priced between Rs 30 and Rs 80. At good value for money and an 'al fresco' sea view to match the experience, it is a must for fish fanatics and even the saltiest of sea dogs.

Chennai - INDIA

## Today's Weather



Clear

**Saturday, Mar 27**

Max Min

35.8° | 24.4°

Rain: 00mm in24hrs Sunrise: 06:09

Humidity: 56% Sunset: 18:20

Wind: Normal Barometer: 1008.1mb

## Tomorrow's Forecast



Sunny

**Sunday, Mar 28**

Max Min

34° | 25°

## Extended Forecast for a week

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Mar 29

Mar 30

Mar 31

Apr 1

Apr 2



34° | 27°

34° | 26°

35° | 27°

35° | 28°

36° | 27°

Tstorm

Sunny

Sunny

Sunny

Partly Cloudy