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TNAU VC calls for commercialisation of the university-designed equipment

Scientists told to design and develop machinery that can be used in small holdings



FOR FARMERS: Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University

COIMBATORE: Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has developed 746 crop varieties and 146 farm equipment. But, unless these reach the farmers, they cannot be put to good use.

Since the university cannot commercialise the technologies and designs, private companies and entrepreneurs should come forward to do so, Vice-Chancellor of the university P. Murugesu Boopathi said here recently.

Power weeder

Launching the Garuda Paddy Power Weeder for commercial use, the Vice-Chancellor said the Agri-Business Development Directorate had been set up in the university to act as a link between the university and entrepreneurs to facilitate commercialisation or incubation.

Equipment cost

The power weeder design had been transferred by the university to Premier Power Equipment and Products Private Limited for commercial manufacture. The cost of the weeder was fixed at Rs. 31,000.

This was in response to the demand by rice farmers to replace the manual weeder as it was found difficult to be pushed in between the rows of paddy.

Subsidy

“There is a possibility of getting 50 per cent subsidy for the purchase of the weeder from the Department of Agriculture Engineering, Government of Tamil Nadu. The Corporation Bank has also come forward to extend loans for the same purpose,” Mr. Boopathi said.

Lamenting that most of the wards of farmers were moving away from farming, the Vice-Chancellor said mechanisation was the only solution for addressing this and also labour scarcity. “There are 80 lakh farming families in Tamil Nadu. Out of these, 65 lakh are small and marginal farmers possessing very small holdings. Hence, scientists should design and develop machinery that can be used in such small holdings,” he said. Appreciating the equipment that had been developed for sugarcane harvesting, Mr. Boopathi said efficient mechanisation was necessary in cotton, especially for picking.

Coconut tree climber

The next major equipment that was awaiting commercialisation was the coconut tree climber, he added.

Registrar P. Subbian, Dean S. Santhanu Bosu, Director of Research M. Paramathma, Director of Agri Business Development R. Ganeshan, and Chief Executive Officer and Director of Premier Equipment and Products Private Limited A. Rajkumar, were present for the launch.

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Mango coating, grading unit inaugurated



Extending shelf-life:Mangoes being graded according to size and weight after organic coating at Harsha Fresh's new fruit processing unit at Aalapatti village, in Krishnagiri, on Thursday.

KRISHNAGIRI: Decco, a wholly-owned company of Mumbai-based United Phosphorus Ltd, in association with a local franchisee Harsha Fresh launched a mango coating and grading unit at Aalappati village, 18 km from Krishnagiri on Thursday.

The unit was commissioned at a cost of Rs. 1.87 crore. The fruit processing machine costing Rs. 1.10 crore was bought from Italy-based technology major Samma Projects, owned by United Phosphorous Ltd. The project is a 50:50 joint venture of Decco and Harsha Fresh, said Agri. Pugazhenthly, Advisor, Harsha Fresh. K.N. Singh, General

Manager, Decco, told reporters that it was the first fruit coating and grading unit in South India. The installed capacity of the unit is 3 tonnes per hour. The target for the current financial year is 1000 tonnes. The company plans to process 3,000 tonnes of mango each season.

The process will extend the shelf-life of the fruits produced in Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri region for export purposes.

Every year, 1.5 tonnes of mango is being exported from this region alone. The processing would be extended to other crops which are abundantly cultivated in this region such as tomato and capsicum.

The Italy-based Decco (Decay Control) is a world leader in post-harvest and storage solution of fruits and vegetables such as coatings, cleaners, sanitizers, fungicides, growth regulators and anti-scald for the past 80 years.

Narendra Babu, Area Manager, Decco, Bangalore explained the process of coating and grading.

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Crop insurance relief being disbursed in Thanjavur district

THANJAVUR: A sum of Rs. 7.28 crore, the share of central Government in providing crop insurance relief to Thanjavur district farmers who have insured their crop for the rabi season 2008, is being disbursed through Primary Agriculture Cooperative Banks (PACBs) in the district from May 7, according to a press release from Collector M.S. Shanmugham.

This money is the pending 10 per cent of the Union government's share in the crop insurance scheme.

90 per cent disbursed

Already 90 per cent of the share has been disbursed to 62,364 farmers in the district. (Under National Crop Insurance scheme, 50 per cent is borne by the State Government and an equal amount by the central Government.

The State Government has disbursed its share to the farmers already).

Farmers can approach the respective Primary Agriculture Co-operative Credit Societies to get the arrears. The amount will be accounted in the accounts of loanee farmers.

Any pending loan will also be compensated using the insurance relief.

For those who do not have loan arrears, the amount will be accounted in their accounts and disbursed.

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Farmers to protest against land acquisition

Demonstration to be held on May 11

Call to give up Neelambur bypass plan

COIMBATORE: Farmers' organisation Tamizhaga Vivasayeegal Sangam will hold a demonstration here on May 11 to protest against land acquisition.

State president of the Sangam M.R. Sivasamy has said in a release that if the National Highways Authority of India was to go ahead with its plans to acquire land for the 200 feet by pass road, it would cause damage and financial loss in Coimbatore district.

To prevent the damage, the Authority must give up the Neelambur bypass plan and without causing much damage must widen the Mettupalayam Road into a four-lane highway. It could also form a 100-foot road through Neelambur and Kovilpalayam.

By doing so the Rs. 250 crore the Government had allotted for the purpose could be put to better use.

As far as possible, acquisition of farm lands should be avoided, as farmers not only lost their land but also profession. And if at all the Government or any of its agencies were to acquire land it should purchase the same at twice the prevailing market rate and not as per guideline value.

After the May 11 protests, farmers who would be affected in the acquisition process to be carried out at Chavady bypass, Neelambur bypass, airport and link roads would form a joint committee to carry out protests. It was to project a united front of the farmers.

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Training programme for horticulture farmers held

COIMBATORE: Agriculture lending of the State Bank of India (SBI) stands at Rs. 80,000 crore to 80 lakh farmers, according to its Deputy General Manager of Agri Business Unit V. Eswaran.

Speaking at a Hariyali Ganga (farmer training) programme organised here recently by the bank, he said that the bank would extend crop loan of Rs. 3 lakh to Rs. 25 lakh and

credit for minor irrigation at 8.5 per cent for the first year of the loan, nine per cent for the second and third year and the prevailing rate from the fourth year.

Director of the Central Board of the Bank D.N. Balodhi urged the farmers to resort to rainwater harvesting and efficient water management systems.

Opportunities

The Hariyali Ganga programmes are aimed at meeting the financial needs of agro-based units in rural and semi-urban areas and creating opportunities for youth.

The SBI Hariyali Ganga meeting here focused on organic farming and certification.

According to a release from the bank, 400 farmers participated in the event. From January this year, the bank decided to organise a Hariyali Ganga programme in every region (each region has 30 to 40 branches) in the country once in three months.

In the farmer training programme, a theme is selected and top officials of the bank, technical personnel from agricultural universities and agricultural organisations participate.

Maintain registers

The farmers are given an update on the latest technologies and market trends to improve the farming practices. The bank has also decided to print records and registers for 1,500 farmers in Salem District who have taken up organic farming.

This will enable the farmers to get organic certification.

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Suggest measures for enhancing sugar recovery, scientists told



Must be sweeter:The stress is now on methods to step up recovery of sugar from the cane.

COIMBATORE: Good varieties of sugarcane with sugar recovery potential exceeding 12 per cent are available in Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU).

Yet, at the field level, only 9.6 per cent of sugar recovery is achieved.

Reasons

Hence, scientists need to assess the reasons for this difference and suggest management measures to overcome this deficit, P. Murugesu Boopathi, Vice-Chancellor, TNAU, said here recently.

Speaking at a two-day annual research meet on sugarcane at the university, he said the sugar recovery of the State stood at a poor 9.6 per cent as compared to the 11.6 per cent of Maharashtra – which stood first in the country.

Area

“India is the second largest producer of sugarcane next to Brazil. Tamil Nadu has an area of 3.5 lakh hectares under sugarcane, which is 6.9 per cent of the country's total area.

With regard to productivity, Tamil Nadu stands first with 107 tonnes a hectare. Even Australia which has the world's highest productivity registers only 85 tonnes a hectare,” he said.

Precision farming

Farmers in Sankagiri in Salem had recorded 119 tonnes a hectare by adopting precision farming technologies, the Vice-Chancellor said.

Stating that the estimated demand for white sugar in the country by 2025 would be 30 million tonnes, Mr. Boopathi said to produce that much, sugarcane production had to be increased to 452 million tonnes with 11 per cent recovery.

Pointing out that the red rot disease was destroying sugarcane, he said the Tamil Nadu Government had allotted Rs. 240 lakh under the Cess Fund Scheme for evolving red rot resistant varieties.

The Vice-Chancellor also mentioned that the university had developed technologies such as pit method planting, drip and fertigation, and wider row spacing, which could increase yields up to 140 tonnes a hectare.

Task force

M. Paramathma, Director, Research, TNAU, said to increase sugar recovery in the State, a task force would be formed in the university for developing new varieties and management technologies.

N. Ajjan, Director, Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies, TNAU, said though Tamil Nadu was a leading sugarcane producer, in recent years, a lot of variations were being observed in area, productivity, and production.

Promoting mechanisation as a major intervention to increase the Benefit Cost (BC) ratio would be a good solution to bring down the variations.

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Cotton prices not expected to move up

'Monsoon expected to be near normal this year'

Cotton sowing has started in several States for next season

Prices have not come down significantly in Indian market

COIMBATORE: Cotton sowing has started in several States for the next season (October 2010-September 2011) and cotton prices may not move up further from the current level during the next few days, according to secretary of the South India Cotton Association K. N. Viswanathan.

He told 'The Hindu' here on Saturday that 40 per cent sowing was already over in the Northern Zone of the country and early sowing was reported in Gujarat. Monsoon was expected to be near normal this year.

Reports

In another two weeks, clear reports would be available on sowing and monsoon reports from different cotton cultivating regions in the country.

Though small quantities of cotton arrivals were still reported in some parts, most of the mills had purchased their cotton needs till August – September.

The Union Ministry of Textiles was not registering cotton exports now.

Those who had already registered for cotton exports but had not shipped the registered quantity should get export authorisation now. Hence, there was no rush for buying cotton.

Yet, prices had not come down significantly in the Indian market as there was hope still for relaxation of export norms.

The prices were holding on now and the scenario would change if the Government relaxed the export rules.

The situation on this front was also expected to become clear in a couple of weeks, he said.

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Production picks up, sugar crisis on its way out

India's sugar production has shown signs of picking up, prompting the government to consider reversing some sharp measures it had taken to bring down the prices.

Domestic production for the current sugar crop year (October 2009-September 2010) is now estimated to be over 18 million tonnes, up 11 per cent from earlier industry projections of 16 million tonnes.

Hit by last year's drought, states had predicted even lower estimates of 14 million tonnes.

Aided by both improved domestic forecast and higher production in Brazil, the world's biggest exporter, sugar prices have dipped to Rs 35 a kg from a peak of Rs 50 last year — a 30 per cent fall.

"World prices continued to decline through April," Dutch investment bank, Rabobank, which tracks global commodity markets, told HT.

"The import duty, waived off to boost supplies, could now be re-imposed," a senior government source said. The sweet respite is now stoking problems for millers. Cheap duty-free imports are impacting sales of domestic sugar.

Less-profitable sales eventually affect farmers, who depend on millers for payments.

"(Re-introducing) import duty is imminent," said M.N. Rao, deputy director-general of the Indian Sugar Mills Association. Rao said since production would be better than expected, the industry, on which farmers depend, needs some support. "Or payments to farmers may suffer," he said.

"The situation is comfortable, but we can't say it's hunky dory until we return to a surplus position," N Sanyal, joint secretary in charge of sugar, told HT.

India requires 23 million tonnes of the sweetener annually, but 60 per cent of it is used up by commercial buyers.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/541178.aspx>

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Monday, May 10

Max Min

Partly Cloudy

37.3° | 28.1°

Rain: 00mm in24hrs Sunrise: 05:45

Humidity: 34% Sunset: 18:26

Wind: Normal Barometer: 1008.1mb

Tomorrow's Forecast



Tuesday, May 11

Max Min

Partly Cloudy

38° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday May 12	Thursday May 13	Friday May 14	Saturday May 15	Sunday May 16
37° 28°	37° 28°	38° 28°	38° 28°	37° 28°
Sunny	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy