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Prime Minister declares Sikkim as First Organic State in India



Sikkim, 18 January 2016. Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, addressed a conference of Agriculture Ministers of States at Gangtok, and declared Sikkim as First Organic State of India. Shri Modi said that 12-year-long journey of Sikkim transformed it into an eco-friendly farming state. Hon'ble Prime Minister, inaugurated a state flower show and mentioned the need for promotion of vertical farming, cultivation of fragrant and high value orchids for increased income of farmers. Hon'ble Prime Minister released three *Cymbidium* orchid hybrids and named two of them as *Cymbidium* 'Sardar' (after Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel) and *Cymbidium* 'Deen Dayal' (after Shri Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay). The Chief Minister of Sikkim, Shri Pawan Chamling, named one hybrid as *Cymbidium* 'Namoo' (in the honour of the Prime Minister).



Shri Radha Mohan Singh, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, strongly emphasized the need of strengthening lab-to-land programme in presence of large number of progressive farmers of the state. The initiatives like *Mera Gaon, Mera Gaurav*, Soil-Health Cards and promotion of pulses and oilseeds must be given utmost priority by all concerned. Shri Singh was accompanied by Ministers of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Dr Sanjeev Kumar Balyan and Shri Mohan Bhai Kundariya.

Organic farming: concerns about crop productivity and soil-health

Modipuram, 7 January 2016. Dr A.K. Sikka (DDG, NRM) focused on the workshop on 'Organic Farming: Concerns about crop productivity and soil-health', sponsored by Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare under the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, and organized by the Indian Institute of Farming Systems Research. Dr Sikka informed that organic farming has advantages over chemical management in agriculture, but considering the food requirement in terms of quantity and quality, proper policy needs to be designed for organic farming after taking into consideration of crop productivity in different regions.



The salient recommendations are as follows:

- Organic farming should be promoted in phased manner in the identified niche areas (hilly, rainfed and drylands) and crops (positive crops to organic management, low volume high value).
- 'Certified organic farming' with combination of tradition, innovation and scientific organic packages should be promoted in the *de-facto* organic areas (hills) and rainfed/dryland regions for safe food security and climate resilience, besides increased income of farm households.
- Accelerated adoption of 'towards organic' (integrated crop management) approach for intensive agricultural areas (food hubs) will positively contribute to the cause of soil, human, livestock and eco-system health, the basic objective of organic agriculture.

XXXI Annual Workshop on Post-Harvest Engineering and Technology

Coimbatore, 6 January 2016. Dr K. Alagusundaram (DDG, Agric. Engg) chaired a three-day 31st Annual Workshop on 'Post-harvest Engineering and Technology', organized by All India Coordinated Research Project on Post-harvest Engineering and Technology at Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University on 4 January 2016. Dr Alagusundaram focused on the consortium and value chain mode of research rather than the conventional way of research that would facilitate the delivery of benefits to farmers immediately. To initiate this consortium for grain storage, value chain on turmeric were started at different centers in last year.

Dr K. Ramasamy (Vice-Chancellor, TNAU, Coimbatore), Chief Guest, informed the gathering by expressing the need to exploit steel manufactured from Salem for food processing machinery. In furtherance, Dr Ramasamy listed the benefits of coconut in reducing heart diseases.

Prolific three breed cross 'Avishaan' released

Avikanagar, 4 January 2016. The Central Sheep and Wool Research Institute released a high performing prolific three breed cross developed by the same institute at its Foundation



Day for testing in the farmers' field. The cross named as 'Avishaan' was released by Dr V.K. Taneja (Chairman, RAC and Ex-DDG, ICAR). The prolific cross is a composite cross having 12.5% Garole, 37.5% Malpura, and 50% Patanwadi blood. The prolific sheep project conceived and inspired by the guidance of the then DDG (AS), Dr V. K. Taneja in 1997. Dr Taneja hailed the efforts and achievements of the Institute in developing this unique three breed cross. 'Avishaan' excelled by about 30% over native Malpura sheep in terms of Ewe Productivity Efficiency (EPE) at six month of age. In the current female

population 47% females produced 2 lambs and 2% produced 3 lambs in a lambing leading to overall 49% prolificacy. It is accepted with an enhanced growth, farmers can get 1.5 times income from rearing of 'Avishaan' without extra investments. The enhanced milk production will lead to sustenance of more lambs, fulfillment of domestic requirement, thus adding up to the nutritional security of the sheep farmers. During the occasion five elite 'Avishaan' breeding rams along with data recording aids were distributed to five registered farmers of five different villages around Malpura for extensive field evaluation for validation of the genotype.

XX Foundation Day of NRC for Grapes

Pune, 18 January 2016. The importance of keeping alive the interest of rural youth in agriculture for holistic development of the country and in tune with the market and consumer demands was emphasized by the chief guest, Mr Dnyaneshwar Phadtare (Retd. Joint Commissioner of Vigilance, Maharashtra). Dr P. S. Minhas (Director, NIASM, Baramati) focused on the need to strengthen the collaborative work between NIASM and NRC for Grapes in the management of edaphic stress in grapes.

Dr Jai Gopal (Director, DoGR) highlighted importance of breeding for development of grape varieties with desired traits. Dr K. V. Prasad (Director, DFR) spoke on the scope of incorporation of natural colors and flavors from ornamental crops in grape juice. The wall magazine, 'Angoori' of NRC for Grapes brought out a special issue depicting photographs and memoirs of the establishment of the NRC for Grapes. Two progressive farmers Mr Subash Arve (President MRDBS) and Mr Shivajirao Baste were felicitated for collaborating with NRC for Grapes in field of demonstration of technologies and varieties developed by the NRC for Grapes at the 20th Foundation Day of National Research Centre for Grapes. Mr Subash Arve delivered a technical talk on 'Current status of dry grape industry in India and its future'.



Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare visits CAU, Imphal

Iroisemba, 14 January 2016. The Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shri Mohan Bhai Kundariya, inaugurated the New Academic Block of College of Agriculture, Central Agricultural University, Imphal. Shri Kundariya



appealed the farmers to form groups to avail the benefits of various schemes extended by the government. Shri Kundariya said that now farmers have to pay only 1 to 2.5% premium to get the benefit of Crop Insurance scheme. Shri Kundariya reiterated the importance of Soil-Health Card Scheme, Prime Minister Irrigation Scheme, Soil and Water Conservation Scheme etc. The Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare stated that the North-East states have enough potential for developing organic farming, as the use of fertilizer and insecticides is quite minimal in these states. Besides, the availability of water resources is abundant. The Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare also assured sanction of Dairy project for Manipur, if it is submitted to the Ministry.

Shri Kundariya expressed his satisfaction about the various welfare measures of the farmers, in terms of providing seed materials and other technology transfer services. The Hon'ble Minister also distributed soil-health cards and seeds to the selected progressive farmers. After the Farmers' Interaction Programme, Hon'ble Minister interacted with the media groups by holding a Press Conference. Issues like organic farming in the north-east states, crop insurance scheme were discussed. The Hon'ble Minister visited to Manipur Milk Producers' Co-operative Union Ltd., Porompat, Imphal East to see the milk processing facilities and manufacturing of various milk products.

Secretary, ICAR visits Research Centre of IISWC

Chandigarh, 9 January, 2016. Shri Chhabilendra Roul (Secretary, ICAR and Additional Secretary, DARE) visited the Research Farm of Research Centre, Indian Institute of Soil & Water Conservation (IISWC) for three days. A meeting was held by the Secretary at Mini Secretariat, Punjab and discussion was made on the problems related to agriculture and horticulture with Commissioner (Agriculture), Director (Agriculture), and Director (Horticulture of Punjab state) along with the Director of the Institute and the Head of Chandigarh Centre. On this occasion, plantation of *Mimusoph elengi* (Molsiri) was done by the Secretary, at research farm. The Secretary (ICAR) emphasized the assessment of economic viability of the research outcomes for the benefit of the farmers.



IPM in Important Crops...

Hyderabad, 8 January 2016. Dr P.K. Chakrabarty (ADG, PP & BS) inaugurated a three-day orientation course on 'IPM in Important Crops with special reference to Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Telangana', jointly organized by the National Research Centre for Integrated Pest Management and ATARI Zone-V, at the ATARI, Zone-V on 6 January 2016. Dr Chakrabarty highlighted the importance of IPM in various fields and horticultural crops in these three states. He stressed that participating SMS Plant-Protection of 44 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and 5 progressive farmers of these states shall be the new ambassadors of IPM and promote various eco-friendly crop management packages. Dr Mukesh Sehgal (In charge, HRD, NCIPM) informed that with this training (since September, 2013) NCIPM would have completed creation of awareness among 476 personnel of existing 643 KVKs (74%) about the recent developments in IPM. Dr C. Chattopadhyay (Director, NCIPM) emphasized the urgent need of the IPM refresher course and suggested appropriate measures for sustainable crop protection through IPM strategies. Dr Ch. Srinivasa Rao (Director, CRIDA) flagged the issue of water, fertilizer management and need for timely action for crop health management in sustainable crop production. A resource book, 'IPM in Important Crops with Special Reference to Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Telangana' was distributed to the participants.

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