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Scientific interventions paved the way for success

With a little care, proper planning and a strong determination for success coupled with timely technical advice can bring amazing results in aquaculture. The backyard freshwater prawn hatchery unit of Mr Manoj K K from Atholi in Kozhikode district of Kerala is a model for many to emulate. It was 15 years back when he began to ponder on exploiting the potential of fish wealth in his five-acre pond.

"I started with tiger shrimp farming near my house. But changes in climatic conditions and emergence of white spot disease were the major setbacks," says Mr Manoj. This prompted Manoj to look into the potentials of brackish water fish culture. Brackish water breeds like Pearl Spot, Mullet and others were abundant in the lake. Knowing that broodstock (mother prawns) is available in the pond, the scientists put forward the idea of setting up a hatchery for breeding giant freshwater prawn (*Macrobrachium rosenbergii*) in his backyard. Manoj's determination and hard work plus timely scientific intervention showed good result. Though it was an experiment, he was able to sell around 5,000 post-larvae prawns in the first stage. Manoj is planning to expand his hatchery. Recently, the Indian Institute of Spices Research had felicitated Manoj for his innovation in low-cost fish culture cage production as part of the *Karshika Sankethika Darshanam 2011*, a farmers' mela and technology expo.



Manoj's Pearl Spot farming in fibre cages has also caught the attention of many. He has also developed a low-cost fibre cage for growing Pearl Spot in captivity. These fibre cages are made of fibre wire mesh. PVC pipes are used to float these structures on water. Since PVC pipes are very costly, he replaced them with empty plastic bottles, which will also help to float the cage on the water surface.

The production cost for a standard fish culture cage of 3x1x1 m will be more than ₹3,000, whereas this low cost model will cost only ₹1,000. With a full-fledged Pearl Spot hatchery unit, Manoj is producing around 20,000 fingerlings in each breeding season.

Shri Harish Rawat inaugurates KVKs Interface 2011

Inaugurating the two-day KVKs Interface Meet on 6 June 2011 at Directorate of Cold Water Fisheries Research, Bhimtal,



Uttarakhand, Shri Harish Rawat, the Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Processing Industry, Government of India, said that there is need of such meets where it gives platform for the interaction of experts, progressive farmers, KVKs and other stakeholders to address the major issues in coldwater fisheries sector and appreciated the contribution of the Institute in this direction.

He facilitated the progressive fish farmers, Mr Krishnanand Gahtori and Shri Bajani of Uttarakhand, and Mr Maukai Aajung of Arunachal Pradesh. The Minister released a Hindi magazine *Him Jyoti* and Bulletin on Nutrient Profiling of coldwater fish species. He advised the Director Dr P C Mahanta, to extend the technologies of the Institute like poly tank fish culture in the high altitude regions and to give more emphasis to build more women organized societies in agriculture. He stressed at least 1.5 to 2% of GDP should be invested in research to develop new technologies to increase the productivity and thereby increasing the purchasing power of the farmers.

Dr KD Kokate, Deputy Director General (Agricultural Extension) stressed about the resources available in the Himalayan belt and desired exploitation of the resources in effective manner to increase the productivity of the coldwater fish sector. Dr B Meenakumari, DDG (Fisheries) gave a brief introduction of the Institute and the major issues to be discussed in the Interface meeting.

Cultivation and collection of medicinal plants made easy

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, India, and the Directorate of Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Research (DMAPR) of ICAR have together developed an interactive training toolkit to facilitate better application of the WHO guidelines for good agriculture and collection practices for medicinal plants.

Dr S Ayyappan, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) and Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), released the training toolkit on Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP) for medicinal plants at a launch function at New Delhi on 30 May 2011.

While releasing the toolkit, Dr Ayyappan appreciated the efforts and said that the GACP training kit will be very useful for farmers, collectors, trainers and other stakeholders to impart standard and uniform training across the country. He also thanked FAO for completing this collaborative work within the limited time period.

This training toolkit is based on the guidelines for Good Agriculture and Collection Practices for medicinal plants that were developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2003. The guidelines were designed to ensure the safety, efficiency and quality of raw materials used in herbal medicine. In 2009, the National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), in collaboration with the WHO Country Office for India, developed a set of country-specific guidelines and standards for GACP.

The adoption of GACP in medicinal plant sector will improve livelihood by adding premium price to the produce and also generating additional employment in rural sector for the educated youth.

Need to prioritize research

Dr S Ayyappan, Secretary, DARE and Director General, ICAR stressed upon the need to prioritize the research and develop a strategy to make agricultural research more demand-driven. He was addressing a special meeting of heads of divisions of regional stations of ICAR institutes across the country.



He elaborated the strengths of ICAR research system and urged to find out the gaps which need to be addressed immediately. He suggested ways and means to make the agricultural research more meaningful for the stakeholders in which farmers occupy premium place. He expressed satisfaction over record production of foodgrains, nearly 236 million tonnes, during the year and complimented the scientists for their important contribution.

Central Institute of Fisheries Education celebrates Golden Jubilee Year

Dr S Ayyappan, Secretary, DARE and DG, ICAR, while rededicating the Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Mumbai on the completion of 50 years of its existence recalled the contributions by the former Directors, Joint Directors and Staff. He traced the journey from the simple beginning as a training Institute to in-service fisheries personnel in 1961, to its present stature of a leading research and educational institute in fisheries sector in the country. He emphasised upon the great advances made by the Institute not only in the area of education, but also in fisheries research and extension giving examples of carp hatchery, aquaculture revolution in Andhra Pradesh, shrimp farming in inland saline soils and reclamation of degraded areas in Maharashtra through aquaculture.

Dr Ayyappan emphasised upon the new initiatives in pipeline under the 12th Five Year Plan of the Council and threw light upon the aspects like National Agriculture Education Project, institution



of new awards, career advancement, overseas exposure to faculty and students, etc. He lauded the Institute for their various activities and expressed his happiness in transforming the barren land into a hub of activities with world class infrastructure in pipeline. Further, he urged the Faculty and Staff to excel in teaching and research and to be the role models for others to follow.

The DG during his visit also inaugurated various new facilities at CIFE, viz Girls' Hostel, Residential Quarters, Personality Development and Placement Cell and Microbiology Lab for Post-Harvest Technology.

DG, ICAR inaugurates National Seminar

Dr S Ayyappan, Secretary, DARE and DG, ICAR inaugurated the National Seminar on Transfer of Technology of Strategic Pesticides Use to Enhance Agricultural Production and Food Security, on 1 June 2011 at National Agricultural Science Centre, New Delhi. While touching upon the research education and extension programme of the ICAR, Dr Ayyappan said that programmes on entrepreneurship and skill development have been accorded high priority to catalyze commercialization of technologies on a larger scale, in which private sector can play immense role.

He called for greater Public-Private Partnership, so as to gain the synergy of each other's strengths and take agricultural technologies to the door steps of the farmers across the country. Ensuring timely availability of quality inputs, including seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, and educating the farmers and agriculture input dealers on judicious use of pesticides are quite vital in which ICAR and Private Sector can play an important role, said Dr Ayyappan.

He also called for creating para professional and middle level functionaries to assist in various department projects through appropriate training at the VKVs, SAUs and ICAR institutes.

While delivering the key note address, Prof. R B Singh, Former Assistant Director General, FAO said, the agrochemicals have played a pivotal role in the past in increasing agricultural productivity and production, and protecting and preserving the human and animal food, feed and health. These have become a topic of public debate, owing primarily by to their non-judicious and un-scientific use, thus, a policy on their use needs to be in place, mentioned Prof. Singh.

Dr KD Kokate, DDG (Agricultural Extension); Shri RG Agarwal, Chairman of Dhanuka Group; Shri JNL Shrivastava, Former Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture; Shri Salil Singhal, Co Chairman CII and Dr OP Singh, President, Dhanuka Agritech Ltd also addressed the delegates on the occasion.

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