

State-Level Workshop on Natural Farming Highlights the Need for Chemical-Free Agriculture in A&N Islands



Port Blair, Aug 13: A one day State Level Workshop-cum-Seminar on 'Scope & Challenges of Natural Farming in A&N Islands' was held in the Conference Hall of ICAR-CIARI, Garacharma today. Organized by the Department of Agriculture in collaboration with the ICAR-CIARI, the Chief Secretary, A&N Administration, Shri Keshav Chandra, IAS inaugurated the workshop by lighting the lamp in the presence of the Commissioner-cum Secretary, A&N Administration, Smt. Nandini Paliwal, IAS, Secretary, Agriculture, Shri B. S Jaglan, IAS, Padmashree, Smt. K. Chellammal, Director, CIARI, Dr. Eknath B. Chakurkar, Director, Agriculture, Shri Abhishek Gulia, Scientists of CIARI, Officials of Agriculture Department, progressive farmers and others.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Secretary, at the outset, described the workshop as important one as it creates awareness about the benefits of naturally produced food products and to bring in new opportunities of farming and business through Natural Farming in these Islands. He said, at present, there is no shortage of food grains in our country, but it has become most important to check

whether the food we are consuming is good for our development or harmful.

Pointing towards the ill-effects of chemical fertilizers/urea and chemical pesticides, the Chief Secretary said, use of these products in farming will not only damage our health but also damages the fertility of the soil. He said that rampant use of Chemical Fertilizers & Chemical Pesticides has increased the crop production/yield in farming activities, but on the other hand, it has contributed to too many diseases in human which are incurable and taking lives of the people besides, it will also have a great impact on the health of the future generation.

The Chief Secretary urged the farmers to take up natural farming in such a way that it not only contributes towards increased food production but also contributes in maintaining good health of the people. He urged the farmers to disseminate the benefits of Natural Farming to other farmers too. The Chief Secretary informed about the Agniastra, Beejamrit, Jeevamrit and Neemastra which are the components of natural farming that controls pests and all these are prepared from the locally available inputs available in farmers' fields. As the meth-

ods of preparation is very easy, the Chief Secretary encouraged the farmers to take up training in this regard and start preparing natural pest control in their home/farm itself, so that pest can be controlled in a natural way, avoiding chemical pesticides.

During the inaugural function, the Chief Secretary distributed the maiden produced Tissue Culture Banana variety G-9 to farmers of South Andaman which is produced in the Tissue Culture Laboratory of the Deptt. of Agriculture, the first of its kind in the Islands.

In her address, the Commissioner-cum Secretary (Agriculture), Smt. Nandini Paliwal, while informing about the importance of Natural Farming said that the Administration, Agriculture Deptt. and CIARI is making efforts to propagate Natural Farming in the Islands and this Seminar will further throw light on the action to be taken for its implementation in a broader scale. She urged the Agriculture Department to compile the deliberations of the workshop, so that an action plan with timeline can be prepared and the technical knowledge received during the workshop can be taken from lab. to land for effective implementation of Natural Farming in the Islands.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director, CIARI, Dr. Eknath B. Chakurkar said that Natural Farming is the need of the hour. At present, our country has achieved food security, but now we have to concentrate more on nutritional security, so that quality food can be made available to the

masses, he added.

In his address, the Scientist, CIARI, Dr. Ajit Arun Waman while informing about the functioning of the Tissue Culture Laboratory in Isles said, the establishment of this laboratory is a boon for the Islanders. Disease free planting materials are produced in this laboratory for its distribution to farmers, he stated.

Proposing the vote of the thanks in the inaugural session, the Director, Agriculture Department, Shri Abhishek Gulia, said this event marks the initiative of Agriculture Department in bringing a paradigm shift from chemical farming to natural farming for the farmers of these Islands. By adopting natural farming not only the farmers but the entire population of A&N Islands will be benefitted, he added.

During the technical session, Dr. Y. Ramakrishna, Pr. Scientist & Head, ICAR-KVK, Port Blair and Dr. T. Subramani, Senior Scientist, ICAR-CIARI delivered lectures on Inputs preparation and application in crops; Con-

cepts, Scope, Challenges of Natural Farming. The Scientists from mainland Research Institutes, Dr. N. Ravisankar, Project Coordinator, AICRPIFS & ICAR-IIFSR and Dr. C.P. Chandrashekara, Senior Scientist, UAS, Dharwad delivered lectures through virtual mode. Shri Ramesh Kumar, Joint Director (Agri) delivered a lecture on Methods of Natural farming and its benefits. Also, Padmashree Smt. K. Chellammal from Burmanallah shared her experiences on her journey in achieving milestone in organic as well as natural farming.

About 100 participants including persons engaged in Research and Development, Scientists, Agriculture Extension Officers, Allied Department Officials, SHG's, Agri-entrepreneurs and progressive farmers participated in this workshop. The Workshop-cum-Seminar was also attended by the Officers and Officials of Zonal Agriculture Office of North & Middle Andaman, Little Andaman & Nicobar Districts virtually.