

ICAR-CIARI Conducts Hands-On Training for Agriculture Department Staff on Nursery Techniques

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The ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-CIARI) recently conducted hands-on training programs on nursery techniques for horticultural crops, aimed at building the capacity of Agriculture Department staff across the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The training, held from February 4 to 8, 2025, was organized in collaboration with the CSS-MIDH (NHM) Project on Spices.

The primary focus of the program was to address the challenge of limited availability of quality planting material for spice crops, which are among the islands' major commercial crops. ICAR-CIARI has developed superior varieties of various spice crops through years of research and has also standardized efficient nursery techniques for their cultivation.

The three-day training sessions were led by Dr. Ajit Arun Waman, Senior Scientist and Course Director, along with Dr. Pooja Bohra, Senior Scientist and Course Co-Director. A total of 28 participants from 18 farms under the Department of Agriculture attended the sessions, representing all three districts of the islands.

The training began with an orientation on propagation techniques and the basics of establishing and managing nursery units. Participants were taken to the Horticultural Plants Propagation Unit at ICAR-CIARI, where they learned about different types of structures such as polyhouses, shade net houses, and poly tunnels used for planting material production. Demonstrations on manual and sensor-operated micro-sprinklers, foggers, drip irrigation, and weed mats for nursery and mother block management were also conducted.

During the practical sessions, participants gained hands-on experience in propagating spices like black pepper, nutmeg, cinnamon, tejpat, woody pepper, and sapota. Techniques such as stem cutting (herbaceous, softwood, semi-hardwood, and hardwood), layering (air layering and serpentine layering), and grafting (approach grafting and softwood grafting) were demonstrated. Additional sessions focused on preparing plant growth regulators, potting mixtures, and using biocontrol agents, biopesticides, and Bt formulations. Participants were also introduced to the Dweep Goottee-365 technique, a novel propagation method developed by ICAR-CIARI.

Dr. E.B. Chakurkar, Director of ICAR-CIARI, was the Chief Guest at the valedictory sessions. He encouraged participants to apply the knowledge gained during the training to achieve self-sufficiency in spice planting material production in the islands. Dr. Chakurkar emphasized that inter-organizational collaborations like these would contribute to the growth of island agriculture and benefit local farmers.

The participants expressed their satisfaction with the training, describing it as well-structured and practical. They noted that the program equipped them with the necessary skills to enhance their efficiency in field assignments. The practical sessions were supported by Mr. Sandip Kujur, Mr. Dilip Kumar, Mr. Pradeep Kerketta, Ms. Karthika Devi, and Ms. Kausalya from ICAR-CIARI.