

## Highlights:

- ICAR input & tech support empowers South Sikkim tribal farmers
- Govt to encourage farmers to take up cultivation of pulses
- Weather based crop insurance scheme
- Snapdeal launches online 'Agri Store' targeting farmers
- Karnataka becomes first state to have green growth strategy
- Kerala biodiversity board to revive tuber crop farming
- Govt restarts drip irrigation scheme



**[ WEEKLY INDIAN AGRI POLICY, TRENDS UPDATES ]**

### **1. ICAR input & tech support empowers South Sikkim tribal farmers**

The ICAR Sikkim Centre organized two days program on Dec 18 and 19 at Ravitar and Perbingtar, South Sikkim under Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) in order to strengthen tribal farmer's capacity by dissemination of scientific knowledge and input support. During the two days program, a total of 84 farmers participated and benefitted with the technical knowhow and various necessary inputs like plastics for cultivation of off-season vegetables under low cost plastic tunnels, untreated seeds of Fenugreek, Coriander, Spinach and Radish, bio-fertilizers, neem based bio-pesticide formulations, copper oxy chloride (COC) and spray machines were distributed among the farmers of different self-help groups. Dr. R.K. Avasthe, Joint Director, ICAR Sikkim Centre stressed upon the importance of scientific knowledge for commercial production of crops to bring about perceptible change in the region. He emphasized on the importance of soil testing for balanced nutrition of crops and adoption of integrated farming system including livestock components. Joint Director also distributed the plastics, seeds, sprayers, biofertilizers, organic insecticides and fungicides to the progressive farmers of Ravitar and Perbingtar, South Sikkim.

### **2. Govt to encourage farmers to take up cultivation of pulses**

To increase self-reliance of Uttarakhand in the area of availability of agriculture produce, the Department of Agriculture has decided to encourage the farmers to include pulses and commercial crops in the cultivation expansion programme under the fully funded National Food Security (NFS) Mission of the Central Government. According to the Director, Agriculture, CS Mehra, "Though we are self-reliant in wheat and rice, under the NFS programmes apart from cereals, farmers are being encouraged to grow pulses and also adopt commercial crops, including sugarcane." He said that the target would be achieved by encouraging farmers to adopt hybrid seeds, irrigation facilities and use of bio-fertilisers," he added. He said that since the launch of the NFS mission in 2012, the state has witnessed a rapid increase in the expansion of area under cereals (wheat and rice and hill cereals) in both the hills and the plain areas. "But since the inception of the state, the area under agriculture has reduced in both the hills and plain areas. Under the NFS mission there has been an improvement in the production of wheat and rice. In 2009 -2010 the production of wheat and rice was 20.39 quintal/hectare and 22.24 quintal per hectare, respectively, whereas in 2013-2014 it stands at 24.0 quintal per hectare and 25.34 quintal per hectare, respectively," said Mehra.

### **3. Weather based crop insurance scheme**

The Government has introduced National Crop Insurance Programme (NCIP) from Rabi 2013-14 seasons with the component schemes of Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS) and Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS). The premium rates under MNAIS and WBCIS are on higher side as compared to earlier scheme of National Agricultural Insurance Scheme. This is because there are several improvements and additional benefits to the farmers under these schemes. Further, premium being charged are on actuarial basis and claim liability is at present on the insurance company. However, to make the premium affordable to the farmers, Government is providing upfront subsidy upto 75% under MNAIS and upto 50% under WBCIS.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Agriculture, Shri Mohanbhai Kundaria in the Lok Sabha.

### **4. Snapdeal launches online 'Agri Store' targeting farmers**

Celebrating Kisan Diwas, e-retailing firm Snapdeal.com announced the launch of "The Agri Store", offering products like seeds, fertiliser and irrigation tools, among others, to farmers. A Hindi version of the store will also be launched soon to aid farmers in making an informed decision, the company said in a statement. "Now, farmers will be able to access products critical to their daily needs easily at the click of a button, thus bringing forth the inclusive power of digital marketplaces in the realm of agriculture as well," Snapdeal.com CEO and Co-founder Kunal Bahl said. Stating that the country's 70% of the population is engaged in agriculture, he said, "With the store also accessible through mobile phones, we are positive that farmers will find this a convenient

and efficient way to shop.” The Agri Store aims to offer wide variety of farm items from seeds to fertilisers, farming tools and irrigation tools.

More products and categories will be added in the coming weeks from merchants across the country to make ‘The Agri Store’ a destination of choice for farmers seeking quality products with reliable service, the statement added. Snapdeal.com, which started in 2010, is one of the fastest growing e-commerce company in India with over 60 per cent of its orders coming from mobile phones.

#### **5. Karnataka becomes first state to have green growth strategy**

Karnataka became the first to get a green growth strategy which details what can be done in adapting to the climate change and how the state can play its part in reducing carbon emissions. A consortium of institutions led by the Bangalore Climate Change Initiative – Karnataka (BCCI-K) in partnership with Seoul-based Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) has conducted the study. The Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), Bengaluru, London School of Economics (LSE), Integrated Natural Resources Management Consultants, New Delhi and Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi have contributed to conduct the study for about two years.

“This is a first comprehensive effort at developing a state-level green growth strategy in India, using sophisticated analytical tools and models. It presents a sectoral analysis of challenges and solutions for energy, agriculture, forestry and water sectors,” Prasoan Agarwal, senior policy advisor, India Country Program, GGGI told.

#### **6. Kerala biodiversity board to revive tuber crop farming**

Cultivation of tuber crops in Kerala, which once enjoyed a significant position among food crops in the state, is all set to get a revival with the Kerala State Biodiversity Board taking up a scheme in this regard. The KSBB has proposed a Tuber Germplasm conservation programme in Onattukara in Alappuzha district to conserve and enrich tuber crop diversity in the state. According to KSBB officials, the revival of traditional tuber crop cultivation is significant in the time of global warming and climate change as they can withstand any extreme condition and provide good harvest. Onattukara is selected for the conservation programme as it had been a hub of tuber crops once, they said.

A top KSBB official said many traditional tuber crop varieties are on the verge of extinction in the state. "Under the plan, KSBB will join hands with Mavelikkara municipality and village panchayats in Thazhakkara, Mannar, Chennithala, Thekkekkara and Chettikulangara to impart training for selected farmers in tuber crop cultivation," KSBB Member Secretary K P Laladas said. Quality seeds of selected tuber crop species would be made available to them to spread their cultivation, he said.

#### **7. Govt restarts drip irrigation scheme**

After a gap of one-and-a-half-years, Maharashtra state government has restarted the drip irrigation promotion scheme. The BJP-Shiv Sena government is hopeful that it will get 100% amount demanded by it from the centre. In a major policy decision, the irrigation development corporations have been asked to include the cost of drip irrigation schemes in the command area. "We want to grow maximum crops with minimum water," agriculture minister Eknath Khadse told the legislative council. The scheme had been stopped by the Congress-NCP government because the central government was not providing the entire money spent on it. "In 2011-12, the state government demanded Rs 550 crore but got only Rs 232 crore. Next fiscal, Rs 603 crore was demanded but state got only Rs 250 crore. Again in 2013-14, Rs 600 crore was sought but centre gave only Rs 250 crore. This year, the alliance government has demanded only Rs 470 crore. Some of it will be direct grant and remaining will a soft loan from Nabard," Khadse said, adding that the state government was ready to give its share but centre didn't release the requisite funds.