

# ANDAMAN SHEEKHA

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## Save the Soil, Secure the Future: ICAR-CIARI Rallies Primary Agricultural Credit Societies for Balanced Fertilizer Use

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Sri Vijaya Puram, June 12: As part of the nationwide “Khet Bachao Abhiyan”, ICAR–Central Island Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-CIARI), Sri Vijaya Puram, organized an interaction meeting with the Presidents and Secretaries of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)—the grassroots-level cooperative credit institutions functioning at the village and Gram Panchayat levels—on 12 June 2026. The meeting aimed to sensitize participants on the importance of the balanced use of fertilizers for sustainable agriculture, soil health management, and enhanced crop productivity. Chairmen and representatives from Chouldari Service Cooperative Society Ltd., Chouldari, Bharti Service Cooperative Society Ltd., Ferrargunj, Pema Service Cooperative Society Ltd., Teylorabad, and Netaji Service Cooperative Society Ltd., Guptapara, actively participated in the interaction meeting and shared their views on promoting balanced fertilizer use and sustainable farming practices among farmers in their respective areas.

Dr. Jai Sunder, Director, ICAR-CIARI, emphasized the urgent need for the balanced and judicious use of fertilizers to prevent soil degradation and maintain long-term agricultural sustainability. He advocated the promotion of biofertilizers, beneficial microbial agents such as *Trichoderma* and *Pseudomonas*, and the adoption of organic and natural farming practices to reduce dependence on chemical inputs. Stressing the importance of scientific awareness among farmers, he highlighted the crucial role of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in disseminating knowledge on sustainable nutrient management. He urged PACS representatives to coordinate with ICAR-CIARI and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) for conducting demonstrations and training programmes on improved agricultural practices. Dr. Sunder also called for the promotion of vermicompost production at the village level to supplement nutrient requirements and reduce fertilizer costs. He encouraged all farmers to obtain Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) and to undertake soil testing at least once every three years for informed fertilizer application. Referring to the adverse effects of indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, he noted that excessive exposure has been linked to several chronic health issues, including kidney ailments and certain forms of cancer. He reiterated that balanced fertilizer use, guided by soil health and scientific recommendations, is essential for safeguarding human health, protecting the environment, and ensuring sustainable agricultural productivity.

Scientists also interacted with the PACS representatives and farmers on the safe and effective use of herbicides for weed management. They advised the use of recommended green-label herbicides strictly as per scientific recommendations, noting that their weed-control effect generally lasts for about 15–20 days. Participants were cautioned against spraying herbicides during rainy weather, as rainfall soon after application can significantly reduce their effectiveness and may lead to runoff, causing environmental contamination. The scientists emphasized adopting integrated weed management practices and following proper dosage, timing, and safety precautions to ensure effective weed control while minimizing risks to crops, soil health, and the environment.

CIARI and KVKs would organize need-based training programmes and skill development initiatives to support their entrepreneurial ventures.

Earlier, Dr. Y. Ramakrishna, Principal Scientist and Head, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), South Andaman, welcomed the participants and emphasized that Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) serve as important grassroots institutions for sensitizing farmers on the balanced and judicious use of fertilizers and for providing guidance on scientific farming practices. He urged the PACS representatives to identify and communicate their training and demonstration requirements to ICAR-CIARI and the KVKs so that appropriate capacity-building programmes could be organized for farmers. Dr. Ramakrishna also informed the gathering that teams of scientists from ICAR-CIARI and KVKs are visiting villages across the islands under the “Khet Bachao Abhiyan” to create awareness among farmers on soil health management, balanced nutrient use, and sustainable agricultural practices. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Mr. Mohit, Subject Matter Specialist.