

# ICAR-CIARI Promotes Soil Health, Farmer Innovation and Sustainable Agriculture through Interaction with Zilla Parishad Members and Progressive Farmers

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Sri Vijaya Puram, June 15: As part of the nationwide “Khet Bachao Abhiyan”, ICAR–Central Island Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-CIARI), Sri Vijaya Puram, in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), South Andaman, organized an interaction meeting with Zilla Parishad members and innovative farmers on 15 June 2026. The programme aimed to create awareness among participants on the importance of soil health management, adoption of innovative agricultural technologies, sustainable farming practices, and various government schemes available for the welfare and development of the farming community.

Dr. Jai Sunder, Director, ICAR-CIARI, emphasized that many farmers in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands are successfully practicing innovative farming and possess rich experience in island agriculture. He highlighted that the Integrated Farming System (IFS) developed by the Institute is highly profitable and sustainable for island conditions, as it integrates fisheries, livestock, spices, plantation crops, and vegetable cultivation. He also encouraged farmers to share their field-level problems and feedback with ICAR-CIARI and KVKs so that research and extension activities can be tailored to address their needs effectively.

Dr. Sunder advocated the adoption of polyhouse cultivation for leafy vegetables and other crops to overcome challenges posed by the high rainfall in the islands. He recommended bamboo plantation in upland areas to reduce soil erosion and urged farmers to preserve agricultural lands rather than converting them for housing and other non-agricultural purposes. Stressing the importance of self-reliance in food production, particularly during disruptions in supplies from the mainland, he encouraged farmers to adopt organic and natural farming practices and to ensure the balanced use of fertilizers for sustainable agricultural development.

Earlier, Dr. Y. Ramakrishna, Principal Scientist and Head, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), South Andaman, welcomed the participants and highlighted the importance of maintaining soil health for sustainable agricultural production. He advised farmers to get their soil tested once every three years and encouraged them to contact him through WhatsApp or visit the KVK for assistance in interpreting soil test reports and obtaining suitable crop and nutrient management recommendations. Dr. Ramakrishna also explained the role of biofertilizers in improving soil fertility and crop productivity. He provided practical guidance on the application of different biofertilizers in various crops and emphasized their judicious use as an eco-friendly

and cost-effective component of sustainable farming practices.

During the interaction session, several innovative and progressive farmers shared their experiences and success stories. Padma Shri awardee Kamachi Chellammal, popularly known as "Nariyal Amma" from Rangachang, South Andaman, highlighted her pioneering efforts in organic coconut and arecanut cultivation, water conservation, and multi-cropping systems. Progressive farmers Mr. Pachai Muthu, Mr. Ajay Saojal, Mr. Bimal Das, Mr. Joydhar, Mr. Srisingh, and others also shared their experiences on adopting water and soil conservation measures, as well as the benefits gained from exposure visits and training programmes conducted by KVK and ICAR-CIARI. They discussed how the technologies and best farming practices promoted by the Institute have helped improve farm productivity, sustainability, and income. Their success stories inspired fellow farmers to adopt scientific and climate-resilient agricultural practices for sustainable livelihood development.

Earlier, Dr. Zachariah George, Subject Matter Specialist, welcomed the progressive farmers and representatives from ATMA and highlighted the importance of adopting scientific and sustainable agricultural practices for enhancing farm productivity and income. The programme concluded with a formal vote of thanks proposed by Mr. Mohit, Subject Matter Specialist, who expressed gratitude to the dignitaries, farmers, officials, and participants for their active involvement and valuable contributions to the programme.