

Balanced Fertilizer Use Key to Sustainable Farming: ICAR-CIARI Sensitizes Farmers in South Andaman



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The ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-CIARI) conducted a farmer sensitization programme on "Balanced Use of Fertilizers – A Must" at Calicut in South Andaman on Friday, highlighting the importance of integrated nutrient management for sustainable agriculture in island conditions.

The programme focused on promoting balanced nutrient use as a critical component of soil and water conservation, particularly in the high-rainfall, resource-constrained environment of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

A team of scientists led by Dr. M. Muruganandam, Principal Scientist and Head of the Fisheries Science Division, emphasized the need to integrate organic, biological, and inorganic nutrient sources to enhance crop productivity while reducing input costs and environmental risks.

Drawing from his experience at the ICAR-Indian Institute of Soil and Water Conservation, Dr. Muruganandam highlighted that balanced use of organic manures and biofertilizers complements soil and water conservation practices. He outlined techniques such as bunding, trenching, contour farming, mulching, green manuring, cover cropping, and improved cropping systems including mixed cropping, intercropping, and crop rotation. These measures, he noted, help reduce soil erosion, conserve moisture, and sustain crop yields under island conditions.

Referring to the current scarcity and indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers, he stressed the need for greater self-reliance in producing organic manures and biofertilizers. He advocated practices such as vermicomposting, farmyard manure production, and on-farm biofertilizer use, calling for coordinated efforts among research institutions, agricultural agencies, and farmers.

Dr. Rafeeqe Rahman Alyethodie, Senior Scientist (Animal Genetics and Breeding), addressed livestock health concerns during the upcoming monsoon season and shared preventive and treatment measures to improve animal productivity.

Dr. Puneet P. V., Scientist (Vegetable Science), underscored the importance of crop-specific fertilizer application based on nutrient requirements at different growth stages to sustain productivity of vegetable and fruit crops while maintaining soil health.

A display banner showcasing nutrient requirements of major crops and fertilizer management strategies was used during the programme to enhance farmers' understanding. Participants were also informed about alternatives to chemical fertilizers and training opportunities on organic and biofertilizer production available at ICAR-CIARI and its Krishi Vigyan Kendras.

Around 25 farmers, including nine women and ten youth farmers, participated in the programme. During an interactive session, participants raised queries on the availability, preparation, and appropriate application methods of organic and biofertilizer inputs.