The Wave Andaman

The Voice of Andaman and Nicobar Islands

ICAR-CIARI Pushes Sustainable Farming, Soil Health Under Khet Bachao Campaign

Sri Vijaya Puram, June 17: The ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-CIARI), Sri Vijaya Puram, intensified efforts to promote sustainable agriculture and soil conservation in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by organizing two programmes under the nationwide Khet Bachao Abhiyan on June 15.

The initiatives, held at Wandoor and ICAR-CIARI in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), South Andaman, brought together farmers, Zilla Parishad members, progressive cultivators and agricultural experts to discuss sustainable farming practices, soil health management and innovative technologies suitable for island conditions.

At Gram Panchayat Wandoor, an awareness programme focused on promoting eco-friendly agricultural practices among local farmers. Twelve farmers, including eight women and four men, participated in the event.

The Pradhan of Gram Panchayat Wandoor, who attended as the chief guest, appreciated the efforts of ICAR-CIARI in creating awareness among the farming community. Emphasizing the need for sustainable agriculture, the Pradhan encouraged farmers to adopt environmentally responsible practices to improve soil fertility, increase crop productivity and ensure long-term sustainability.

During the technical session, experts highlighted key aspects of sustainable farming. Shri Mohit spoke on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Integrated Nutrient Management (INM), stressing the importance of balanced fertilizer use, reduced dependence on chemical pesticides and environmentally safe crop protection measures.

Dr. Sharath S. Yeligar, Scientist at ICAR-CIARI, addressed participants on the economics of agriculture, focusing on cost-effective farming methods, efficient resource utilization and approaches to improving farm income.

The programme concluded with an interactive discussion during which farmers shared field-level experiences and sought guidance on implementing sustainable farming technologies. Participants expressed interest in adopting the practices promoted under the campaign.

In a parallel initiative, ICAR-CIARI and KVK South Andaman organized an interaction meeting involving Zilla Parishad members, innovative farmers and agricultural stakeholders to strengthen awareness about soil health, climate-resilient farming and government support schemes for farmers.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Jai Sunder, Director of ICAR-CIARI, highlighted the vast experience and innovative spirit of farmers across the islands. He noted that many island farmers are already successfully implementing progressive agricultural practices and can play a key role in promoting sustainable development within the sector.

Dr. Sunder emphasized the benefits of the Integrated Farming System (IFS) developed by the institute, describing it as a profitable and sustainable model suited to island conditions. The system integrates fisheries, livestock, plantation crops, spices and vegetable cultivation to enhance productivity and diversify income sources.

He also encouraged farmers to regularly communicate field-level challenges to ICAR-CIARI and KVKs so that research and extension programmes can better address local needs.

Highlighting challenges posed by heavy rainfall in the islands, Dr. Sunder advocated the adoption of polyhouse cultivation for vegetables and other crops. He further recommended bamboo plantation in upland areas as a measure to reduce soil erosion and conserve fragile landscapes.

Calling for the preservation of agricultural land, he urged farmers to avoid converting cultivable areas for non-agricultural purposes and stressed the importance of achieving greater self-reliance in food production, particularly during disruptions in supplies from the mainland.

Earlier, Dr. Y. Ramakrishna, Principal Scientist and Head of KVK South Andaman, emphasized the importance of regular soil testing and advised farmers to conduct soil analysis at least once every three years. He also explained the role of biofertilizers in improving soil fertility and crop productivity while reducing environmental impacts.