The Wave Andaman

ICAR-CIARI Pushes Balanced Fertilizer Use in South Andaman Farmer Training Drive

Sri Vijaya Puram, April 24: A push to reduce chemical fertilizer dependence and strengthen sustainable farming practices took centre stage in South Andaman as ICAR-CIARI, in collaboration with ATMA, conducted a farmer sensitization programme at Old Bimblitan village focusing on balanced nutrient management.

The programme, held on April 23, 2026, aimed to promote sustainable agriculture practices suited to the unique ecological conditions of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Scientists, agriculture officials and farmers participated in discussions on improving soil health, reducing input costs and limiting environmental risks through integrated nutrient management.

Experts from ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute stressed the importance of combining organic, biological and inorganic fertilizers in a structured manner to enhance crop productivity while ensuring long-term soil sustainability. They recommended a nutrient model consisting of 50–60 per cent organic inputs, 20–25 per cent biofertilizers and minimal reliance on chemical fertilizers.

Scientific discussions highlighted the role of natural nitrogen-fixing agents such as Azolla, blue-green algae including Anabaena, and leguminous crops in improving soil fertility. The use of vermicompost and farmyard manure as primary nutrient sources was strongly emphasized, along with biofertilizers like Azospirillum, Rhizobium, phosphate solubilizing bacteria and Trichoderma.

The programme also addressed soil and water conservation strategies, including bunding, trenching, contour farming, mulching, green manuring and cover cropping. Experts explained that these practices are essential in controlling soil erosion, reducing nutrient loss and stabilizing yields, especially in high rainfall island environments with limited soil resources.

Agricultural scientists further discussed crop diversification strategies such as mixed cropping, intercropping and crop rotation as methods to maintain soil fertility and improve long-term agricultural resilience in the islands.

A senior scientist from ICAR-CIARI working in spices and crop diversification pointed to the potential of non-conventional crops, including spices and indigenous fruit varieties, which are better adapted to local soil conditions and require lower external inputs. The session also highlighted training opportunities available at ICAR-CIARI for organic fertilizer production and neem-based biopesticides, with emphasis on integrated approaches to address fertilizer constraints through biological and organic inputs.

A horticulture scientist from the institute underlined the importance of balanced fertilizer application, stating that correct nutrient proportions are essential for achieving optimal crop growth while preserving soil health.

Officials from the Agricultural Technology Management Agency briefed farmers on fertilizer availability and distribution systems in the region. They emphasized efficient use of existing resources and stressed the importance of applying fertilizers at the right time, place and quantity to improve yield and profitability.

Around 30 farmers, including 10 women, participated in the programme. Participants showed interest in adopting organic and biofertilizer-based farming methods, subject to availability and support systems. Information handouts on nutrient management and fertilizer practices were distributed, and farmers were guided on alternatives to chemical fertilizers, including preparation methods and training facilities available through ICAR-CIARI and its Krishi Vigyan Kendras.

The programme concluded with a strong focus on promoting sustainable nutrient management systems as part of long-term agricultural resilience in island farming communities.