

Tribal Farmers played an important role in the generation and conservation of biodiversity since time immemorial: Shri Radha Mohan Singh

125 Krishi Vigyan Kendras out of 673 KVKs working in areas having prominent tribal population: Shri Singh

Shri Radha Mohan Singh addresses National Workshop on Empowerment of Farmers of Tribal Areas

Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister, Radha Mohan Singh said that in last three years, tribal farmers submitted more than 5,000 plant varieties through KVKs for registration at Protection of Plant Variety and Farmers Rights Authority. This will play an important role in the development of climate resilient and sustainable varieties in future. Shri Singh stated it on the occasion of “National Workshop on Empowerment of Farmers of Tribal Areas” held in New Delhi, on June 7, 2017. Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, Shri Jual Oram was also present on the occasion.

The Agriculture Minister said that new technological innovations in agriculture must reach to the fields of tribal areas but before taking such steps we must keep in mind the unique conditions of these areas, which are the gift of nature and therefore, we should promote natural farming in those areas. Simultaneously, new varieties of coarse grains, pulses, oilseeds, fruits, flowers, vegetables are to be propagated in these areas besides the introduction of integrated farming, new techniques of rain-fed agriculture, appropriate technologies for water conservation along with new techniques for irrigation, agriculture equipment and line sowing. Special attention shall be given to area-specific integrated farming modules.

Shri Singh stated that the landholdings of tribal farmers are small therefore the proposed techniques should be suitable for these small farm holdings, only then the development modules will become realistic. It's a matter of great pleasure that out of 673 KVKs, 125 are in working in tribal majority areas. Besides the establishment charges, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is approving Rs.75 to Rs.100 crore for special projects for effective extension in tribal areas.

Shri Singh said that the ministry is providing all support for mushroom cultivation, fisheries, poultry production (backyard poultry), desi chickens, piggery, apiary etc, which will help in doubling the income of tribal farmers by 2022 despite the limited resources.

ICAR has taken several steps to strengthen the social condition of tribal areas. Two new Indian Agricultural Research Institutes being established in Assam and Jharkhand states. Similarly, 6 colleges were established in Northeastern India. Ten new Krishi Vigyan Kendras were also opened in these areas. All the institutes of ICAR are allotted certain budget for working in the areas of crop production, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries etc tribal areas. The scientists of the Central Island Agricultural Research Institute working at Andaman and Nicobar Islands are struggling with the tribal farmers.

The tribal have unique knowledge of climate suitable varieties. Living in the same area for ages, roaming around the forests and living in close contact with nature have provided them

knowledge of flora and fauna of that area which even experts envy. Their knowledge of natural resources should be utilised.

The Agriculture Minister said that the tribal area is highly fertile. Away from the chemical inputs, therefore these areas are suitable for organic agriculture and sustainable farming. Tribal agriculture products are of high quality with unique characteristics; the need of the hour is that productivity of such agriculture produces be increased. The special crops grown in these areas are niger, til, coarse grains, kodo, *kakun*, *kutri*, *ragi*, which are not only of high medicinal value but of nutritional value as well. Pulses and oilseeds are also grown in these areas and we have all the facilities to increase their productivity.

Shri Singh further stated that tribal have very popular and useful indigenous methods of grain storage as well as food processing, and their propagation after scientific validation is proving very useful.

After visualising the whole tribal scenario, the curriculum for tribal students should be framed in such a manner that the degree and diploma are based on their life-trait skills. Their skills should be honed in a manner that better products like textile, jewellery, metal craft, bamboo products, utensil etc., come into the market paving the way for more money flow in these areas.

Source: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite>