

Greater technical thrust needed in agriculture: Pawar

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While addressing the 84th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) at Delhi, the agriculture and food processing industries minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, on February 18, 2013, called for greater technical thrust in agricultural sector . He said, "The 12th Plan accepts the proposition that a greater technical thrust is needed, and the strategy for agriculture should take this into account. In order to provide scientific focus to some of the critical areas, research consortia platforms are to be launched in seed, diagnostics and vaccines, nanotechnology, bio-fortification, agri-incubators, water, natural fibers, health foods, hybrids, secondary agriculture, farm mechanization, precision farming and energy, genomics, molecular breeding and agro-biodiversity."

The minister added further, "This has been a momentous year for the national agricultural research system and the Indian agriculture. I wish to inform the august house that ICAR has established the National Institute for Biotic Stress Management at Raipur in Chhattisgarh, Indian Institute of Agricultural Biotechnology at Ranchi in Jharkhand, Regional Research Station of Central Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI) for cold arid agriculture in Leh, Jammu & Kashmir and five new Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), one each in Andhra Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Orissa, Maharashtra and Karnataka, raising their total to 631 KVKs across the country. The ICAR has also added 19 new Experimental Learning Units to the existing 264 units in 51 state agricultural universities and created a centralized statistical and computational genomics lab facility."

He also called upon the state ministers, "to ensure that the respective state agricultural universities are adequately funded and staffed so that the efforts to improve the quality of education are synergized. We feel that participation of the private sector is also essential to raise the level of investments in agricultural research and education." The minister said, "The vast network of agricultural universities and colleges can play a leading role in cultivating self-confidence and capabilities in the students required for taking up agriculture as a profession."

The minister further said, " The success of research lies in our production figures. I am happy to inform you that agriculture and allied sector in 11th Plan has seen phenomenal growth rate of 3.7 percent as against 2.4 percent in 10th Plan. In fact, if

we exclude the forestry sector, then agricultural sector growth is 3.8 percent which is very close to the targeted 4 percent. Indications are that we are going to have a reasonably good wheat crop this year which should bring happiness for everyone."

The minister expressed his confidence that, "The proactive initiatives taken by the Council will help us to achieve a robust agriculture to ensure food, nutritional and livelihood security for millions of our countrymen. In addition to being world's largest agricultural research institutions, let Indian Council of Agricultural Research to be one of the world's largest research institutions and said that the Government is fully committed to support its efforts through adequate resources and sufficient autonomy."

The meeting was also attended by ministers of state for agriculture, Mr Tariq Anwar and Dr Charan Das Mahant. Other dignitaries who attended the meeting were Dr S Ayyappan, secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) and director general, ICAR; agriculture and animal husbandry ministers of various states and representatives from international organizations.