

Third Group Discussion of the ICAR-All India Coordinated Research Project on Fruits

The third group discussion of the ICAR-All India Coordinated Research Project on Fruits was organized at the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, from March 3 to March 6, 2016.



Dr. N.K. Krishna Kumar, Deputy Director General (Hort. Sci.), ICAR, inaugurated the group discussion and complimented the progress made by ICAR-AICRP on Fruits. In his inaugural address, he highlighted the position and importance of Punjab state in Indian agriculture with respect to production. Further, he highlighted the importance of vision 2050 and 2030 for Indian states in general and Punjab, in particular. He also emphasized the importance of increase in productivity based on sustainability in each agro-climatic zone.



Dr. Kumar also suggested taking up measures to mitigate of post harvest losses in fruits based on the compiled market intelligence. Highlighting the need for ensuring chemical-free agriculture products (use of pesticides, aflotoxins, artificial dyes, salmonella and so on), Dr Kumar emphasized the importance of studies in bio-accumulation, application of ecological principles, and package of practices for organic horticulture for all states in general and Sikkim and Kerala in particular. He also urged investigation into reasons for lack of processing to the extent required despite production in citrus, formulating a policy decision on production of good quality planting material only in shadenet and poly-house conditions, considering the need for timely advisories on various production aspects of fruits based on anticipation of changes in weather, completing trait-specific characterization by using marker-assisted selection and expanding the GM rootstocks and clonal repository of horticulture crops at ICAR-NBPGR, New Delhi.

Shri. Suresh Kumar, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Department, Agriculture, Water Supply and Sanitation, Government of Punjab graced the occasion. In his address, Mr. Suresh Kumar emphasized the need for crop diversification from grain crops to fruits and vegetables in Punjab to ensure better cost-benefit ratios and also highlighted the dynamics of fruit crops in terms of the area in Punjab in the recent past.

The function was presided over by Dr. Baldev Singh Dhillon, Vice Chancellor, PAU, Ludhiana. Dr Dhillon provided an update on the status of fruit crops *vis-a-vis* the grain crops in Punjab and listed the problems caused by *Phytophthora* in citrus, climate change, Downey Mildew in ber and so on. He also highlighted the role of AICRP in the overall development of agriculture and horticulture in any state. Further, he emphasized the importance of breeding for desired traits, exploitation of available germplasm for variety development, rootstock breeding, ensuring canopy management, improving the nutritional value of fruits, maintaining a field gene bank, quarantining and so on.

Dr. Prakash Patil, Project Coordinator (Fruits), presented the progress of work done at 42 centres across the country on nine fruit crops, namely mango, Citrus, banana, guava, litchi, grapes, papaya, sapota and jackfruit.

In the eight technical sessions that were conducted, the research achievements made during 2014-15 in relation to crop improvement, crop production and crop protection were reviewed in detail and the research programme for the mandate fruit crops for the year 2016-17 was finalized. During this period, a total of five technologies that were found to be suitable for different regions in the country were recommended. A new emerging defoliator insect pest of banana, the skipper butterfly, was identified under this project and details related to its biology, the extent of damage, distribution and biological control were made. Further studies confirmed its spread in Maharashtra and parts of Andhra Pradesh. An action plan has been made to guide the farmers in this region in managing the pest.

Dr. T. Janakiram, Assistant Director General (Hort Sci.-I), ICAR, New Delhi, Dr. Balwinder Singh, Director of Research, PAU, Ludhiana, Special Invitee Dr. R. D. Rawal, Ex. Head, Division of Plant Pathology, ICAR-

IIHR, Bengaluru, Dr. M.R. Dinesh, Director, ICAR-IIHR, Bengaluru, Dr. S. Rajan, Director, ICAR-CISH, Lucknow, Dr. B. Padmanaban, Director, ICAR-NRC for Banana and Dr. M.S. Ladaniya, Director, ICAR-CCRI, Dr. Vishal Nath, Director, ICAR-NRC for Litchi and Dr. S.D. Sawant, Director, ICAR-NRC for Grapes, Dr. S.D. Sharma, Director, ICAR-CIAH also attended the group discussion.

A total of 165 delegates from 28 SAU-based centres, 13 ICAR-institute-based centres, 1 CAU-based centres, including 1 private centre, and growers and nurserymen of Punjab participated in the four-day event.

Four publications—“Insect and Mite Pests of Citrus in India,” “Integrated Pest Management of Banana and Plantain in 5 local languages,” “*Neembu Vargeeya Falon Ke Vibhinn Keet Evam Unka Prabandhan*” and *Kinnow Panchang*”—were released during the inaugural session of the group discussion. During interaction meeting with farmers, 18 progressive farmers were honoured and shared their experience with delegates of this meet.

The inaugural function ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. M.I.S. Gill, Head, Dept. of Fruit Science, PAU, Ludhiana.