

'Will up support price of Pokkali rice'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: In order to help distressed Pokkali farmers in the state, the government will take necessary measures to raise the support price of Pokkali rice, said minister for agriculture V S Sunil Kumar in Kochi on Monday.

"Pokkali cultivation is one of the oldest types of rice farming in the state and is suitable for our environment," said the minister while speaking at a one-day 'Pokkali' workshop organised by the department of agriculture development and farmers' welfare and Pokkali Land Development Agency (PLDA) at Kadamakudy panchayat.

The workshop was organised as the part of expanding Pokkali farming in the state and also to get an insight into the issues faced by the farmers working in the sector. During the workshop, the minister promised the farmers that a project will be



AGRI TIME: The workshop at Kothad was aimed at expanding Pokkali farming and also to get an insight into the issues faced by farmers

launched by the government to conserve the traditional Pokkali seeds.

"Because of the non-profitable conditions, some Pokkali farmers have opted to carry on with fish farming ignoring the rice cultivation; but that would do irreparable damage to the natural envi-

ronment of the place," the minister said.

Despite the lack of workforce and challenging climate last year, there had been an increase in the Pokkali paddy cultivation in the district. "The district was able to increase the Pokkali cultivation to more than 100 hecta-

res," said district collector K Mohammed Y Safirulla. Last year, about 553 hectares in the district was utilized to cultivate Pokkali rice which was earlier about 450 hectares, Safirulla said.

As per the requests of the farmers in meetings conducted by the district administration, there are also plans to bring them under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

According to the district collector, as the part of reviving the sector, steps will be taken for preserving and collecting genuine seeds of Pokkali rice through PLDA.

Kadamakudy panchayat alone had increased Pokkali cultivation from 82 hectares to 104 hectares last year. "Though we had the challenge of the devastating deluge, we were able to get a fair harvest," said Kadamakudy panchayat president Shalini Babu.