

Krishi Vigyan Kendras to mass produce biopesticides

To be manufactured at two centres of KAU at Mannuthy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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The government will undertake a programme for the mass production of biopesticides through Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), Agriculture Minister V.S. Sunil Kumar has said.

Addressing a press conference at the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute here on Saturday, he said it had been decided to manufacture biopesticides at two centres under the Mannuthy campus of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU). The government, he said, would provide financial assistance for the KVKs to launch the enterprise.

The Minister said the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) had pledged technical support for testing pesticides. An agreement for this purpose was inked at a Centre-State

interface meeting held at the CTCRI. The government would launch a campaign among spices farmers against the indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides.

Committee to be formed

Mr. Kumar said a committee chaired by Agricultural Production Commissioner Teeka Ram Meena would be constituted to coordinate the activities of State and Central agencies in the farm sector and ensure timely receipt of Central funds for various projects.

The committee would comprise department officials, heads of ICAR institutions, and representatives of the KAU.

The government entered into an agreement with the ICAR for the production of coconut saplings and climate resilient varieties of paddy. The ICAR would also cooper-

ate in the seed bank project of the government. Turmeric cultivation would be started in 1,000 hectares and strawberry and other fruits in Idukki and Wayanad.

Mr. Kumar said the State had urged the Centre to exempt foodgrain crops from Goods and Services Tax.

ICAR Director General T. Mohapatra said efforts were on to promote intercropping as a means to double the income of farmers. CTCRI Director Archana Mukherjee was present.

Earlier, inaugurating a Tuber Crops Technology Conclave and Agri start-up meet, the Minister stressed the need for agri-based industries that protected the interests of farmers. "It is important that farmers' income keeps pace with the growth of agricultural technology," he said.