

KERALA SCIENCE CONG CURTAIN RAISER

Restore obliterated indigenous species: Agriculture Minister

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"If the green revolution affected the health of our soil or obliterated many indigenous treasures, then we have to develop a technology to counter that," said V S Sunil Kumar, Minister for Agriculture. He was speaking after inaugurating the curtain raiser programme of the Kerala Science Congress and policy workshop on 'Organic Farming: Field realities and strategies' held at Kerala Agriculture University's College of Forestry, Vellanikkara.

He said harnessing technology to suit our needs is a challenge the scientific community has to take up. "Correction is not a retrograde step. We do it whether in the cases of plastic or pesticide. Introspection and corrections by scientists are as important as other research interventions," he said.

Science is a journey of progress. It corrects its mistakes and practices through scientific interventions, he said. Kumar said when the white revolution told us to forget and forbid indigenous cattle breeds producing grade 2 milk, all went ahead with hybrid breeds for enhanced grade 1 milk. But, many other countries have conserved native breeds and now science says grade 2 milk is better suited for human intake.

"Where will we get grade 2 milk? Now some international corporates are luring farmers with hybrid seeds promising better harvest in shorter time. But should we fall into the trap?" he said. The minister also questioned the credibility of those who blindly oppose organic farming.

"Organic farming is not something to be laughed at or praised with romantic discourses. It is a goal which

we should pursue scientifically. If organic farming has to materialise, we should have varieties and breeds developed through organic methods. We should have a package of organic practices," he said.

He demanded scientists at KAU should develop strategies and inputs to support the state's organic farming policy. Scientists should come up with technologies to promote organic farming. Without technical back up no farming model will flourish, he said.

KAU Vice-Chancellor R Chandrababu in his presidential address highlighted the need to resort to scientific practices for healthy farming.

"While enhanced production is needed to ensure food security, food safety and nutritional security are factors of equal importance. We are also bound to ensure purity of natural resources and indulge in responsible production and consumption," he said.

Chandrababu was of the opinion the stress on quantity is giving way to quality and consumers are looking for responsible production guaranteeing calorific and nutritional requirements.

Sustainability depends on sustaining the pursuit

of sustainable goals, he said. Director of Research P Indira Devi presented the possibilities and challenges in organic farming while Director of Extension Jiju P Alex presented organic farming models in other states and Binooja Thomas from Kerala State Council for Science and Technology (KSCSTE) briefed the programme of the science congress.

Stake holders in organic farming from different parts of the state participated in the workshop jointly organised by KSCSTE and KAU's Centre for Excellence in Environmental Economics.



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Agriculture Minister**