

# KAU higher officials' meeting reviews certification mechanism of agro products

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MANISH PANDE, joint director and head, PAD division, Quality Council of India (QCI), stressed the need to ensure certification of agricultural products is backed by incentives to producers and sustainable procurement policy.

In his keynote address at the consultative meeting on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) organised by the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) on Wednesday, Pande delineated different aspects of implementing quality assessment and certification.

"INDGAP, the national forum for certification, aims at reducing chemical use in agriculture and ensuring strict adherence of standards prescribed by the government," he said. "Ensuring all is well within the system is the responsibility of QCI. A credible system for assessment is maintained and efforts are on to link INDGAP with SAARC-GAP and GLOBALGAP so farmers get the benefits of global trade as well. The fundamental principle is all these efforts should impact the beneficiary, the real producer. INDGAP standards help farmers fetch more price for their pro-



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R Chandra Babu, KAU Vice-Chancellor

duce and the consumers can purchase certified products which are traceable to their origin," he said.

The meeting discussed the modalities of adopting INDGAP standards for agro products. Pande said Kerala had taken the right steps in the adoption of GAP standards. He suggested some minor modifications in the auditing and certification mechanisms currently adopted in the state so as to enable farmers to align their production practices with INDGAP standards. This will be the first step in empowering Kerala farmers to achieve GLOBALGAP standards. A GAP certified product is accepted as safe for consumption and can fetch a higher value in a health-conscious state like Kerala.

KAU Vice-Chancellor R Chandra

Babu said the meeting was convened to facilitate a serious discussion on initiating steps for product certification at the state-level and explore the possibility of adoption and promotion of INDGAP. "In order to establish proper GAP standards in place at the state-level, we thought it befitting to understand the INDGAP first so an appropriately modified version of it can be proposed. Formulating a fully functional GAP mechanism will help the state to tap niche markets and export potential besides optimising natural resources and helping environmental protection. Proceedings of this meeting will be subjected to discussions at various levels so a concrete proposal for state-level GAP assessment and certification council can be submitted to the government," he said.

KAU director of research P Indiradevi; director of extension Jiju P Alex; director of planning T Pradeep Kumar; associate directors of research Asha Sankar, C Narayanan Kutty and Lissamma Joseph; State Organic cell head Baby Girija; VFPC CEO Suresh and selected scientists participated in the meeting.

