



भारतीय कृषि एवं खाद्य परिषद्
INDIAN CHAMBER OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

DEVELOPMENT MEET ON AGRICULTURE FOR NORTH EAST REGION

Tuesday, 25th July 2023
Hotel Taj Vivanta, Guwahati (Assam)



POST EVENT REPORT

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Inauguration :

ICFA hosted Development Meet on Agriculture for NER at Hotel Taj, Guwahati on 25th July which was joined by 50 plus CEOs, State officials, heads of institutions, and Startups. Chaired by the Secretary, of North Eastern Council, Mr. Moses Chalai, IAS, it recommended the launch of Commodity Boards for Bamboo, Pineapples, and Organic Foods, establishing integrated GI system for all NE products, FPOs-industry partnerships and agri Startups support program and creation of a business and investment forum for NER.



Unlocking the NER Agri Potential

Mr. PL Thanga, a retired IAS officer and the ICFA Chair for the North Eastern Region, extended a warm welcome to all the esteemed guests in attendance. He shared his perspectives, highlighting India's significant role as a prominent pineapple producer. Mr. Thanga pointed out the notable trend of individuals from various states venturing into the North Eastern region to explore new opportunities, subsequently emerging as leading entrepreneurs.

During his address, Mr. Thanga also delved into discussions surrounding key topics such as the establishment of an incubation center, strategic interventions within the pineapple market, and a dedicated focus on promoting the organic brand of the North Eastern Region. He underscored the significance of the present gathering, underscoring that global concerns about food have elevated its importance, necessitating the application of cutting-edge technologies and best practices. He emphasized the need for heightened investments in agriculture to ensure global food security.

Furthermore, Mr. Thanga highlighted the immense untapped potential of the North Eastern Region in various sectors, particularly agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, and fisheries.

Pineapple Potential and Market Strategy in NER

Addressing the potential of Pineapple in the NER region, **Mr. Pankaj Pathak, ICFA Advisor** for NER, highlighted the two superior varieties found in Assam and neighboring states - Kew for processing and Queen for consumption. Despite India ranking 6th in pineapple production, its global market presence remains minimal, he emphasized.

Mr. Pathak advocated supporting FPOs to enhance agro-produce marketing. Given Assam's organic status, he pointed out significant opportunities. He underlined a shift in perspective from merely raising product prices, citing Thailand's competitive pricing strategy as a pineapple and black pepper exporter. In terms of increasing farmer income, Mr. Pathak proposed three avenues: price increase, cost reduction, or volume expansion.

Nurturing Rural Development and Agriculture in NER

Mr. Naveen Dhingra, CGM of NABARD, emphasized the necessity for development in the northeastern region to uplift rural and agricultural sectors. He presented data highlighting the region's situation, revealing that only 15 lakh hectares out of 40 lakh hectares of land in Assam are irrigated. Similarly, out of 29 lakh households, only 11 lakh possess Kisan Credit Cards (KCC), indicating significant underfinancing for cultivation.

Mr. Dhingra drew attention to the subpar productivity of Assam's major crop, paddy, with a productivity level below 30% compared to the national average. He noted that merely 3000 farmers in Assam have crop insurance coverage, underscoring a gap in risk mitigation.

Highlighting the region's potential, Mr. Dhingra pointed out that several NER states are organic and possess abundant bamboo production, which could facilitate a valuable export value chain. Assam's strengths in handloom, handicrafts, and its extensive rural community were also mentioned. Additionally, he proposed promoting the North East as a unique area, suggesting the establishment of a floriculture board and fostering tourism to further boost the region's growth.



Enhancing Agricultural Strategies and Transforming Ideas into Action

Dr. MJ Khan, Chairman of the Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture, proposed valuable measures to formalize actions, including information dissemination, awareness building, and facilitation. He recommended the organization of comprehensive campaigns, utilizing both physical and digital platforms, to capitalize on various opportunities. Dr. Khan urged participants to shift the focus from problem identification to solution-oriented discussions and action planning.

Fostering FPO Collaboration and Sustainable Agriculture in NER

Addressing the challenges of collaborating with FPOs in the North Eastern Region, Dr. Madhulika, Head of NER at Invest India, highlighted a significant obstacle in the form of insufficient primary processing. This limitation hinders potential investments in upstream activities. To address this, she proposed viable solutions, including the provision of effective export guidance and the establishment of comprehensive supply chains for various products and crops.

Dr. Madhulika emphasized the necessity of raising awareness among farmers about market dynamics and the benefits of crop rotation. These measures are crucial for enhancing the productivity and sustainability of agricultural endeavors in the region.



Unveiling Policy Roadmap to Nurture Agri- Horticulture

Mr. Subhash Bhattacharjee, Patanjali's Advisor, outlined four key recommendations to align policies for agri-horticultural development. He proposed fostering public-private partnerships in the processing sector, harnessing Geographical Indication (GI) crops to enhance value, establishing a millet value chain, and exploring innovative approaches to support tea growers.

Fostering Rural Education and Innovation

Dr. Kushalin Sarma, an Executive Member of DTDF at DRDO under the Ministry of Defence, expressed the belief that academic institutions, research bodies, central government, and state government mechanisms across all eight states should collaborate to educate rural communities. He highlighted the existing disconnect between the public and government sectors. Additionally, he proposed the establishment of an investor connection platform akin to a "Shark Tank," where startups could present their innovative concepts.

Agriculture Advancements and Market Prospects

Dr. R. Sudhakaran, INERA CropScience's Head of Regulatory Affairs (Agri inputs), highlighted the available prospects for farmers, producers, exporters, and FPOs. He underlined the provision of crop insurance and advisory services for their benefit.

Mr. Bharat Goswami, Regional Manager of DS Group, drew attention to the potential for Arecanut farmers in Assam to contribute to pan masala production. He noted a current scarcity of high-quality raw materials being utilized in this industry.



Cultivating Farmer Empowerment Initiatives

Ms. Angela Nar, Director of Respondent Development Services informed about the 300 farmers initiative which was the first pilot that was started in April with the challenge of information dissemination on the ground and capacity building among the farmers. She further suggested that institutions and government bodies should focus on educating farmers.

"Every state government of the northeast region should come together and provide more platforms like naturally organic, products of the region, etc. Small initiative platforms for startups to get investors can also be thought about," she added.

Uniting FPOs for Agricultural Progress

Mr. Raja Gohain, Founder of Ryan Farms LLP, emphasized a unified platform for FPOs, proposing inter-trading and collaboration instead of isolation.

Dr. Geetima Das Krishnan, Head-North East Desk at Invest India, GoI, recommended sharing a list of FPOs for streamlined funding, akin to the support provided in agricultural allied sectors and tea gardens.

Driving Agri- Education, Finance and Industry

Highlighting the need for a lasting solution, **Mr. Saurabh Srivastava, Marketing Coordinator of the Agriculture Department, Government of Assam**, emphasized the significance of comprehensive education at both school and college levels, as well as within the banking sector. He pointed out the challenge arising from delayed loan repayments in the North East, which hampers the provision of additional loans to transform the agricultural landscape. Mr. Srivastava advocated for viewing agriculture as an industry.

Revolutionizing Agri-Export Strategy

Proposing an innovative approach, **Mr. Mintu Handique, General Manager CSR at Numaligarh Refinery Limited**, recommended the creation of a daily reporting WhatsApp group for all VCs. He emphasized the potential for North Eastern products but stressed the need to identify suitable buyers. Mr. Handique highlighted the department's initiative of establishing around 30 entries, enabling direct exports and facilitating registration as exporters.

Navigating Agricultural Sustainability and Innovation in NER

Mr. Pritha Purkayastha, AVP, Axis Bank discussed logistics improvement. "Protection gap and insurance should also be provided" he opined. Prof CP Suresh, Head, Department of Horticulture, North-Eastern Hill University noted that production of pineapples and oranges has been decreasing for the past 3 years. He also advocated for sustainable tourism.

Mr. Abhijit Sharma, Mission Director, School of Livelihood and Rural Development talked about how climatic change has been affecting Meghalaya now. "The production of oranges has been reduced. So through other ways, farmers can earn like from carbon funding, renewable energy, socio-forestry, forest produce using the innovative ways for increasing the farmer's income and not going for extensive or over-exploitation of resources", he suggested.

Strengthening Agri-Connections

Dr. R Murugesan, Director of the National Institute of Rural Development, emphasized the absence of adequate capacity building and proposed the establishment of FPO cells to establish direct connections. He extended an offer to utilize NIRD facilities for training FPOs and other stakeholders within the agricultural sector

Closing Reflections :

Dr. MJ Khan expressed gratitude for the valuable suggestions, extending thanks to Mr. Moses for his time, Dr. Thanga for his inspirational involvement in the region, and Mr. Naveen Dhingra for enriching the discussions of various speakers.

Concluding the event, Mr. Moses Chalai, IAS, Secretary of the North Eastern Council, commended the meeting and the meaningful contributions made by all participants. He highlighted the prevalent isolation of various stakeholders in the region and stressed the challenge of fostering collaborative efforts. He noted the contemporary hurdles faced by entrepreneurs and emphasized the diverse contributions made by single families in cultivating multiple crop varieties. Mr. Chalai also discussed the potential of pineapple and turmeric, underscoring their value chain development for optimal returns for farmers.

Recommendations of the Meeting

- Strengthening FPOs by formalizing FPO-Industry Partnerships for forward linkages
- Creating an effective value chain for Bamboo products
- Promoting Handloom and Handcrafts of NER by creating an e-commerce portal
- Establishment of a Floriculture Board for important flowers of NER
- Promotion of Sustainable Tourism and Creating Agro Tourism Board
- Comprehensive awareness campaigns, both in physical and digital format
- Providing proper export guidance and creating agri-export entrepreneurs
- Establishing an entire supply chain for key agro commodities of NER
- Awareness among farmers regarding the marketing and export opportunities
- Policy alignment for the development of the Agri sector and awareness creation about schemes
- GI training of horticulture crops and a dedicated portal for integrating GI work
- Formation of millet value chain in North-Eastern states.
- Creating Investor Connect Programs like Shark Tank to promote agri startups in NER
- Providing platforms like naturally organic, products of the region, and Organic Board for NER
- Creation of a common platform for FPOs for experience sharing and intra trading
- Expanding and Strengthening logistics for fresh to reduce delivery time and costs
- Increasing farmer incomes through carbon funding, renewable energy, socio-forestry, and marketing forest produce using digital platforms and other innovative ways
- Public-private partnership in the food and agro-processing sector
- Creating Awareness of different financial schemes for farmers

Roadmap For Development of NER

- **Creating Commodity Boards for Bamboo, Pineapples, and Organic Food :** These boards would address the issues of quality and costs, supply chain and value chain development, trade and policy issues, logistics and investments, and branding and market access. ICFA proposes to create these boards, as it has relevant expertise, for which NEC/DONER support is needed.
- **Creating Dedicated Portal for Handicrafts and Handlooms :** Introducing the website www.ruralcraftsofnortheast.com. This platform aims to survey and compile an extensive catalog of rural craft items, facilitating direct artisan interactions through an integrated online payment system. ICFA will establish a logistical framework for efficiently storing and delivering online orders. Collaborations with design and technology organizations will ensure continuous enhancement of product designs, features, and functionality based on valuable buyer feedback
- **FPOs – Industry Partnership Program :** ICFA has initiated a nationwide project on FPOs-Industry partnership to facilitate forward market linkages for FPOs and also delivery of programs and technologies and inputs to farmers. ICFA shall launch the same in Guwahati for NER. Mechanisms for Intra-FPOs trading can also be created. This program can later be taken to all the States.
- **Setting up of NER Agri Growth Centers Network :** ICFA proposes setting up a pan northeast network of Agri Growth Centers, run by entrepreneurs, on clusters of 25-30 villages or 1000 farmers each. The entire network would operate on a digital platform for sourcing and supplies, delivery of programs and activities, training and technologies, good agriculture practices, and linking farmers to markets.
- **Mobilization of Corporate CSR funds for NER Development :** ICFA proposes to mobilize CSR funds with NEC support from corporate and PSUs for the training of farmers, awareness creation, creating a startup ecosystem, sustainable livelihood programs, millets, horticulture value chain development, and farmers market linkages programs. In collaboration with NEC or one of its organizations, this initiative can be launched for making meaningful interventions in NER.

GLIMPSES OF DEVELOPMENT MEET ON AGRICULTURE FOR NER



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Development Meet on Agriculture for NER

S.No	Organization	Name	Designation
1	NEC	Mr. Moses Chalai	Secretary
2	Axis Bank	Mr. Pritha Purkayastha	AVP
3	Indo American Chamber of Commerce	Mr. Mukesh Singh	Chairman
4	Blue Brett Consultants India LLP	Mr. Utpal Nath	Director
5	Spice Route Global	Mr. Anant Deorah	Partner
6	NABARD	Mr. Naveen Dhingra	CGM
7	Ryans Farms LLP	Mr. Raja Gohain	Founder
8	India Post	Mr. Abhishek Jain	Director
9	AIC	Mr. G Senthil Kumar	Regional Manager
10	Agri Infra Fund	Mr. Nitin S	Regional Coordinator
11	NEHU	Prof CP Suresh	Head- Dept of Horticulture
12	Patanjali	Mr. Subhash Bhattacharjee	Advisor
13	Agriculture Dept, Govt of Assam	Mr. Saurabh Srivastava	Mktg Coordinator
14	DRDO, Ministry of Defence	Dr. Kushalin Sarma	Executive Member DTDF
15	DS Group	Mr. Bharat Goswami	RM
16	ISAP India Foundation	Mr. Neeraj Saikia	Regional Coordinator
17	School of Livelihood & Rural Development	Mr. Abhijit Sharma	Mission Director
18	Anjaybee Green	Mr. Nayanjyoti Bhattacharyya	CEO
19	Assam Livestock Development Agency	Dr. Monideep Das	CEO
20	ICAR	Dr VK Mishra	Director
21	Mera Adhikar	Ms. Arunima Chakrabarty Sarma	Executive Member
22	CYSS	Mrs. Kajal Sarma	State Executive
23	Foolani	Mr. Hassan Al-Mehdi	Founder
24	Foolani	Mr. Mahibul Islam	Operations Manager
25	Jaap Enterprises	Ms. Ruchika Kuthari	
26	ESIC, Ministry of Health, Gol	Mr. Pankaj Pathak	Executive Member
27	APART, ARIAS Society	Mr. Baljeet Singh	Market Analyst
28	ICFA	Dr PL Thanga, IAS ®	Chairman- NE Council
29	Arinova Exim (I) Pvt Ltd.	Ms. Ananya Biswas	Director
30	Arinova Exim (I) Pvt Ltd.	Mr. Rubul Gogoi	Director

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S.No	Organization	Name	Designation
31	Govt of Meghalaya	Mr.Sanjay Goel, IAS	Secretary
32	NEC	Mr. MI Meiti	Advisor
33	NIRD	Dr R. Murugesan	Director
34	Invest India, GoI	Dr. Geetima Das Krishna	Head- NE Desk
35	Responset Development Services	Ms.Angela Nar	Director
36	Responset Development Services	Mr.Pranjal Das	Regional Prog Manager
37	Numaligarh Refinery Limited	Mr.Mintu Handique	GM CSR
38	INERA Crop Science	Dr R Sudhakaran	Head RA
39	Directorate of Agriculture, Govt Of Assam	Khagendra Sarma	Horticulture Advisor
40	Canara Bank	Srinivas Rao	DGM
41	Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	Indrajit Baisya	VP
42	Meghalaya Govt	M.L Suiam	OSD, DOFP
43		Nazma Gol	
44	Indian Bank	Anil Kr Prasad	Chief Manager
45	Central Bank of India	Krishna Kumar	AGM
46	HDFC Bank	K.P Nath	VP
47	Dept of Post	Nabendu Kar	ASP (BD)
48	Dept of Post	Bhaskar Jyoti Kalita	Circle Mktg Executive
49	ICFA	Dr MJ Khan	Chairman
50	ICFA	Tushar Sharma	Director
51	CARD	Mukut Choudhary	Regional Director



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