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**DNA fingerprint of all the released varieties for ascertaining their varietal identity and genetic purity**

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A Pre-Kharif Interface between Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare and ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) was held last week in Delhi, chaired by the Secretary (AC&FW) and co-chaired by the Secretary (DARE). It was attended by senior officials from the Departments of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare; Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries; and ICAR/Agricultural Research and Education.

The objective of Interface is to jointly identify emerging researchable areas and evolve strategies for better implementation of the schemes and programmes of the Ministry during the coming crop season. The Ministry has a well established institutional mechanism for identifying critical and contemporary issues for research and technology/farm management practices. It begins with a Zonal Conference on agricultural inputs in the month of January, wherein the Divisional Heads of Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare/Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries supported by their counterpart from ICAR hold meetings with State representatives and identify critical issues. These are deliberated further at the Ministry level and brought up before the Interface chaired by Secretary, DAC&FW. The issues deliberated upon and recommendations made during the Pre-Kharif Interface would be further shared with the State representatives during the forthcoming National Conference for Kharif Campaign 2017, scheduled on April 25-26, 2017. Simultaneously, all researchable issues will be shared with ICAR for appropriate research based solutions.

During the Interface, joint/common issues relating to Crops, Seeds, Plant Protection, Horticulture, Farm Mechanization & Technology, Natural Resource Management, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, Integrated Nutrient Management, Extension and DAHD&F were deliberated upon. A few important decisions taken include:

- Crop varieties released by ICAR after 2011 should be promoted throughout India. The purpose is to achieve higher rate of varietal replacement.
- It was decided to request all the State governments to put seed indents for all the recommended varieties of various crops for their respective State, released after 2011.
- It was also agreed to have DNA fingerprint of all the released varieties for ascertaining their varietal identity and genetic purity.
- The Secretary, DAC&FW directed to identify different sources of supply of Gypsum, so that it is made available for enhancing the productivity of Oilseeds and Pulses, besides treating all problem soils.
- The Secretary, DARE stressed on developing transgenic groundnut, sunflower and castor varieties resistant to peanut bud/ stem necrosis disease, Alternaria and Botrytis diseases, as the search for resistance sources in the germplasm has not given the desired result so far.
- Among many issues discussed today, the issue of application of drip irrigation technology in sugarcane cultivation throughout the country was stressed by the Secretary, DAC&FW, who referred to the law made by the Government of Maharashtra in this regard.
- It was also jointly decided that the consolidated laboratory for honey-testing will be established at IARI, New Delhi to promote the enterprise and take advantage of its positive impact on crop productivity.

Both the Secretaries agreed to work for addressing the problems of the farming community by providing appropriate technology through proper dissemination mechanism.

The close coordination and cooperation amongst the three Departments of the Ministry was recognised by all participating members and it was agreed, that the same spirit shall be brought to bear upon the working to ensure food and nutrition security of the country in particular and growth of agriculture sector at large. The Chairman also highlighted the need to work jointly for realising the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of doubling the farmers' income by 2022.

**SS**

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