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Shri Radha Mohan Singh addresses the Plenary Session of 9TH Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference Today

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Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shri Radha Mohan Singh addressed the Plenary Session of 9th Berlin Agriculture Ministers' Conference at Berlin, Germany today. In his addressed Shri Singh said that keeping the farmers' interest foremost in our research programmes, there is a need to optimize the resources' use efficiency.

Shri Singh said that water is certainly the most critical resource for agriculture, gaining primacy even on other important inputs like soil. The competing use of water for agriculture and non-agricultural purposes, inefficient irrigation practices, injudicious use of pesticides, poor conservation infrastructure, and lack of governance have lead to increasing water scarcity and pollution worldwide.

Union Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Minister said that distribution of water resources across the vast expanse of the country is uneven, therefore, as incomes rise the need for water also raises. Shri Singh said that as per the international norms, a country is classified as *Water Stressed and Water Scarce***,** if per capita / year water availability goes below 1700 m3 and 1000 m3, respectively. With 1544 m3 per capita / year water availability, India is already a water-stressed country and moving towards turning water scarce.

Shri Singh further said that efficient use of irrigation water requires that water be applied to growing crops at appropriate times and in adequate amounts and the main task will be to (i) produce more from less water by efficient use of utilizable water resources in irrigated areas, (ii) enhance productivity of challenged ecosystems, i.e., rainfed and water logged areas, and (iii) utilize a part of grey water for agriculture production in a sustainable manner.

Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Minister informed that most of the irrigation projects are operating at levels below the achievable efficiency of more than 50 per cent and there is enormous scope to improve the productivity and efficiency of irrigation systems which can be achieved both by technological as well as social interventions. Shri Singh said that it is estimated that with 10 per cent increase in the present level of efficiency in irrigation projects, an additional 14 million hectare area can be irrigated from the existing irrigation capacities which would involve a very modest investment compared to what is required for creating equivalent potential through new schemes. Therefore, there is need to adopt an integrated approach with emphasis on greater conservation and enhanced water use efficiency.

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare said that though India is among the leading producers of foodgrains in the world but India's productivity vis-à-vis world average and highest yield (kg/ha) for major crops cereals, pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane and vegetables remains short of the highest levels achieved elsewhere in the world, except castor an industrial oil crop. India has highest courage, production and productivity of castor in the world mainly because of hybrid technologies and water use efficiency in castor. Similarly, in livestock sector also, despite India being the top producer of milk, bovine productivity is only 1538 kg per year as compared to the world average of 2238 kg per year. The low productivity levels also indicate existence of enormous untapped potential. Shri Singh further said that efficiency-mediated improvement in productivity is the most viable option to raise production. Development of new crop varieties with more efficient photosynthesis and shorter duration would be of immense help in increasing cropping intensity.

Shri Singh said that there are several technologies developed by our institutions that enable production of 'more crop per drop'. Adoption of Resource Conserving Technologies (RCTs) lead to an improvement in productivity compared to traditional hand transplanting at different locations. The prevailing farming situation in India calls for an integrated effort to address the emerging issues / problems. However, these integrated farming

systems are required to be location specific and designed in such a manner that they lead to substantial improvement in energy efficiencies at the farm and help in maximum exploitation of synergies through adoption of close cycles. The Minister added that these systems also need to be socially acceptable, environment friendly and economically viable.

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