

AGRICULTURE MINISTER OF TRIPURA INAUGURATED NATIONAL SEMINAR ON MAIZE IN NORTH EAST INDIA

The ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Umiam Meghalaya and ICAR-Indian Institute of Maize Research, Ludhiana jointly organized National Seminar on “Promotion of maize in North East India: Opportunities and strategies” during 22-23 October at ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Tripura Centre, Lembucherra, Agartala. About 250 scientists, experts, researchers, officials from Line Departments, KVKs, extension functionaries and farmers attended the programme. Shri Pranajit Singha Roy, Honourable Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare & Tourism, Govt. of Tripura was present as the chief guest in the inaugural programme of the National Seminar. Dr. BK Kandpal, Director, ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Umiam Meghalaya in his welcome address gave an account of Institute’s efforts in promoting sustainable maize production technology in north Eastern region of India and appreciated the effort of IIMR, Ludhiana for taking a lead in development and promotion of maize through participatory research and capacity building activities in the NER.

Shri Pranajit Singha Roy in his address, stressed on the importance of the seminar from the perspective self-sufficiency in food grain production in Tripura. Honourable minister interacted with the farmers and farmers informed him that they are earning a net return of more than Rs. 20,000/ha more than 1 lakh/ha. Shri Roy said that he will try to take forward the maize farming in the state as a means for doubling farmers income. The chief guest also emphasised on the need for maize production in the state as feed ingredient to reduce the feed cost. He said that since most of the feeds are imported from outside the region hence, feed cost in the Tripura



and other North eastern states are very high leading to lack of desired development in livestock, pig and poultry sectors. He emphasised on the establishment of purchasing centres and market by the Government to help the maize farmers, just like Govt. has taken initiative for pineapple farmers of Tripura. There is very good potential for baby corn, sweet corn and popcorn which are rich source of nutrition and liked by the children and youngsters. Innovative maize farmers from different districts of Tripura were felicitated by the Chief Guest during the occasion. Chief Guest also distributed critical inputs like seeds and farm tools among farmers. Shri Roy appreciated the effort of ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region in developing and promoting location specific integrated farming system models and high yielding quality crop varieties like Gomati in rice, Shinghnath & Bholanath in Brinjal, TRCP-8 in pea and many other improved package of practices for enhancing productivity of crops, animal and fish in the state. He urged the directors of IIMR and ICAR Research Complex to share modern and innovative technologies with state department to promote maize in the state.

Dr. D.P. Sarkar, Director, Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Tripura & guest of honour stated that maize is cultivated in the state since ages. The soil and climatic conditions are very conducive for maize farming and the tribal farmers of the state have been using it as food, feed etc. in Tripura. However, the productivity of maize in Tripura is very low and by adopting suitable varieties and improving the cultural practice, the productivity can be increased to 4t/ha. He informed that about 85,000ha area is available as rice fallow in the state, which can be brought under maize, pulses and oilseed cultivation. He emphasised that maize hybrids and quality protein maize like



Vivek HQPM 9 are rich in vitamin A, lysine and tryptophan. He opined that primary level maize processing units can be established under RKVY schemes.



Dr. Sujay Rakshit, Director, IIMR and guest of honour, in his keynote address stated that Maize is a candidate crop for doubling of farmer's income. It can enhance income of farmers through increase in production, utilization in feed of livestock and entrepreneurship development through value addition. The production of maize in the last 60 years has increased 16 times with 6 times increase in productivity and three times increase in area. North East holds an enormous scope in production increase in maize. He stated that 65% of the maize produced is used by the feed industry with poultry being the major



consumer with 57% share. Babycorn canning and export has tremendous scope for entrepreneurship development. Sindhu Cross hybrid is a variety that should be introduced to enhance the productivity in north east. There is scope for introducing speciality corn like babycorn and popcorn in NE states which are known for timber, tea and tourism. The NE states can also act as gateway for maize export due to its proximity with South East Asian countries. He informed that IIMR has developed 3 hybrids like MH 1305, 1539, 1530 which are high yielding varieties. To manage the weed menace, IIMR has developed a single spray post emergence herbicide that can effectively control weeds without harming the crops. Quality seed is very important for maize farming. High humidity is a major issue in maize storage in north east India and aflatoxicosis is major concern. If the farmers are not able to store and sell their produce, they will not show any interest to maize farming. About 20% loss in maize is during storage. Hence, small/large scale dryers need to be established if maize is to be taken up in a bigger way. Silos can be promoted for livestock feed. While traditional varieties should be given importance for human consumption due to their taste, flavour and nutrition, hybrids should be promoted as feed ingredient for piggery, poultry where taste and flavour is not important. He informed that blue corn of NE India has

anti-oxidant potential. Sweet corn and baby corn can be promoted for organic production in the region. He informed that Fall Army Worm (FAW) is a recent threat to maize production but it has been taken care in the country in a commendable manner by engaging multiple institutes and partners. There is opportunity for seed production as well as in conservation agriculture in maize farming. The seminar witnessed presentation of 20 lead and invited papers and 30 oral papers in 4 technical sessions in two days.

A farmers- scientist interaction programme on opportunity and constraints of maize production was also organized to identify actionable points for promotion of maize in North East India. Maize biodiversity, Composite varieties and important hybrids along with important technologies were showcased to the farmers. Dr. Biswajit Das, Joint Director (I/C) presided the valedictory function where Dr. Pramod Kumar Pandey, Dean,



College of Fisheries, CAU, Lembucherra was present as chief guest. Dr. VK Singh, Head, Agronomy, IARI New Delhi was present as guest of Honour in valedictory function. Best oral paper presentation certificates were given to the winners by the Chief Guest and other guests and salient actionable points were read out by the convener. Dr. Anup Das, Principal Scientist (Agronomy) and Convener of the National seminar proposed the formal vote of thanks in inaugural programme, while Dr. GS Yadav, Scientist, Agronomy & Organizing Secretary of the seminar offered vote of thanks in Valedictory programme.