

Union Minister announces Rs. 25-crore fund for IFGTB

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Farmers urged to pursue agro forestry for their benefit and that of the country



Farmer-friendly: Union Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh (left) presents a new tree clone to a farmer at the 'Tree Growers Mela' at the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding in Coimbatore on Thursday.

Staff Reporter

Coimbatore: Union Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh on Thursday announced a financial aid of Rs. 25 crore to the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB) here over a period of next two to three years to carry forward research activities.

Announcing the launch of Annual Indian Forestry Congress from this year in December in Dehradun and in 2011 in Coimbatore, Mr. Ramesh called upon the farming community to pursue agro forestry for their own as well as for the good of the country.

He was speaking at a function organised by the IFGTB and the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) after releasing four new clone varieties of eucalyptus and casuarinas besides booklets, pamphlets.

He also gave awards and prizes to those who took part in the marathon research that had yielded results in the form of new varieties in tree species.

Mr. Ramesh said the new clone varieties would be launched in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Next year, IFGTB would possibly release a new variety of acacia and every year the institute would release such new varieties. Referring to the criticism on him as a person against science, Mr. Ramesh clarified that "he was a strongest supporter of science". On Bt. brinjal Mr. Ramesh said: "Let Indian scientists decide for our people, let

farmers and political leaders decide on what is good and let us not run after America for a seed."

Mr. Ramesh said now farmers growing acacia had to wait for four to five years to cut. It was seven years for eucalyptus. Farmers wanted tree species that could be grown and cut in three to three-and-a-half years. It would be a challenge for scientists to release such varieties. He exhorted the scientists to go to the field and not sit in laboratories.

Mr. Ramesh said Dr. M.S. Swaminathan's efforts led to Green Revolution. Now, it was the turn for 'ever green' revolution. He urged the scientists to focus on soil fertility, crop productivity and climate change resistance besides erratic rainfall and increasing dry days.

IFGTB Director N. Krishnakumar said the long gestation period in tree species was over and the farmers wanted species that grew fast. Holistic information was being generated to achieve the 33 per cent green cover.

ICFRE Director G.S. Rawat called for insect resilient varieties. V. Irulandi, Chief Conservator of Forests (Extension), Forest Department, said owing to projects such as trees outside the forest land, Tamil Nadu was able to achieve the one-crore trees target in three years.

Full-time member of Planning Commission G. Kumaravel said land and land-based assets were paramount and there was need for agriculture/forestry to keep pace with other sectors.

Collector P. Umanath said initially there were apprehensions about viability and possibility, but thanks to the Forest Department's initiative, now funds allocated were proving to be inadequate.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Kerala, T.M. Manoharan said of the chosen 1,400 villages in Kerala, rules had been liberalised to fell trees without pass or permit in 1,350 villages. But Tamil Nadu insisting on pass for transport of such timber was proving to be a problem. He appealed to the government to look into it.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/union-minister-announces-rs-25crore-fund-for-ifgtb/article713273.ece>