

Farmers encouraged to cultivate aromatic crops

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To encourage farmers to take up cultivation of the high-revenue earning aromatic plants like lavender, rosemary and lemon grass and medicinal plants like ashwagandha as envisaged under the central Aroma Mission, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has initiated several awareness-cum-training programme for them at its various labs across the country.

Launched by Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, the Aroma Mission aims to give the farmers alternative choices in crop production against traditional crops, which have been giving them diminishing returns because of various reasons.

In contrast, the aromatic and medicinal crops have a huge potential in the world market as the essential oils obtained from these are used in perfumes, pharma industry, fragrances and flavours.

Various programs are being organised by the CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrated Medicines (IIMS) in Jammu & Kashmir to promote the Mission. According to Dr Ram Viswakarma, Director IIMS,

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Jammu, "More than one thousand farmers have already taken to planting these aromatic and medicinal plants". The State's peculiar climate and presence of a growing market for the essential oils from these plants is helping the farmers earn good revenue.

The IIMS is providing seeds, training and other facilities like distillation units to the farmers to grow these flowers and plants.

Similarly, the scientists at the CSIR-IHBT, Palampur held a two-day awareness-cum-training programme was held which was attended by tribal farmers from West Kameng,

West Siang and Tawang districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

Rakesh Kumar, principal scientist-cum-training programme organiser said that the farmers were imparted training on the process to cultivate various varieties, including damask rose, wild marigold, rosemary, Valeriana jatamansi and Matricaria chamomilla. He said the farmers were imparted practical exposure on field preparation and management of nursery, nutrients, weed, insect, pest and disease and post harvest management of aromatic crops.

To reach out to farmers in the Southern States like, Tamil Nadu, the CSIR has signed a pact with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU). The Lucknow-based CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatics Plants (CIMAP) has been tasked to implement the central mission and phytopharmaceutical projects and rural technologies.

The mission is expected to enable farmers and the aroma industry to become global leaders in the production and export of some other essential oils on the pattern of menthol mint, said a senior officer from the CSIR.