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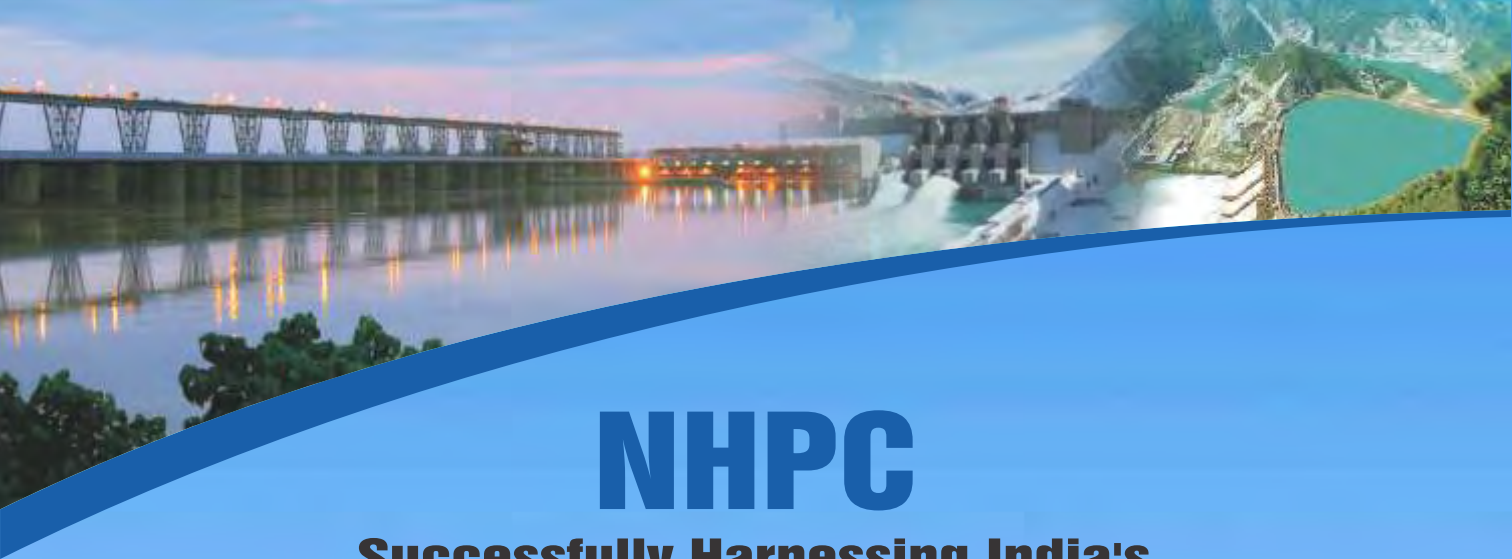
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VIBRANT NORTH EAST 2024

19th - 21st September, 2024 | Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalalshetra, Exhibition Ground, Guwahati

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The North-Eastern part of India is one of the most culturally vibrant areas in the nation. Due to its abundance of natural resources, the North-East holds immense potential in terms of food and agricultural industries. However, due to a lack of opportunities, this region, where 70% of the population depends on agriculture, has not thrived as expected. As a result, an event called “VIBRANT NORTHEAST”, supported by the Ministry of DoNER (Government of India), Government of Assam, and the North Eastern Council (Government of India), was organized by the Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) and co-organized by the Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA). This event brought together key luminaries from various agricultural sectors, government authorities, and private groups on one platform, facilitating efforts to support the development of the North-Eastern region. A concerted effort was also made to educate farmers on various government initiatives, programs, and employment and revenue-generating opportunities available to them.

The North Eastern part of India is one of the most culturally vibrant areas in the nation. Due to its abundance of natural resources, the North East is an emerging region in terms of food and agricultural industries. The Hon'ble Prime Minister has shared the vision of a developed North East. While the region is rich in potential, the opportunities for development have yet to be fully explored, despite the continued high focus of the Government of India and the concerted efforts by the State Governments of the North East for a long time. With the current Government at the Centre, there has been a renewed focus on the development of the North East region. Key sectors of focus include agriculture, horticulture, agro-industries, food processing, energy, industries, water, infrastructure, tourism, ICT, business and trade, investments, financial inclusion, skills, Make in North East, and social and rural development.

With the new situation and emerging opportunities, and with the Central Government's prime focus on the development of the North East region, the Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development, with the support of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and North East Invest and Business Forum (NEBIF), organized the mega event, the 8th edition of Vibrant North East 2024, in Guwahati, Assam from 19th to 21st September, 2024. The event involved various development bodies, national-level organizations, central ministries, state governments, and the industry.

INAUGURAL SESSION - Day 1: 19th September 2024

Dignitaries Present:

- **Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya**, Hon'ble Governor of Assam
- **Prof. G. Singaiah**, Vice-Chancellor, BSSR Viswavidyalaya
- **Shri Radhakrishnan**, CGM, SBI Guwahati Circle
- **Mohamad Iqbal Djamil**, Trade Attaché, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia
- **Shri Pankaj Pathak**, Member, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Govt. of India
- **Shri Vanrajsinh Hamirsinh Dodiya**, General Manager, Pawan Hans Helicopter
- **Shri Mukesh Singh**, Chairman, Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (U.P)
- **Dr. H.D. Sarma**, Member, Assam Agriculture Commission
- **Shri Amresh Kumar Jha**, GM, SBI Guwahati Circle
- **Shri Loken Das**, CGM, NABARD, Guwahati Circle



Opening Ceremony:

- **Ribbon Cutting & Stall Visit**: The event commenced with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, followed by a visit to all stalls by the chief guest, Honorable Governor Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya, who was welcomed by CARD officials, Mr. Arindam Singha Roy (Executive Director) and Mr. Tushar Sharma (Director).
- **National and State Anthems** were followed by the **lighting of the inaugural lamp** by the chief guest and dignitaries.

Key Addresses:

Shri Pankaj Pathak, Ministry of Labour & Employment and Advisor CARD: He welcomed all dignitaries and



emphasized the importance of support mechanisms from both the state and central governments to harness the agricultural potential of the Northeastern Region (NER).

Dr. H.D. Sarma, Assam Agriculture Commission: He Emphasized the role of govt. and the commission- Ground level farmers reduced the waste and various



support mechanisms in the value chain which are available for farmer and specific problem of northeast should be address properly. He emphasized apart from providing a comprehensive marketing solution to farmers and entrepreneurs associated with agri sector and NER and also engage livelihood generation skill up gradation and training programmer at the grassroots level.

Shri Amresh Kumar Jha, GM, SBI Guwahati Circle:

He reinforced SBI's commitment to increasing agricultural advances in the NER. He discussed successful schemes like Lakhpati Beti aimed at improving the livelihood of the region.



Shri Loken Das, CGM, NABARD Guwahati Circle:

He underlined the efforts of NABARD in supporting agro-processing, post-harvest management, and value-chain development in the NER. He urged farmers to take advantage of NABARD's schemes to enhance their livelihoods.



Mr. Mohamad Iqbal Djamil, Trade Attaché, Embassy of Indonesia: He emphasized the trade and business potential between Indonesia and the NER, highlighting



the region's proximity to Indonesia and the scope for collaboration in agriculture.

Shri Mukesh Singh, Chairman, Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (U.P.): He praised CARD and ICFA for their role in developing the agricultural sector and



rural development and for promoting agri-entrepreneurship for better livelihood in the NER. He presented the momentos Honorable Governor

Speech by Honorable Governor of Assam, Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya:

The Governor began by expressing his deep respect for the region, highlighting its immense potential in agriculture, forestry, and biodiversity. The Governor



commended Vibrant North East 2024 for providing an invaluable platform for stakeholders – farmers, entrepreneurs, and government bodies – to work collaboratively toward the development of the entire region. He extended gratitude to the Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) for organizing the event and recognizing the NER as a vital frontier of economic growth.

He addressed the dignitaries, guests, and farmers who traveled from remote rural areas, expressing his honor to be part of the event. The Governor emphasized the significant efforts being made by the current government to uplift the NER through targeted programs like PMMSY (Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana), PKVY (Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana), RKVY (Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana), and others, which are transforming the region's agriculture, fisheries, and animal husbandry sectors. These schemes, he said, are being implemented through research institutions, government bodies, and KVKs



(Krishi Vigyan Kendras).

He spoke about the North East Region's (NER) natural strengths, including fertile land, abundant water resources, and a wealth of flora and fauna. However, he pointed out that despite these advantages, the NER continues to lag behind the rest of India in terms of economic growth, accounting for only about 2.5% of India's GDP. He acknowledged that government policies that benefit the rest of the nation have not fully addressed the challenges faced by the North East.

The Governor also stressed that the NER's geographical position, bordering countries like China, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, positions it as a potential trade hub for not only India but the entire subcontinent. He underlined the importance of improving infrastructure – from roads and railways to airways and waterways – to unlock the region's trade potential. He pointed out that while the NER has a high literacy rate and better gender ratio compared to other parts of India, the region lacks sufficient infrastructure and market integration, which limits its growth.



With 70% of the NER's population relying on agriculture, the Governor noted that enhancing agricultural productivity is critical to driving economic development. Harnessing the agricultural potential of the NER would generate surplus to support the secondary sector, boost rural demand, and lead to broader socio-economic development.

The Governor praised organizations like CARD and the North East Business and Investment Forum for showcasing the region's potential and spearheading efforts in agriculture and rural development. He recognized their role in organizing large-scale events and creating platforms for industry leaders to collaborate on solutions for the challenges faced by the NER.



In conclusion, the Governor called on all stakeholders to remain committed to the growth and prosperity of the NER. He emphasized the importance of working hand-in-hand with the government to transform the region's potential into reality. He extended his best wishes for the success of Vibrant North East 2024, stating that the event is not just a celebration of the past and present but a guiding force toward a future of promise and opportunity for the NER. He expressed hope that this would be the start of more landmark events that will drive the region's progress.

Finally, he offered his heartfelt thanks to the organizers, sponsors, participants, and all those involved in making the event a success, praising their dedication and hard work.

Conclusion by Mr. Arindam Singha Roy (Executive Director, CARD):

Welcomed all dignitaries to present momentos. He emphasized CARD's role in supporting the agricultural and rural sectors for the last 25 years and stressed their continued efforts in organizing mega events like Vibrant North East. He also highlighted the formation of FPOs and FFPOs, which offer a platform for small farmers to access institutional support and connect with larger markets.

Mr. Arindam Singha Roy Executive Director- CARD- Welcome to the all dignitary to presented momentos. He emphasized that the Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) has been actively supporting the development of India's agriculture and rural sectors for the past 25 years. Highlighting CARD's credibility, he spoke of its role as a significant platform driving the growth of the North East, successfully



organizing the Vibrant North East event over the years. He mentioned the launch of the 8th edition of Vibrant North East 2024, taking place from 19th to 21st September, with support from the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) and the North East Business and Investment Forum (NEBIF).

Mr. Roy also recognized the vital contributions of the Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA) in this endeavor. He emphasized the formation of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and Farmer Producer



Companies (FFPOs) in the North East as a key initiative to scale the agricultural economy. These organizations serve as aggregation platforms for small and marginal farmers, providing access to input supplies, technology, and institutional support. They also link farmers to food processing companies, retailers, and exporters.

CARD, he noted, has been instrumental in reaching out to the NER, working closely with NAFED and NABARD through cluster-based FPOs and FFPOs. Moreover, CARD collaborates with Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects aimed at the region's development. He highlighted the importance of promoting key crops from the NER for export through national and international trade bodies such as NERAMAC, NEDFi, SBI, and NABARD, with active involvement from ICFA.

In conclusion, Mr. Roy emphasized the critical role of the agriculture commission in fostering the growth of agriculture, food, and rural development in the North East.



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NORTH EAST DEVELOPMENT MEET

Thursday, 19th September 2024, Hotel Vivanta by Taj, Guwahati (Assam)



The Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) organized a 3-day-long Vibrant North East 2024 Summit to showcase the potential of the North Eastern states in agriculture and allied sectors, including the food processing sector. It highlighted various sectors such as horticulture, dairy, poultry, fisheries, spices, plantation crops, organic food, and processed food from the North East Region (NER). Other sectors under discussion included agro-industries, energy, water management, infrastructure, tourism, ICT, business, trade, investments, financial inclusion, skills development, Make in North East, and social and rural development.

The Development Meet also underscored the importance of education and skills development for sustainable and rapid socio-economic growth in the

region. The North Eastern Region (NER) of India is rapidly emerging as an innovation-led, technology-driven education hub, with several institutions ranked among the top educational establishments across the country. Flagship schemes driving the skilling sector in the region include PMKVY, DDUGKY, NULM, Seekho aur Kamao, and NBCFDC-funded programs.

In addition, the meet discussed how the tourism industry in the North East is more vibrant and productive than ever. The Central Government is promoting the NER as a prime tourism destination and hub, generating jobs and livelihoods for thousands of people. However, while tourism and other development projects move forward, the need to preserve the rich cultural and ethnic legacy of the region remains crucial.

Prominent Speakers and Contributions:

Distinguished dignitaries and government officials provided insights into their respective activities in the North East.

Prof. G Singaiah, Vice-Chancellor of BSSR Viswavidyalaya,



emphasized the role of academia in facilitating agriculture graduates and promoting jobs and entrepreneurship in the agro sector.

Mr. Mukesh Singh and Arindam Singha Roy highlighted the contributions of the Airport Authority of India (AAI). M. Raja Kishore, Regional Executive



Director of AAI, emphasized how aviation is significantly improving connectivity among the states in the NER. New greenfield airports are planned for Silchar and Karbi Anglong, with land acquisition already underway. Hangars are under construction at Dibrugarh and Imphal Airports, and a new integrated

cargo complex is being built at Imphal. Runway extensions at Dibrugarh will soon accommodate larger aircraft, boosting tourism in the region. AAI is also enhancing safety with new Instrument Landing System (ILS) and DVOR installations at key airports.

SBI and Agriculture Credit:

The State Bank of India (SBI) highlighted several challenges faced by bankers in the farming sector, particularly regarding credit flow to agriculture. Arunachal Pradesh leads the region with 91% credit disbursal, while Meghalaya lags at 17.5%. Assam has the



highest exposure to agriculture credit but also the highest NPA rate, at 26.16%. The unorganized nature of food processing units and outdated technology are major obstacles to accessing institutional credit, making it difficult for banks to fund these ventures.

Business and Industry in the Region:

The Department of Agriculture in Assam, along with other state entities, showcased the region's global leadership in tea production. Assam alone produces



nearly 700 million kg of tea annually, accounting for half of India's tea production. In addition to tea, the region is a major player in oil and gas, with large-scale projects approved by the Indian government. Tripura has also become the second-largest producer of



natural rubber in India. The NER's bamboo reserves were another focal point, with the region holding approximately 36% of India's bamboo area. Bamboo, known as "the poor man's timber," provides livelihoods for many rural workers.

Food Processing and Agri-Horti Produce:

The food processing industry in the NER was highlighted as a sunrise industry with immense potential. With significant post-harvest losses, there is a wide scope for value addition, which could provide better returns to growers. The Union Government has undertaken several initiatives to promote food processing industries in the region. Assam, known for its silk production, shares 15% of India's raw silk production, with its unique Muga silk gaining prominence.



Infrastructure Development:

The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) is executing large-scale road and rail projects to enhance connectivity across the region. More than 4,000 km of road projects have already been completed, and additional projects covering over 7,500 km are



underway. The Inland Waterways Authority is developing 20 national waterways in the region to connect it with mainland India via the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route.

Energy and Renewable Resources:

GAIL and NHPC discussed the development of natural gas pipelines and hydroelectric projects in the region. The region has a hydroelectric potential of around



58,356 MW, with ongoing efforts to harness this energy. The NER is also focusing on renewable energy, with estimated potential from solar, small hydro, and bioenergy at around 65,837 MW.

Some of the key take-away of the Development Meet are:

A Significant gap was identified in terms of awareness among stakeholders all the various important and flagship schemes related to agri and allied sectors with their special offerings for North Eastern Region, It was agreed that a mechanism will be developed in coming days such that all the schemes are available at a single, easily presentable and easily accessible e-platform. There is no credible and effective platform in NER which can play a catalytic role in addressing production, trade and market access challenges related to specific commodities, and thus boosting the production and trade of those commodities. A decision was taken that ICFA would set up five Commodity Boards in North-East regions for boosting the trade and exports of these agro produce from the region. Fisheries, Agriculture and Poultry and GI tag crop will be source of income of the farmers and food processing industry development is giving more milage. Govt. FPOs & FFPOs schemes through NABARD & NAFED also give a major boost to the agricultural economy of NE state.

Poor status of implementation of flagship schemes like Agri Infrastructure Fund in North East is a major concern. Assam occupies a major share of this with almost Rs 322 crores. This translates to a meager 1.5% utilization in NER where Assam constitutes 1.4%. Thus Activate Windows all the other 7 NE States together shares only 0.1% of the total allocation, which is a matter of concern and needs immediate attention,

Certain schemes like Krishi Udan Scheme 2.0 enhancing the existing provisions, mainly focusing on transporting perishable food products from the hilly areas, North-Eastern States and tribal areas. For facilitating and incentivising movement of agri-produce by air transportation, Airports Authority of India (AAI) Pawan Hans Helicopter provides full waiver of Landing, Parking, Terminal Navigational Landing Charges (TNLC) and Route Navigation Facility Charges (RNFC) for Indian freighters and P2C (Passenger-to-Cargo) Aircraft. The scheme primarily covers around 25 airports focusing on North Eastern, Hilly and Tribal region besides 28 airports in other regions/areas. After evaluation of Krishi Udan 2.0, five more airports have been included making it to total 58 airports. However, the awareness level of such an important scheme among agri traders, agri entrepreneurs, FPOs, exporters and many other important stakeholders are negligible. It was agreed that a systematic approach for reaching out to the stakeholders with this scheme needs to be developed in coming days and implemented Lakhpati beti of SBI is also putting best efforts of growth of north east

North East in a true sense is the emerging powerhouse of India which is not only critical for fuelling the growth and mechanization of agri and allied sectors in the region but also the overall economic activities in the region.





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Vibrant North East 2024 (20th September 2024) - Day 2

Arrival of Guests and Visit of the Exhibition

The second day of Vibrant North East 2024 commenced with the arrival of Shri Atul Bora, Hon'ble Agriculture Minister, Government of Assam, as the Chief Guest. Upon his arrival, he visited the 24 stalls set up at the exhibition. **Shri Atul Bora** graced the event by lighting the ceremonial lamp, marking the official start of the day's proceedings. Other notable guests included Dr. H.D. Sarma (Member, Assam Agriculture Commission), Mr. B.C. Bara (Member, Assam Agriculture Commission), Mr. P.P. Sharma (Member, Assam Agriculture Commission), Mr. Thabang Linus Kholoumo (Counsellor, Kingdom of Lesotho), Mr. Rajni Gupta (GM, AAI), and Sri Loken Das (CGM, NABARD Assam Regional Office).



Welcome Speech by Shri Atul Bora, Chief Guest

Shri Atul Bora addressed the dignitaries on the dais, distinguished guests, delegates, and farmers, emphasizing the cultural richness and agricultural



potential of North East India. He highlighted the region's natural abundance—fertile land, dense forests, and mega biodiversity—but lamented its developmental lag compared to other parts of the country. The NE region accounts for only 2.5% of India's GDP, and Shri Bora stressed the need for focused attention, investment, and partnerships to unlock the region's potential.

Key highlights of his speech included:

- The region's potential as a trade hub, given its strategic location, sharing borders with Bhutan, China, Myanmar, and Bangladesh.



- The need for infrastructure development—roads, railways, airports, and waterways—to improve market integration and inter-state connectivity.
- The significance of agriculture in the region, where 70% of the population depends on farming, but contributes only 1.5% to India's total foodgrain production. Shri Bora encouraged efforts to boost the region's agricultural output through schemes such as PMMSY, PKVY, and ATMA.



- He commended organizations like the Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) and North East Business and Investment Forum (NEBIF) for showcasing the region's potential and creating networking opportunities for industries and investors.
- He concluded by expressing hope that the event would become a landmark in the region's development, providing inputs for formulating agro-industrial policies.

Address by Dr. H.D. Sarma (Member, Assam Agriculture Commission)

Dr. Sarma emphasized the significant progress made in Assam's agricultural and allied sectors in recent years.



Notably, nearly 4 lakh hectares of rice fallow land have been successfully converted to mustard cultivation, showcasing the State's strides in crop diversification. He also underscored the vast potential of Assam's fisheries sector, as fish is a staple food for the majority of its population. However, he pointed out the critical challenges in this sector, particularly the diminishing genetic quality of major fish breeds. To address this, the fisheries department has established brood banks across the State, aiming to enhance the production and quality of fish seeds.



Despite the State's annual need for 3 lakh metric tons of fish seed, there remains a substantial shortfall. In addition, the availability of high-quality feed is another pressing issue. To counter this, the State government has initiated the promotion of defatted rice oil bran as a key ingredient in fish feed, offering a sustainable solution to enhance production while maintaining nutritional standards. Dr. Sarma's insights highlighted both the achievements and the ongoing challenges in Assam's agricultural landscape.

Mr. Pankaj Prasad Sharma, Member, Assam Agriculture Commission

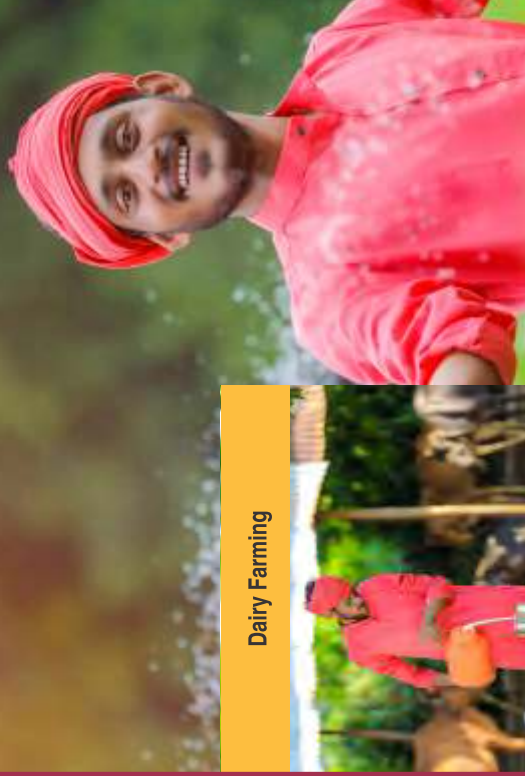
Highlighted some of the achievements of the agri and allied sectors in Assam in recent years. Till date, almost 4 lakh hectares of rice fallow has been brought under mustard cultivation. He also highlighted the immense potential of the fisheries sector in the State considering that majority of the population eats fish. However, the



challenge in the fisheries sectors is availability of improved and quality fish seed for production enhancement. The overall genetic quality of the major fish breeds is going down and to solve the issue, brood banks have been set up by the fisheries department across the State. Assam needs 3 lakh MT of fish seed annually but there is a huge shortfall currently. Along with fish seed, quality feed is also a challenge in Assam and to solve this problem, the State government is promoting use of defatted rice oil bran as a fish feed ingredient.

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Panel Discussion : Day 2

Supply and Value Chain Development and Boosting Agriculture and Food Processing Sector in North East

- **Prof. G. Singal**, Vice Chancellor, Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajkiya Vishwavidalaya
- **Prof C.P Suresh** from North Eastern Hill University
- **Mr. Subhash Bhattacharjee**, Advisor Patanjali Foods and Ex. MD NERAMAC
- **Prof. C.P Suresh**, Senior Scientist, North East Hill University
- **Dr. Goutam Das**, Assistant Professor, National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship & Management
- **Dr. H.D Sarma**, Member. Assam Agriculture Commission
- **Mr. B.C Bara**, Member, Assam Agriculture Commission
- **Mr. P.P Sharma**, Member, Assam Agriculture Commission
- **Mr. Arindam Singha Roy**, Executive Director- CARD (Moderator)



Prof. G. Singal, Vice Chancellor, Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajkiya Vishwavidyalaya:



He emphasized value addition and food security, advocating for minimal cultivation of nutrient-rich crops like millets, AI integration, and organic farming.

Prof. C.P. Suresh from North Eastern Hill University:

Provided an insightful overview of key flagship schemes aimed at enhancing the agri and allied sectors, particularly with a focus on the North Eastern Region (NER).



He outlined various government initiatives designed to strengthen farm gate infrastructure, boost agro-processing, and improve the supply and value chains in the region. Among the schemes discussed were:

- The Agri Infrastructure Fund (AIF), which supports the development of farm gate infrastructure for farmers.
- The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), aimed at enhancing fisheries through sustainable fish production and processing.

- The Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund, which provides financial aid for establishing modern infrastructure in the livestock sector.
- NESIDS (North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme), focusing on key infrastructure projects in the NER.

Prof. Suresh also emphasized the importance of schemes like the PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PM FME Scheme), which promotes the formation and support of micro-food enterprises, and the Schemes for the Promotion and Cultivation of Medicinal Plants, aimed at leveraging the region's biodiversity. He also highlighted initiatives like the North-East Venture Fund (NEVF) and PM-DevINE, which offer investment opportunities and special incentives for the development of the North Eastern Region.

These schemes, Prof. Suresh stressed, hold the potential to significantly enhance value chain development, boost agricultural productivity, and strengthen the food processing sector in the NER, contributing to the region's economic and rural development.

Dr. Subhash Bhattacharjee, Advisor to Patanjali:

Dr. Bhattacharjee presented Patanjali's extensive work in palm oil production within the North Eastern Region



(NER). He explained the complete value chain of palm oil, highlighting the organization's efforts to disseminate the best agricultural practices among local farmers. He underscored the enormous potential of palm oil cultivation for boosting the livelihoods and economy of the NER's residents. Patanjali Agrovaat is fully engaged in buy-back agreements with Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) and has contributed to the value addition of 37 different oil products, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh.

Dr. Goutam Das, Assistant Professor, National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship & Management:



Dr. Das emphasized the need for improvement in the food processing industries, particularly in rice, pineapple, and tomato production. He discussed the challenges of production and aggregation, urging a more effective collaboration between processors and farmers' organizations, such as FPCs and FPOs, to optimize processes and packaging. Dr. Das stressed the importance of primary packaging systems to extend the shelf life of high-value products, which is crucial for the economic upliftment of small and marginal farmers. He also highlighted the need for MSME enterprises to leverage government support channels like FTRI for further growth.

Concluding Remarks:

Dr. H.D Sarma, Member, Assam Agriculture Commission and Mr. B.C Bara, Member, Assam Agriculture Commission, and Mr. P.P Sharma, Member, Assam Agriculture Commission- reiterated the

importance of government intervention in supporting

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farmers, ensuring minimum support prices, and enhancing incubation centers for value chain development.

Closing:

The day's events were marked by collaborative discussions, insightful speeches, and commitments toward improving the North Eastern region's agricultural and industrial potential. The session concluded with a reaffirmation of dedication to the growth and prosperity of the region.





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Vibrant North East 2024 - Concluding Function - Day 3

Dignitaries in attendance included:

- **Shri Keshab Mahanta**, Hon'ble Minister of Fisheries, Government of Assam
- **Prof. Prabha Shankar Shukla**, Vice Chancellor, North Eastern Hill University, Meghalaya
- **Shri Bhaskar Pegu, IAS**, Director Agriculture, Government of Assam
- **Dr. H.D. Sarma**, Member, Assam Agriculture Commission
- **Shri Nabin Roy**, General Manager NABARD, Guwahati Circle
- **Mr. Thabang Linus Kholumo**, Counsellor, High Commission of the Kingdom of Lesotho
- **Shri Arindam Singha Roy**, Executive Director- Centre for Agriculture & Rural Development
- **Shri Tushar Sharma**, Director- Centre for Agriculture & Rural Development



Traditional Welcome:

- Mr. Tushar Sharma, Director, Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development, welcomed the dignitaries.

Lighting of the Inaugural Lamp:

- The Chief Guest, Shri Keshab Mahanta, along with other dignitaries, participated in the lighting of the lamp

**Mr. Keshav Mahanta, Minister of Fisheries,
Government of Assam**

Mr. Keshav Mahanta addressed the honorable dignitaries and esteemed delegates at the Vibrant North East event in Assam, expressing his honor and privilege to speak at such a significant gathering. He acknowledged the event as a celebration of the rich



culture, heritage, and potential of the northeastern region and expressed gratitude to the Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development for organizing the 8th edition of Vibrant North East 2024, recognizing the region as a new frontier of economic change.

Mr. Mahanta emphasized that while the North East is blessed with abundant natural resources, including fertile land, water, and biodiversity, it has consistently lagged behind the rest of India in economic growth. He noted that the region accounts for only about 2.5% of India's GDP, highlighting the need for focused attention and investment.

He discussed the immense potential of the fisheries sector, pointing out that the North East is the highest consumer of fish and one of the top producers of inland fisheries. With initiatives like the PMMSY scheme and various state government programs, he expressed optimism that the region would thrive. He mentioned efforts to empower farmers through the establishment

of Fisheries Producer Organizations (FPOs) and the revival of fisheries cooperatives.

Mr. Mahanta articulated a clear vision for the North East, aiming to enhance infrastructure, promote economic growth, and foster sustainable development. He envisioned a future where industries prosper, education is accessible, and cultural heritage is preserved alongside technological advancement. He underscored the importance of collaboration among government, business, and civil society in achieving this vision.

He also highlighted the North East's strategic position as a bridge between Asia and South Asia, with its borders shared with Bhutan, China, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. Mr. Mahanta stressed the need for improved infrastructure and inter-state connectivity to harness the region's potential as a trade hub.

In closing, he reaffirmed the commitment to the North East's growth and prosperity, urging collective efforts to transform the region's potential into reality. He expressed hope that the Vibrant North East event would serve as a stepping stone for future initiatives and thanked all contributors for their dedication and hard work.

Mr. Mahanta concluded by stating that the event represents not just a celebration of the region's past and present, but a guiding beacon toward a future filled with promise and opportunity.



Prof. Prabha Shankar Shukla, Vice Chancellor, North Eastern Hill University, Meghalaya

deliberated upon a range of important and flagship schemes related to the agri and allied sectors. Along with plan outlay, eligibility criteria and some of the special considerations for NER, he described in brief various important schemes like Agri infrastructure fund for Farm Gate infrastructure for farmers (AIF),



Formation of microfood enterprises, Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund, Schemes for Promotion and Cultivation of Medicinal Plants, PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PM FME Scheme), North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS), North-East Venture Fund (NEVF), Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE) etc

Shri Nabin Roy, GM, Nabard, Guwahati

Explained the need for food processing and value addition of agriproduce, particularly in the context of NER. He informed about NABARDs on implementation of the Tribal Development Fund in Assam through the approach of orchard-based livelihood development in tribal section of the farming society. He informed that so far, almost 9000 farmers have been covered under this initiative and their livelihood development efforts. The focus crops are banana, lemon, pineapple etc. Shri Roy also highlighted the focus of NABARD in developing the sericulture value chain in the State.



When crops are combined with sericulture, it provides livelihood and income generation opportunities for the rural people based on a 'Soil to Silk' approach. NABARD is also working in Assam with the small tea growers and facilitating the adoption of Kisan Credit Cards by this segment of self-employed people in the state.

Shri Bhaskar Pegu, IAS, Director Agriculture, Government of Assam

He visited the stall highlighted that development of the agri sector has got direct effect to the overall economic development of North eastern Region (NER). He impressed that key agri commodities in the region can result to increase production through scheme



awareness of Govt. among all stakeholders in agri & allied sectors including the farmers through the financial support could play a vital role for development of North East.

Dr. H.D Sarma, Member, Assam Agriculture Commission

Emphasized the vast potential of the fisheries sector in the state, noting that fish is a staple food for the majority of the population. However, he highlighted significant challenges, particularly the availability of improved and quality fish seed necessary for enhancing production. The genetic quality of major fish breeds has been declining, prompting the fisheries department to establish brood banks across the state to address this issue.



Assam requires approximately 300,000 metric tons of fish seed annually, but currently faces a substantial shortfall. In addition to the seed, Dr. Sarma pointed out that the availability of quality feed is another challenge. To tackle this, the state government is promoting the use of defatted rice bran as a key ingredient in fish feed. Furthermore, initiatives like the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEOP) aim to bridge the gap in oil imports by enhancing domestic production through oil palm cultivation.

Mr. Thabang Linus Kholumo, Counsellor at the High Commission of the Kingdom of Lesotho:

Addressed the audience, highlighting the significance of agriculture in Lesotho's economy, where it provides livelihoods for much of the rural population.



He outlined the agricultural sector, which includes:

- **Crops** : The primary crops cultivated in Lesotho are maize, sorghum, wheat, peas, and beans, occupying about 85% of the country's arable land, which constitutes roughly 10% of the total land area.
- **Livestock** : Sheep and goats are the predominant livestock, primarily raised for wool and mohair, with Lesotho being the second-largest producer of mohair globally.
- **Aquaculture** : The Katse Dam and Mohale Dam create optimal conditions for trout production.

Mr. Kholumo noted several characteristics of Lesotho's agriculture :

- The average farm size is approximately 1.3 hectares, with most agricultural production occurring on family-owned farms.
- The agricultural sector's contribution to national GDP has been declining since the 1960s.
- Crop productivity is generally low, with average

yields falling below the regional average.

- Land degradation due to soil erosion and nutrient depletion poses a significant challenge.

Agriculture remains a crucial pillar of rural livelihoods, engaging over 70% of the rural workforce. The wool and mohair industry significantly impacts approximately 250,000 rural households, although about 50% of the population lives below the poverty line.

He emphasized the need for health education within the rural and agricultural sectors. Furthermore, Lesotho is entering into a bilateral mutual transfer of technology process known as Trity, which aims to enhance agricultural productivity and innovation.

Shri Tushar Sharma, Director of the Centre for Agriculture & Rural Development:



welcomed the delegates. Arindam Singha Roy, Executive Director, presented mementos and delivered a vote of thanks to the dignitaries. The program concluded with a vibrant cultural function showcasing the Northeast's rich heritage.

The three-day event wrapped up on September 21, 2024, with a closing ceremony where mementos were presented to all participating organizations, each showcasing beautifully designed and aesthetically organized stalls. Awards were distributed in various categories to recognize the contributions of these organizations.



Concluding Remarks:

Shri Nabin Roy, General Manager of NABARD, expressed gratitude to the farmers for their wholehearted participation. He urged them to take advantage of various schemes and support from organizations like NABARD, highlighting the potential for transforming the region into a vibrant agricultural hub.

Dr. H.D. Sarma, Member of the Assam Agriculture Commission, and Shri Pankaj Pathak, Member of the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India, as well as Advisor to CARD, addressed the farmers, encouraging them to participate in future programs and events in large numbers.

As the three-day mega event concluded in Guwahati, Arindam Singha Roy expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the various departments, speakers, and especially the farmers for their active participation in making the event a success.



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