

DELHI

THE HINDU THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 2010.

Groundnut Variety that requires less irrigation

Oil content is 42-45 percent and yields, 3200-3500 kgs from a hectare

M.J.PRABU

A Majority of farmers, when their crops fail success-ively due to some pest attack, invariably go in either for a change in their cropping pattern, or in some cases, even stop farming. But it is only a few determined farmer who try to find the root cause of the problem and overcome it.

Mr. Dhirajlal Virjibhai Thummar, a groundnut farmer in Gujrat, is credited with developing a new groundnut variety named “Dhiraj 101,” which is resistant to stem rot.

The crop matures in 95-105 days and bears 35-40 pods per plant. About 90-100 kgs of seeds are required for an hectare.

“Groundnut cultivation is a major source of income for many farmer like me in this region with five wells and a bore well, our fields are well irrigated. Apart from groundnut.

“I also grow cotton (BT and Shankar varieties), Sorghum, wheat and vegetables. Sorghum is grown primarily for the cattle and vegetables for our own consumption,” says the farmer.

Complete failure

In the year 2004 he sowed GG-20 groundnut variety and the whole crop got infested with the stem rot disease re-sulting in wilting and almost complete failure of the crop.

“However, I identified a few plants, which are not affected bythis disease. Believing that these may contain some inherent property that makes them stem rot-resistant, I harvested and kept the seeds of these plants separately.”

The farmer sowed the seeds separately in the next season and continued the screening and selection for three consecutive years. Finally he obtained plants, which were free from stem rot and wilt.

Higher oil content

At 3,200-3,500 kg per hectare, the yield is higher than locally cultivated varieties (GG 20 & GG2). The oil content is also higher at around 42-45 percent according to him. This variety performs well in average monsoon as well as in less irrigation conditions.

To promote good crop growth, Mr. Thummar used only herbal pesticide such as neem, kidamari (Dutchman's pipe), tulsi (Holy Basil) and akda (swallow-wort) for controlling insect pests and diseases. He also distributed seeds to some farmers in Amreli, Rajkot and Bhavnagar district of Saurashtra regions. Encouraging feedback was received mentioning that the variety is free from wilt and rust diseases, also giving higher production than the GG20 variety.

They added that it had relatively stronger pods, which remain at a lesser depth than the GG20 variety in the soil.

“Soil conservation and crops that requires less water are urgent needs for farmers to keep agriculture sustainable in changing climatic conditions,” says Mr. Thummar.

Urgent need

Professor Anil Gupta, vice chairperson, National Innovation Foundation says, “Many technical innovations have been centered on groundnut crop in our country. There is an urgent need to invent and popularize crop varieties, which require less water and have more productivity and at the same time are affordable to farmer.”

NIF facilitated the field trial of ‘Dhiraj101’ at the Oil Seed Research Station, Junagrah.

More Yield

The report mentions that it is resistant to stem rot also and its production is 1.5 times more than the variety ‘GG-20’. Also, it performs well even in average monsoon conditions and requires less irrigation.

This variety matures eight to ten days earlier than the GG-20, and also has more average oil content.

For more information readers can contact Prof Anil Gupta through email at anilgb@gmail.com and Mr.Dhirajlal Virjibhai Thummar, Via Mota Akadiya, PO Pipal lag, Taluka Pipal Lag, Mareli 365455, Gujrat, Mobile: 02792-286093, 9825513469

DELHI

THE HINDU THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2010

Sewa kendras to come up with rural job scheme funds

K.Balchand

New Delhi: The Centre has decided to go ahead with the controversial proposal of constructing Rajiv Gandhi Sewa Kendras at the panchayat level at a cost of Rs.10 lakh each from funds meant for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (Mgnregs).

Notwithstanding the opposition against the use of funds meant to provide 100 days of manual employment to the unemployed in rural areas, the Ministry of Rural Development has decided to provide each of the close to 2.75 lakh panchayats in the country with what it calls the Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Sewa Kendra.

While the construction of about 2.75 lakh kendras will cost at least Rs.27,500 crore, at Ministry's decision to construct bigger structures at the block level costing Rs.25 lakh each will entail an additional expenditure of about Rs.1,000 crore.

The Ministry has made it clear that the construction of these building be taken up on apriority basis and that the labour budget be estimated in the next financial budget 2010-11, indicating a hike in the budget allocation for the scheme even though it is a demand driven project.

The Centre has provided close to Rs.40, 000 crore for the Mgnregs during the current financial year.

The Ministry regards the construction of these Kendras as an extension of works under the Mgnregs conforming to norms that the proportion of labour cost to material cost is in the ration of 60:40 of the project cost.

The Ministry allows for the use of funds from the Backward Region Grant Funds (BRGF) in districts where it is applicable to meet the material component, while in the non BRGF districts, the material component could be supplemented by other schemes.

The Ministry hopes that the space will be utilized for training and resource support to Mgnregs workers, panchayati Raj institutions and beneficiaries of other programmes.

Delhi

THE HINDU WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2010

Swaminathan for Revolution in Small Farm Management

T.Nandakumar

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: A revolution in small farm management is essential to revitalize the country's agriculture sector, according to noted agriculture scientist M.S.Swaminathan.

Corporate farming would be detrimental to India. Farming was the largest private sector enterprises in the country, and any bid to take away land from the farmer would be counter-productive. But a symbiotic relationship between farmers and industry, resulting in a win-win situation for both, would be good, he said here on Tuesday.

Dr. Swaminathan was addressing open forum at the 97th Indian Science Congress.

Group farming (farmers sharing machinery and other resources) would be good for a country like India. Farming should be socially sustainable, he said.

Anticipatory research

Dr. Swaminathan called for anticipatory research to help vulnerable communities cope with the impact of climate change and improve the yield and quality of farm produce, including crops, milk and meat. “The threat posed by the rising sea level would require the mapping of vulnerable areas in the Maldives, Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar islands.”

Terming climate change a mega calamity, he said Kerala’s heavily populated coastal areas would feel the impact of the phenomenon. “Climate refugees would be forced to migrate from coastal to inland areas, and food and security would be affected. The effect will also be felt on the farming of rice and plantation crops, which contribute to the State’s economy.” The situation called for intense research into climate resilient crops. He proposed the establishment of an international research centre for below-sea level farming in Kuttanad.

He also underlined the need to marry frontier science with traditional agricultural practices.

Dr. Swaminathan identified four major challenges to science and technology in the 21st century: climate change, nutritional deficiency, concerns over the safety of biotechnology and biodiversity loss. He proposed the establishment of research and development centers in each of the country’s 127 agro climatic zones for crop management.

“Self-sufficiency in home-grown food is a must for a country of our size.” The future, he said, belongs to nations with grains, not guns.

Self-employment

Dr. Swaminathan high-lighted the need to attract youth to the farm sector, suggesting that students be given opportunities to seek self-employment in such agricultural services as pest control and manufacture of value-added products.

Citing Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s inaugural speech at the Indian Science Congress, he said the out-come of the climate change conference in Copenhagen was not satisfactory. He, however, hoped the December 2010 conference in Mexico would lead to legally binding commitments to emission control.

He reiterated the need to have a regulatory mechanism for genetically modified crops. The regulation should enjoy the confidence of people.

Dr. Swaminathan expressed concern at the continuing loss of biodiversity due to habitat destruction and deforestation in the country. He called for community involvement in conservation programmes. “Biodiversity is the feedstock for modern biotechnology.” nSupply of micro and macro nutrients, clean drinking water, primary healthcare and sanitation were important for nutritional security.