

AICTE to develop curriculum for Bamboo Engineering and Design

By TIOL News Service

NEW DELHI, FEB 28, 2020: THE National Bamboo Mission anchored at the Department of Agriculture Cooperation & Farmers Welfare organized a two day conference “National Consultation on Opportunities and Challenges for Bamboo in India” through the virtual platform on 25th and 26th of February 2021. NITI Aayog and Invest India also joined hands with the National Bamboo Mission to conduct the event. The aim of the brainstorming session was to deliberate on the bamboo ecosystem for promoting the holistic growth of the sector across the entire value chain. The deliberations of experts and stakeholders from various fields would further accelerate the efforts of the National Bamboo Mission to pin point solutions to issues facing the sector.

Mr Nitin Gadkari Union Minister of MSME inaugurated the conference on 25th February 2021 in a ceremony graced by Mr Narendra Singh Tomar, Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Dr Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, Mr Kailash Choudhary, Union Minister of State of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Mr Sanjay Aggarwal, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare and Mr Indevan Pandey, Special Secretary, Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region. ^ ^

The conference benefitted from the participation of eminent professionals from various aspects related to bamboo farming, research, innovation, entrepreneurs and industry and attendees from research institutes, State officials, farmers and entrepreneurs. It witnessed discussions on all subjects related to the end to end progression of the bamboo industry from planting material to high end engineered products and marketing. The topics discussed were Bamboo for AtmaNirbhar Bharat, Promoting Exports and Global Branding, Success Stories, Availability of Feedstock & Plantations, Innovations, Research & Development, Skill Development, Access to Institutional Credit and International Cooperation etc.

Some important ideas/challenges that emerge from the discussions were as follows:

Adoption of agro-forestry models by the farmers, especially to tide over the initial 3-4 years of gestation of bamboo plantation; Intercropping with ginger, pulses, lemon grass, etc were suggested as a viable option. Use of good credible planting material and improved agronomic practices to increase yields were considered to be absolutely vital for the sector. Plantations on culturable wastelands should be encouraged on a large scale to provide feed stock to industry. Integrated primary processing units for the complete utilization of bamboo i.e. a zero waste policy would lead to optimum use of bamboo in the country. To overcome the issue of high transport cost especially from the North Eastern Region, use of waterways and transport subsidy options need to be explored. Incentives available across sectors for bamboo need to be compiled for use by potential entrepreneurs. Steps need to be taken to encourage startups, entrepreneurship in the bamboo sector. The GeM portal will create a dedicated window for registration of bamboo products to add visibility of bamboo products in the electronic market space for Government procurement. The need for mass production related to bamboo in areas such as construction, bio CNG, ethanol etc. would provide a real fillip to the sector and add to the income of farmers. Import substitution should be an important aim such as for agarbatti and engineered wood. R&D and technological upgradation by linking clusters with scientific and technological institutions was stressed. The Government has introduced several new schemes such as the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund and Formation of 10000 FPOs. These schemes will be dovetailed with the bamboo sector for improving credit and economies of scale for small marginal farmers respectively. Skill training development in agriculture, handicrafts, construction, furniture, beauty wellness through Qualification Packs of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is being undertaken by National Bamboo Mission. Requirement of credit was considered to be one of the major challenges facing the sector. Appropriate credit products, credit guarantee and interest subvention were flagged in the discussion as the need of the hour. International best practices and collaborations can be encouraged with other countries such as Japan, Vietnam etc.

The conference concluded with a valedictory session on 26th February 2021 afternoon. Dr. Alka Bhargava, Additional Secretary summed up the discussions of the conference and outlined the way forward for the sector. The Panel Discussion on the way ahead for the Indian bamboo sector was attended by Dr. Sanjay Kumar, Director General of Forests & SS and Mr Pasha Patel, Bamboo activist from Maharashtra. Ms. Chhavi Jha, Joint Secretary, DAC & FW delivered a vote of thanks to all the dignitaries, panelists and attendees.