

Farmers switching to aroma crops like Lavender in J&K: MoS

By TIOL News Service

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Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge) Earth Sciences; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh said that “Purple Revolution” has shifted focus to Agri Tech StartUps.

In an exclusive media interview, Dr Jitendra Singh said that due to high monetary returns, farmers in hilly areas of Jammu and Kashmir are switching from traditional farming to aroma crops like lavender in a big way. He added that aroma crops are both drought and pest resistant, and CSIR is providing all kind of technical support for promoting this Agri Start-up boon in the UT.

The Minister informed that CSIR is also planning to introduce the aroma crops in other hilly States with similar climatic conditions like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and in North-Eastern States.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, Centre's Aroma Mission, ably supported by CSIR, is changing the mind-set of farmers and more and more of them are taking up the cultivation of aroma crops like lavender, lemon grass, rose and marigold for extracting costly oils to be used in many industries. He said, the oils selling about Rs 9,000 per litre are used in making incense sticks and also being used for room sprays, cosmetics and therapeutics.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, there is a need for widespread publicity that IIIM Jammu was helping the Start-ups in aroma and lavender farming to sell their produce. Prominent companies like Mumbai based Ajmal Biotech Private Limited, Aditi International and Navnaitri Gamika, etc., are the primary buyers, he added.

Last month, Dr Jitendra Singh inaugurated the country's first 'Lavender Festival' at Bhaderwah, the birthplace of India's Purple Revolution and said that it became possible only because of the progressive thinking of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who after taking oath as PM in 2014 stressed that the regions which did not receive due priority in the past would be raised to the level of developed regions.

Dr Jitendra Singh informed that Aroma Mission is attracting Start-ups and agriculturists from across the country, and during Phase-I, CSIR helped cultivation on 6,000 hectares of land and covered 46 Aspirational districts across the country. More than 44,000 persons have been trained and several crores of farmers' revenue generated. In the second Phase of Aroma Mission, it is proposed to engage over 45,000 skilled human resources with the aim of benefitting more than 75,000 farming families across the country.

CSIR-IIIM introduced lavender to farmers in Doda, Ramban, Kishtwar, Kathua, Udhampur, Rajouri, Pulwama, Anantnag, Kupwara and Bandipora districts of J&K. It provided free quality planting material and end-to-end technology package on cultivation, processing, value addition and marketing of the Lavender crop to the farmers.

CSIR-IIIM also installed 50 distillation units - 45 fixed and five mobile - at different locations across J&K under CSIR-Aroma Mission.

Lavender cultivation has employed about 5,000 farmers and young entrepreneurs in geographically remote areas of J&K. More than 1,000 farming families are cultivating it on more than 200 acres.