

**Press release - Best performing State Award for Tamil Nadu
under the National Horticulture Mission
New Delhi – 17/2/2012**

The Hon'ble Chief Minister has given a big thrust to development of Horticulture. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has ordered that production and productivity of Horticulture Crops shall be increased through adoption of new and advanced technologies. The state is a leader in Precision Farming which was introduced for the first time in the state.

Tamil Nadu was given the Best performing state Award under the National Horticulture Mission by the Hon'ble Union Minister for Agriculture Thiru. Sharad Pawar in the presence of Thiru. Charan Das Mahant, Hon'ble Minister of state for Agriculture. The Awards were presented during the National conference on Horticulture Production and productivity, organised by the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. The conference was inaugurated today 17.2.2012 at Hotel Ashoka in Delhi by Hon'ble Union Minister for Agriculture Thiru. Sharad Pawar. The Awards were received by officials of the Horticulture department and Dr. Chandra Mohan B, IAS, who was the previous Commissioner of Horticulture and Plantation Crops on behalf of the state.

In the Conference, the States were given awards for their performance under the National Horticulture Mission. The citation of the award reads as under.

'Tamil Nadu State has been an active participant under the National Horticulture Mission (NHM) through its State Horticulture Development Mission since the inception of the NHM scheme in 2005-06. As a result of NHM intervention, the production of Horticulture crops has increased from 1.1 million MT IN 2004-05 TO ABOUT 18 MILLION MT and is now contributing about 8% of horticulture production in the country. Major share of production is from vegetables (42%), the fruits being Banana and Mango followed by vegetables (36%) and Plantation crops like Coconut, Cashew nut and Areca nut. Tamil Nadu has attained leadership in the production of banana and is the third largest producer of horticultural crops in the country.

The achievement has been possible as a result of the sustained efforts made by the state under the dynamic leadership of its Mission Director, Dr. Santhosh Babu and his predecessor Dr. Chandra Mohan B, who have made tireless efforts in ensuring effective delivery of the NHM programmes in conjunction with other programmes of the Government of India such as Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), Micro Irrigation,

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) etc, in an integrated manner. Dr. Chandra Mohan has been instrumental in promoting precision farming, high density planting and protected cultivation of flowers and vegetables and bringing out publications on the basis of case studies and success stories on these crops.

In recognition of the meritorious performance by the State the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Co-operation places on record its appreciation and recognises Tamil Nadu as one of the BEST PERFORMING STATE under the National Horticulture Mission”

The award recognises that under the National Horticulture Mission Tamil Nadu has promoted Area expansion of focus Horticulture crops, High density planting, precision farming and protected cultivation of flowers and vegetables. The State has attained leadership in the production of fruits especially banana and is the third largest producer of horticultural crops in the country

In Tamil Nadu, the implementation of the scheme started in the year 2005-06 with 100% assistance. From the year 2007-08 onwards, the scheme is being implemented with the financial assistance from the central Government and State Government in the ratio of 85:15. The scheme has been launched with the objective of increasing the area, production and productivity of Horticulture crops so as to ensure increased and sustainable incomes to farmers.

Under the National Horticulture Mission, the cultivation of nine focus crops, viz. Mango, Amla, Banana, Cashew, Chillies, Turmeric, Flowers, Cocoa, Medicinal & Aromatic plants is being promoted through a cluster approach. 2.5 lakh Ha has been brought under Horticulture cultivation and 3.5 lakh farmers have benefitted with a financial outlay of Rs. 512 Crores from the inception of the scheme in 2005-06. The scheme is being implemented in 22 districts of Tamil Nadu viz. Coimbatore, Cuddalore, Dharmapuri, Dindigul, Erode, Kanyakumari, Madurai, Ramnad, Salem, Sivaganga, Theni, Trichy, Tirunelveli, The Nilgiris, Kanyakumari, Perambalur, Pudukkottai, Thanjavur, Vellore, Villupuram, Tiruppur and Ariyalur.

Hi-density Planting Programme

Under the scheme, Tamil Nadu pioneered the introduction of Hi-density planting in Mango and Cashew in the country. High density planting increases productivity of crops by many folds. This technology increases the plant population in a given unit area and promotes adoption of canopy management and intensive crop cultivation practices. E.g. In normal planting 100 Mango saplings are planted in one hectare of Land; Under High density planting nearly 400 Mango saplings are planted in one hectare of land. Under normal cropping density the average

yield is about 5-6 MT per Ha. Under High density planting the yield is about 10-12 MT per Ha. The plant density is optimally managed by adopting canopy management techniques where the tree canopy is pruned according to well laid out schedules. The crop is irrigated through drip and manured through fertigation. About 15000 ha have been brought under high density cultivation in the state under the scheme.

Precision farming

Precision farming has been pioneered by Tamil Nadu and is a leading proponent of this technology. More than 20,000 ha of area have been brought under precision farming for Horticulture crops. The technology includes proper selection of crops, crop varieties, drip irrigation with fertigation and scientific crop cultivation practices. Precision farming has been practiced in a big way for growing vegetables and fruits like Banana in the state. Farmers have achieved 30 - 50% increase in productivity across various crops. The achievement of the state in promoting cultivation of Tissue culture Banana under precision farming has been commendable. The farmers used to obtain yields of 25 to 30 MT/Ha when they cultivated traditional varieties of bananas. After switching to cultivation of Tissue culture Grand Naine variety farmers have obtained yields of 80 to 100 MT/ Ha.

Green House Cultivation (Protected Cultivation)

Tamil Nadu has emerged as a hub for protected cultivation. Hosur, Ooty, Kodaikanal and Coimbatore have emerged as growth clusters. Protected cultivation ensures controlled atmospheric conditions which are very much conducive for plant growth besides protecting the crop from the vagaries of nature. Drip with fertigation gives a boost to the crop growth and extends the crop harvesting period. This has emerged as a viable technology for providing farmers with manifold increase in their incomes from small and marginal holdings. Cut flowers like Rose, Carnation, and Vegetables like colored capsicum, tomatoes and cucumbers are being cultivated. The success of protected cultivation is mainly due to the increased incomes realised by the farmers. On an average farmers earn about Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 30,000 per month from a 1000 Sq.Mt. of Green House.

About 1700 green houses have been established till now in the state at a cost of Rs. 48.08 Crores in 152.5 ha

Development of Horticulture infrastructure

Critical infrastructure for growth of the sector has been established under the scheme in the state. Three Tissue culture units, Ten Seed processing units, Two Disease forecasting units, Six Bio-control labs, four Leaf tissue analysis labs and more than 100 nurseries have been established in the state. In the current year new crops like onion, papaya, acid lime ginger mandarin orange, rosemary and citronella will be introduced.

Joint Director of Horticulture