

Agriculture important Current Affairs-2019



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The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) have agreed to collaborate in the area of food and agriculture.

Its Relevance

ICAR and CSIR have agreed to collaborate and work together on mutually agreed areas of agri-foods, medicinal and aromatic plants, nutraceuticals, precision agriculture, big data analysis, use of artificial intelligence, genetic modifications in cotton, application of sensors in agriculture, post-harvest management and agricultural mechanization

The huge network of Krishi Vigyan Kendras available with ICAR will be roped in for technology demonstration and dissemination.

A joint working committee will be constituted within a month to deliberate and formulate the collaborative programmes and will meet four times a year. ICAR and CSIR have agreed to form a steering committee to monitor the progress.

2. Cabinet approves "Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN yojana"

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the "Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN (Jaiv Indhan- Vatavaran Anukool fasal awashesh Nivaran) Yojana"

It aims at providing financial support to Integrated Bioethanol Projects using lignocellulosic biomass and other renewable feedstock

Lignocellulose refers to plant dry matter (biomass), is composed of cellulose, hemicellulose, and lignin

The JI-VAN Yojana will be supported with total financial outlay of Rs.1969.50 crore for the period from 2018-19 to 2023-24

Details

Under this Yojana, 12 Commercial Scale and 10 demonstration scale Second Generation (2G) ethanol Projects will be provided a Viability Gap Funding (VGF) support in two phases: a) Phase-I (2018-19 to 2022-23): wherein six commercial projects and five demonstration projects will be supported b)

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Phase-II (2020-21 to 2023-24): wherein remaining six commercial projects and five demonstration projects will be supported

The scheme focuses to incentivise 2G Ethanol sector and support this nascent industry by creating a suitable ecosystem for setting up commercial projects and increasing Research & Development in this area

It's Relevance

Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas has targeted to achieve 10% blending percentage of Ethanol in petrol by 2022

But the highest ever ethanol procurement stands around 150 crore litres during the year 2017-18 which is sufficient for around 4.22% blending on Pan India basis

Therefore, an alternate route viz. Second Generation (2G) Ethanol from biomass and other wastes is being explored by MoP&NG to bridge the supply gap for Ethanol Blending Programme

In this direction, "Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana" has been launched as a tool to create 2G Ethanol capacity in the country and attract investments in this new sector

Background

Government of India launched Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme in 2003 for undertaking blending of ethanol in Petrol to address environmental concerns due to fossil fuel burning, provide remuneration to farmers, subsidize crude imports and achieve forex savings

Presently, EBP is being run in 21 States and 4 UTs of the country

Under EBP programme, OMCs are to blend upto 10% of ethanol in Petrol

The present policy allows procurement of ethanol produced from molasses and non-food feed stock like celluloses and lignocelluloses material including petrochemical route.

3. Bezbaruah reappointed Tea Board chairman

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The Commerce Ministry has reappointed P K Bezbaruah as the chairman of Tea Board for a period of three years

Bezbaruah is the owner of Bokahola Tea Company in Assam and was earlier appointed as chairman of Tea Board as its first non-IAS officer

Tea Board

The present Tea Board is functioning as a statutory body of the Central Government under the Ministry of Commerce

The Board is constituted of 31 members (including Chairman) drawn from Members of Parliament, tea producers, tea traders, tea brokers, consumers, and representatives of Governments from the principal tea producing states, and trade unions

The Board is reconstituted every three years

The origin of the Tea Board can be traced to 1903 when the Indian Tea Cess Bill was passed to provide for levying a cess on tea exports

The proceeds of the cess were to be used for the promotion of Indian tea both within and outside India

4. Karnataka launches water conservation scheme

Karnataka Government has launched a major water conservation scheme titled 'Jalamrutha', which focusses on drought-proofing measures, including protection and rejuvenation of waterbodies

The scheme is important as Karnataka which has the largest drought-prone land in the country next only to Rajasthan

Details

The scheme has been launched by Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department of the Karnataka Government

'Jalamrutha' will deploy scientific approaches to water budgeting, water harvesting and water conservation through the use of geospatial data, satellite imagery, topographical and geological data

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It will be a community driven movement, which will be implemented by key line departments of the government, Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector institutions

Water conservation strategy under this scheme comprises four components of water literacy, rejuvenation of waterbodies, creation of new waterbodies as well as development of watersheds and afforestation activities

It will operate on a four-tier institutional structure with planning and execution committees being set up at village, taluk, district and State levels

The Government of Karnataka has decided to declare 2019 as the 'Year of Water' to emphasise the importance of water becoming a scarce commodity and the need to conserve it.

5. India nominates NITI Aayog's Ramesh Chand to head Food and Agriculture Organisation.

United Nations, India has nominated NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand for the post of the new Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Director-General

Election for FAO's top leadership post with a four-year term of office starting on August 2019 will take place in Rome between June 22-29 at the 41st Session of FAO's Conference in Rome

Background

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.

It was established in October 1945 with the objective of eliminating hunger and improving nutrition and standards of living by increasing agricultural productivity

The conference elects a 49-member Council, which serves as its executive organ

The only Indian to head the FAO is Binay Ranjan Sen, who was the Director-General from 1956 to 1967 .

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