KARNATAKA GOVT TO FUND TWO NEW AGRICULTURE CENTRES

THE CENTRE WILL ENHANCE VALUE-ADDITIONS

Gururaj Jamkhandi, June 1, 2014

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The state government will fund a centre each at the University of Horticultural Sciences in Bagalkot and International Centre for Agriculture at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Dharwad respectively.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced this after he met delegates from the Texas Agricultural and Management University, USA in Bangalore early last week.

Delegates from Texas A and M University, Mark Hussey, Interim President, and Bhimu Patil, director, Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center, met chief minister Siddaramaiah along with vice-chancellor of UAS, Dharwad, D P Biradar. Bhimu Patil initiated the tieup between Texas A&M University (TAMU) and UAS-Dharwad (UASD) 12 years ago with the signing of an MoU under the guidance of Nobel laureate Norman Borlaug.

The success of the decade-long exchange activities among students and faculty, and reciprocal visits of administrators between the two institutes, the chief minister said had prompted Karnataka to immediately provide funds to start the two new centres.

VFIC director Bhimu Patil told Business Standard that the Texas A&M University’s Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center’s (VFIC) Foods for Health Initiative and The Borlaug Institute of International Agriculture will play important roles as strategic partners to these new centres and provide training opportunities for scientists and students from the UAS-D and UHSB.

These interdisciplinary centres will collaborate with other agricultural and horticultural universities, institutes and centres that do work relating to medical sciences, food and nutrition sciences, in Karnataka and beyond. The Foods for Health Center will enhance the addition of value to fruits and vegetables, and food in general, by conducting research both at the VFIC and at the new Centre of Excellence in Bangalore.

The Centre will leverage the research conducted at the VFIC using the “Consumer to Farm” approach, including pre and post-harvest aspects of retaining health-promoting compounds, examining their role in human health to reduce risk from chronic diseases, and increasing food and nutritional security using commercial crops and unexplored vegetables and fruits.

It is anticipated that this Centre would focus on research and educational activities to reduce the risk of malnutrition, increase the value of produce grown in Karnataka, and enhance the export potential of specific crops.

“TAMU leads in international agriculture through The Borlaug Institute for Agriculture and the international centre at Dharwad, under a tieup with TAMU, would be a win-win for both institutes and the countries. The immediate goal of this centre will be to host international scientists after their retirement, to help them continue
to contribute towards improving global agriculture. The centre will emulate and remember the legacy of Borlaug, who worked until the age of 95, in international agriculture, specifically in Indian agriculture, and feeding the world,” Bhimu Patil said.

Other activities planned in partnership with these two centres and TAMU include developing a Dual Certificate Program in food, nutritional security, and sustainability, and training selected scientists at the VFIC in the area of foods for health, with courses from horticultural and agricultural universities in the state.