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MoES Webinar Series: Talk on Agro Advisory services by Dr. Kamaljit Ray, IMD, New Delhi

New Delhi, August 4 (Vigyan Samachar): The Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune is organizing an Earth Science Popular Lecture webinar series in coordination with other MoES institutes in the country.

Dr. Kamaljit Ray, Scientist, IMD, New Delhi, spoke in an engagingly delivered lecture on Agro Advisory Services (AAS) of the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) that has been supporting farmers for the last 50 years. The advisories help farmers to take advantage of favorable weather and reduces the adverse effects of malevolent weather. These services have contributed significantly in increasing agricultural productivity and thus improving food security in India. Dr. Ray spoke on IMD's next 5-year plan (2021-2026) where setting up of a functional District Agro-Meteorological Sector Unit (DAMU) in all 720 districts of the country would be prioritized to strengthen agricultural practice efficiency through better weather forecast. She said that IMD has the vision to provide multi-channel communication with direct dissemination to at least one member in each farming house. She said that farmer awareness programs would be continuing in association with non-governmental organizations, farmer co-operatives and water users associations to increase their awareness among farmers at the sub-district level.

In her talk Dr. Ray said that the goal of AAS in the coming years is to increase the economic benefit of the farmers by 95 %. She added that in 2010, the Agro-Meteorological Advisory Services (AAS) enabled the farmers to increase their annual economic profit by 24% through cultivation of 4 principal crops, viz. wheat, paddy, sugarcane, and cotton amounting to Rs. 38,463 crore. There was a rise of this amount to the tune of Rs. 42,000 crore in 2015. According to Dr. Ray, farmer awareness programs were organized at 1453 locations across the country during 2020 to raise awareness about their services among farmers. Currently, 42 million farmers are receiving SMS advisors through the farmers' portals on their mobile phones.

Till now 156 District Agromet Unit (DAMU) has been established in 330 districts and 700 Agromet Advisory Service (AAS) District Bulletins have been prepared and issued to meet the requirements of farmers. Weather forecasting advisories as alerts and warning via SMS enable farmers to effectively plan farming operations under different weather conditions and reduce crop losses. Dr. Ray said that every year, India is facing natural disasters due to the weather and the other threats due to climate change. This is one of the main reasons of poor productivity in agriculture, while 15% of Indian GDP is dependent on agriculture and it provides employment to more than half (55%) of the working population.

Dr. Ray suggested that extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and cyclones would be dealt with through strengthening weather observations at the panchayat level across the country through historical observations, satellite, and forecasting tools and appropriate hydrological models. Dr. Ray is presently heading the plans and schemes of IMD under this umbrella scheme. She has 27 years of research experience in the Operational Weather Forecasting and Extreme weather event. She has led to the operationalization of the Nowcast Service of IMD through a network of Doppler Weather radars.

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