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Unity in diversity, glorious in its culture and nature
It is one of the earth's beautiful creatures,
From beauty of alpines and serenity of plains
The sight of wild life here is mesmerizingly insane
We call them unique, we call them vibrant
This is our north east India
An inevitable part of India- Unknown*

The North-Eastern part of India is one of the most culturally vibrant areas in the nation. Due to its abundance of natural resources, the North-East is a very embryonic region in terms of food and agricultural industries. Due to a lack of opportunities, this region, where 70% of the population depends on agriculture, has not thrived. As a result, an event called "VIBRANT NORTH EAST" supported by Ministry of Doner (Government of India), , Government of Assam, North Eastern Council (Government of India), organized by Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development ("CARD") and Co-organised by the Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture ("ICFA"). This event made sure that all significant luminaries from various agricultural sectors, government authorities, and private groups came together on one forum and made the required efforts to support the development of the North-Eastern region. A concerted effort was also made to educate farmers on the various government initiatives, programs, employment and revenue-generating opportunities available to them.



Inaugural Session- Vibrant North East Summit 2023 (16th May)

- **Shri PL Thanga IAS (rtd.)**, Chairman, VNE 2023 and former Secretary, NEC
- **Shri Naveen Dhingra, CGM, NABARD, Guwahati**
- **Shri Tarun Shridhar, IAS (rtd.)** Hon'ble Member, Central Administrative Tribunal and former Secretary, AHD&F, Government of India
- **Shri Pankaj Pathak**, Member, Ministry of Labour & Employment, GoI and Advisor, CARD
- **Dr. Sawar Dhanania**, Chairman, Rubber Board of India
- **Dr. MJ Khan**, Chairman, Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA)
- **Cmde Rajiv Ashok**, Managing Director, NERAMAC
- **Shri Shantanu Pendsey**, CGM (ABU) Corp. Centre, State Bank of India (SBI), Mumbai
- **Shri Vincent Menachery Devassy**, Circle CGM, State Bank of India, Guwahati



Shri PL Thanga IAS (rtd.), *Chairman, VNE 2023 and former Secretary, NEC*

Shri PL Thanga in his welcome speech told the august gathering about how an event like Vibrant North East has been trying to offer a credible platform to all stakeholders of agri sector in North Eastern Region (NER). He highlighted the contribution of Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD), the main organizer for this event in the field of agriculture across the Country and particularly in the northeast.



Shri Naveen Dhingra, *CGM, NABARD, Guwahati*



Shri Naveen Dhingra, CGM, NABARD, Guwahati underlined the efforts of NABARD in developing the agri and allied sector in NER. Agro processing is an important tool for increasing the overall efficiency of the agri sector in NER and NABARD is supporting a number of projects related to value chain development, post harvest management and agro processing. He urged the farmers to come forward and avail various schemes and enhance their livelihood and family income.

Shri Tarun Shridhar, IAS (rtd.) *Hon'ble Member, Central Administrative Tribunal and former Secretary, AHD&F, Government of India*

Shri Tarun Shridhar, IAS (rtd.) Hon'ble Member, Central Administrative Tribunal and former Secretary, AHD&F, Government of India in his address to the audience including a large number of farmers highlighted the need for reducing waste in the agri production system. According to him, the real challenge is percolation of scheme benefits at ground level to the farmers and the need is to increase awareness of various support mechanisms available for farmers.



Shri Pankaj Pathak, *Member, Ministry of Labour & Employment, GoI*



during his energetic speech directly interacted with the farmers and motivated them to work harder. He highlighted the support mechanism and the focus of the State Government in sync with the Central Government to take all the welfare schemes in agri sector to the doorstep of the farmers. He highlighted how even during COVID 19 pandemic when the whole world came to a complete stop, there was no stop in agri production activities as people need food to eat and survive.

Dr. Sawar Dhanania, *Chairman, Rubber Board of India*

explained how rubber has emerged as one of the major engines of economic growth and income enhancement of the rural masses in the North East. After Kerala, Tripura is the second largest rubber producing State in the Country and efforts are on to increase the area under rubber cultivation in other NE states too. He referred to the need to focus on awareness and capacity building among the rural masses in terms of cultivation, extraction and processing of rubber in the region.



Comde Rajiv Ashok, *Managing Director, NERAMAC*



highlighted the continuous efforts of NERAMAC in NER to develop the food processing sector in NER. NERAMAC has taken up its role as a dynamic and vibrant marketing organisation essentially to support farmers of the North East Region in all its sincerity. Apart from providing a comprehensive marketing solution to farmers and entrepreneurs associated with agri-horti sector in NER, it also actively engages in livelihood generation, skill upgradation and training programs at the grass root level.

Shri Shantanu Pendsey, *CGM (ABU) Corp. Centre, State Bank of India (SBI), Mumbai*

highlighted the focus of SBI on farm sector lending. SBI in India has been a pioneer and a market leader in agriculture-financing with a huge portfolio in agricultural advances that covering more than 1.1 lakh farmers and their families. He pointed out how SBI caters to the agriculturists and farmers needs and has a vast network of urban and rural branches.



Shri Vincent Menachery Devassy, *Circle CGM, State Bank of India, Guwahati*



demonstrated the commitment of SBI in entire NER to make banking available to the farmers. As the largest banker, State Bank of India has increased its agriculture advances in Northeast India. However, the Credit-Deposit Ratio (CDR) of various scheduled commercial banks in Assam has been less than the desired level for many reasons.

Dr. MJ Khan, *Chairman, Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA)*

in his deliberations mentioned that the formation of about 500 FPOs in NER has provided institutional arrangements at the grassroots level for providing economy of scale and aggregation platform for supplies of inputs and technologies to farmers on one hand and to food processing companies, retailers and exporters on the other hand. However, according to him, FPOs alone cannot suffice without forward linkages with the industry, trade and technology institutions. He declared that ICFA will soon initiate discussions with the relevant institutions such as NEC, NERAMAC, NEDFI, SBI and NABARD etc. and the State Governments to finalize the list of commodities for forming Trade Boards. Few commodities such as Black Rice, Pineapple, jackfruit etc. are important in NER and should receive focus on priority.



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NE Agro and Food Processing Summit

Wednesday, 17th May 2023



Shri PL Thanga IAS (rtd.), *Chairman, VNE 2023 and former Secretary, NEC*

highlighted how development of the agri sector has direct relevance to the overall economic development of North eastern Region (NER). He observed that on an average scale, processing of some of the key agri commodities in the region can result to rice increase by atleast 4 times. He stressed the importance of scheme awareness among all stakeholders in agri & allied sectors including the farmers and also pointed out how the financial institutions can play a vital role for implementation of various schemes. He also expressed the need to analyse quantifiable outcomes vis-s-vis the expenditure for any scheme implementation.



Shri MI Meity, *Advisor (Horticulture) to North Eastern Council (NEC)*

in his deliberation explained the process flow of different activities related to farm sector within NEC. All the constituent States in NER provide the Annual Action Plans and the priority schemes for the respective States to NEC, which in turn provides comprehensive development programs to the respective States. NEC usually prefers to focus on crops based on the inter-linkage and importance in terms of tradition and cultural landscape of the states in particular and the region as a whole. Shri Meity also highlighted on some ground level challenges, particularly in terms of market linkages. Bamboo is extensively found in many of the States in NER but most of them grow in remote and difficult to access terrains of the region. This poses considerable challenge in procurement, transportation and final market linkage. There is also problems of trade risks for various commodities when sent to larger States outside the NER. For perishable fresh products, if the consignment gets stranded in the receiving terminal markets in larger States outside NER, there is deterioration in quality and the price falls below the previously negotiated price



Dr. BC Bora, *Member, Assam Agri Commission*



presented the competitive advantages that Assam as a State enjoys in NER in terms of agri and allied sectors. The State is blessed with fertile soil, pristine nature, abundant rainfall, a huge river system apart from favorable agro climatic conditions. These advantages provide opportunities to enhance the per capita income of the State through the engine of agri and allied sector driven livelihood activities. However, there are challenges still to be overcome. One of the major weaknesses of the agri sector is its lower productivity compared to other major states for many of the important crops. The farmers even today despite various concerted efforts lack significantly in terms of training and awareness. Dr. Bora also highlighted how many of the distinct opportunities in the sector is not yet fully tapped. Premium Quality Rice (PQR) is one of them whose full economic potential is yet to be tapped for the larger welfare of the farmers and strengthening the agri value chain. Maize is another crop which bears significant potential and in recent years, area under maize cultivation has increased, but proper market linkage and adequate price realization by farmers remains a challenge. There needs to be more investment in the agri sector in areas like processing, value addition and marketing linkages.

Shri Pranjal Prakash Sarma, *resource person from Assam Agri Commission*

highlighted some of the achievements of the agri and allied sectors in Assam in recent years. Till date, almost 4 lakh hectares of rice fallow has been brought under mustard cultivation. He also highlighted the immense potential of the fisheries sector in the State considering that majority of the population eats fish. However, the challenge in the fisheries sectors is availability of improved and quality fish seed for production enhancement. The overall genetic quality of the major fish breeds are going down and to solve the issue, brood banks have been set up by the fisheries department across the State. Assam needs 3 lakh MT of fish seed annually but there is a huge shortfall currently. Along with fish seed, quality feed is also a challenge in Assam and to solve this problem, the State government is promoting use of defatted rice oil bran as a fish feed ingredient.



Shri Tarun Shridhar, IAS (rtd.) *Hon'ble Member, Central Administrative Tribunal and former Secretary, AHD&F, Government of India*



highlighted the importance of treating the entire agri sector as a production system. There is no other production system in the economy which sustains and endures loss as much as upto 30% like the agri sector does. This itself is one of the major reasons of lack of efficiency and low profitability of the agri sector in the country. He also pointed to the insane gap that is observed between the price of the fresh produce at the farm gate level and the price of the processed products at the

final customer end. The benefit of this huge price escalation is not always shared by the farmers, who are the original players in the value chain. He also highlighted the importance of maintaining the freshness of the produce as it moves across the value chain and reaches the final consumer. Indians traditionally prefer fresh vegetables and farm products unlike the people in Western nations where most of the products are either processed or value added.



Dr. MJ Khan, *Chairman, Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA)*

pointed out that an event like Vibrant North East 2023 has usually a high outcome quotient in terms of the level of awareness these kinds of events create. In today's age of social media and fast paced information dissemination ecosystem, outcomes and messages emanating from an event like Vibrant North East 2023 spread fast and wide. He also pointed out how India's agriculture sector is worth about US\$ 500 billion and only next to China but unfortunately how India is way behind many countries in terms of food processing. Dr. Khan said many a time in the agriculture sector, value chain does not even exist. It is just the margin chain which is at play as value of the margin keeps increasing instead of any value addition as the commodity keeps moving across the chain from farmers to the final consumers. Dr. Khan stressed upon the importance of a market driven production system rather than the production driven approach largely seen



among various government agencies involved with the agriculture sector. For NER, it is important to design a resilient trade facilitation and market access system while identifying some five or six flagship products from the region and connecting them with markets in rest of the country as well as the international markets. Need is also to redesign the course curriculum in agri educational institutions and incorporate the aspect of agri-marketing. A policy level thrust for market driven agriculture production system is important in today's world. He also announced that ICFA will establish NE Commodity Boards for five or six major commodities from the region which have unique selling propositions at domestic and international markets. To execute formation and functioning of these Agro Trade Boards, ICFA would launch its Agriculture Council for NER. ICFA has already formed State Agriculture Councils, comprised of Government officials, industry CEOs, bankers and heads of institutions, in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Uttarakhand. Dr. Khan further added that the Chamber would soon host a Agro Industry CEOs meet in Guwahati and partner with NERAMAC to facilitate forward market linkages with the food industry. It may be noted that ICFA is the only agri chamber, recognized by the Ministry of Commerce. Dr. Khan further added that the Group would also organise International Organic Conference in Shillong, which it had hosted first time in the year 2004, and based on that NE Organic Program was prepared, which was later taken up on national level and NPOP was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Shri Ravi Soni, *Chief Executive Officer- Grus and Grade*

showcased the importance of reduction in input supplies/service cost through aggregation and achieving better yield per hectare through precision farming. He explained how G&G product allows comprehensive traceability of Agri commodities (farm to fork) using blockchain allowing commercialization of nutritionally enhanced food, naturally or organically produced crop, etc. This creates trust and transparency for the export of agri produce into both domestic as well as international market ensuring higher price realization by farmers, greater yield and earning per acre for the farmers, lower input costs and access to markets.



Shri Nabin Roy, *GM, Nabard, Guwahati*



explained the need for food processing and value addition of agri produce, particularly in the context of NER. He informed about NABARD's on implementation of the Tribal Development Fund in Assam through the approach of orchard based livelihood development in tribal section of the farming society. He informed that so far, almost 9000 farmers have been covered under this initiative and their livelihood development efforts. The focus crops are banana, lemon, pineapple etc. Shri Roy also highlighted the focus of NABARD in developing the sericulture value chain in the

State. When crops are combined with sericulture, it provides livelihood and income generation opportunities for the rural people based on a 'Soil to Silk' approach. NABARD is also working in Assam with the small tea growers and facilitating the adoption of Kisan Credit Cards by this segment of self employed people in the State.

Shri Parameswaran K, *Regional Manager- Food & Water Division, Alfa Laval India Private Limited*

showcased the solutions provided by his organization for the food and agriculture sector. This Swedish MNC offers a range of hitech and modern processing equipments for organizations in sectors like food nd beverages, edible oil and fats, industrial fermentation, pulp and paper, sugar, water treatment, refrigeration and air-conditioning etc.



Shri Kamlesh Kumar Singh, *DGM, (ABU), SBI LHO, Guwahati*

highlighted some of the challenges currently faced by the bankers while operating in the farming sector provided the general perspectives of the bankers in this region. The credit flow of SBI to agri and allied sector is about 38% of the target laid under the annual credit plan. Arunachal Pradesh ranks highest at around 91% credit disbursal as against the target while the lowest is for Meghalaya with just 17.5% of the target. Credit flow for agri infra which is of a particular



focus at policy level at the Centre is highest at about Rs 1476 crores in Meghalaya followed by a distant Rs 289 crores for Assam, while rest of the NER States have been able to utilize negligible benefit of agri infra credit from the banks. Among the North Eastern Region States, highest exposure for agri credit by the banks is in Assam at 63% and lowest is in Arunachal Pradesh. Assam has also the highest NPA at 26.16% while Mizoram ranks lowest in terms of NPA at only 9.2%. Assam ranks topmost in Kisan Credit Cards with a total number of about 11.25 lakhs and total value of about Rs 6,373 crores. Tripura follows next with a total number of about 3.51 lakhs and total value of about Rs 821.75 crores. While underscoring the immense potential and importance of food processing in NER, Shri Singh also highlighted some of the current challenges which are- majority of the food processing units today in NER are in the unorganized sector, there is significantly low level of aggregation and majority of the existing units lack modern technologies. As a result the viability quotient of these units is usually low for the bankers and they face difficulty in accessing institutional credit. Besides these, there are also problems relating to marketing and food safety and quality control.

Shri Abhishek Jain, *Director Postal Services (Mails & Business Development)*



in his informative deliberations created awareness about how the postal service is ready to serve the agri sector though it's various flagship service lines. He showcased the potential of the postal department to facilitate movement of agri produce from NER to any part of the Country as well as overseas destinations for exporters in food and agri commodities. One of the most prominent unique selling propositions of the Postal Department in this regard is its wide network with presence in every nook and corner of the country including the remotest village too where no private courier agency operates. The postal department has integrated all modes of connections- air, rail and road, ensuring alternative mode of connection in case of exigencies. Shri Jain also informed the august gathering about the latest service offering in collaboration with the Indian customs department called Dak Niryat Kendras (DNKs). These DNKs facilitate exports through simplification under one district one product scheme which also includes many agri products. It offers online customs declaration through Postal Bill of Export and is best suited for exporters and MSMEs.

Prof C.P Suresh *from North Eastern Hill University*

deliberated upon a range of important and flagship schemes related to the agri and allied sectors. Along with plan outlay, eligibility criteria and some of the special considerations for NER, he described in brief various important schemes like Agri infrastructure fund for Farm Gate infrastructure for farmers (AIF), Formation of micro-food enterprises, Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund, Schemes for Promotion and Cultivation of Medicinal Plants, PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises

Scheme (PM FME Scheme), North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS), North-East Venture Fund (NEVF), Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE) etc.



Shri Rabajit Dutta Choudhury, *Nodal officer, Agri Infrastructure Fund (AIF), Assam*



in his opening remarks during the exclusive session on Agri Infra Fund deliberated upon the importance of a scheme like AIF in the context of NER. The region is acutely in need for processing and value addition of various exclusive agri and horti products and AIF has the potential to develop the infrastructure in post harvest management operations, storage, warehousing and processing infrastructure.

Shri KR Meena, *Director, MoA&FW*

briefly touched upon the importance of NER in the entire agri and allied sector landscape of the Country. He urged the stakeholders in NER to come forward and take advantage of a flagship scheme of Government of India like that of AIF.



Shri Amaresh Dey, Executive Lead of the AIF CPMU

A detailed presentation was given by Shri Amaresh Dey, Executive Lead of the AIF CPMU and he analytically showed the status of AIF across the country and how the scheme is bearing promises to transform the agri infrastructure ecosystem as a whole. Shri Dey showed how AIF is becoming instrumental in creating agri infrastructure like godwons, drying yards, procurement centres, assaying units etc. across the Country. All these are vital for enhancing the post harvest management activities. However, the



utilization of AIF scheme in NER till date has been far below expectation. Out of a total of Rs 3572 crores allocated for NER under AIF, the amount sanctioned so far is a meager Rs 339 crores with just 218 projects. Assam occupies a major share of this with almost Rs 322 crores. This translates to a meager 1.5% utilization in NER where Assam constitutes 1.4%. Thus all the other 7 NE States together shares only 0.1% of the total allocation, which is a matter of concern and needs immediate attention. One of the major road-block for accelerated implementation of AIF in NER is the issue of land rights. Many places and communities in NER till today do not have proper land right documents because of which the projects get stuck up at the level of the disbursing banks for not meeting the critical areas of eligibility.

Shri Nitin Singh of Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project (APART)

in his concluding remarks thanked all the speakers and those present in the august gathering. He urged for whole hearted from all the stakeholders to percolate the benefits of a scheme like AIF to the farming community in NER.

Dr. Subhash Bhattacharjee, Advisor to Patanjali

showed the extensive works of Patanjali as an organization in areas of palm oil production in NER. He explained the total value chain of the palm oil, aspects of good agricultural practices that the organization is trying to disseminate among the farmers in the north east and the huge potential that this oilseed plant has for the economic and livelihood development of the people of NER.

Concluding session :

Thursday, 18th May, 2023

The 3 day event concluded on 18th May with a closing ceremony and a session to present mementos to all the organizations who participated in the exhibition with their beautifully designed and aesthetically organized stalls. Awards are given to the participating organizations on various categories. Dr. Vinay Kumar Mishra, Head of ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region at Umiam in Meghalaya in his brief speech urged the farmers present in the exhibition to adopt sustainable farming practices and the importance of natural farming. Shri Navin Dhingra, CGM, NABARD thanked the farmers for their whole hearted participation and urged them to avail the benefits of various schemes, support from organizations like NABARD and through hardwork catapult the region into a vibrant agriculture region in the Country. Shri Pankaj Pathak, Member, Ministry of Labour & Employment, GoI and Advisor, CARD addressed the farmers and encouraged them to join in large numbers in all such future programs and events. Finally, Dr. MJ Khan concluded the 3 day mega event in Guwahati and expressed his gratitude to the various departments, speakers and last but not the least, the farmers for participating in this event.





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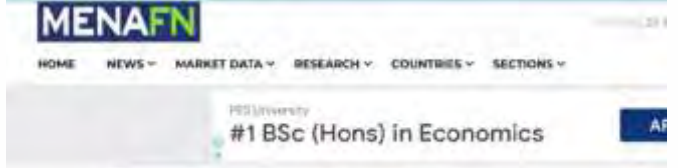
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VIBRANT NORTH EAST 2023 IN MEDIA



Seventh Vibrant North East Summit



PFC's stall received host of enthusiastic & curious visitors in Vibrant North-East 2023 in Guwahati

MEDIA LINKS OF VIBRANT NORTH EAST 2023

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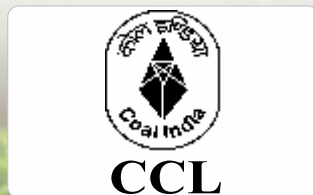
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