

Face to Face at World Cashew Convention 2017

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Dr D L Maheswar, University of Horticultural Sciences, Bagalkot-India

An Exclusive Interview with Dr D L Maheswar, University of Horticultural Sciences, Bagalkot-India, at the World Cashew Convention, 09-11 Feb, 2017, Singapore

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Cashew sector is expanding, what are the steps taken by the horticultural universities to improve cashew sector as a whole?

The University of Horticultural Sciences-Bagalkot, with a selected group of scientists has initiated a plan known as, ‘Natural Resources Inventory Program’, under which we will be examining the geographical area and the soils of different location basically to promote cashew on degraded soils and mined up soils, then will explore the possibility and suitability of the soil on cashew production. Based on seven set of parameters, we examine soil and classify its suitability to different crop. This approach is unique, done by the University of Horticultural Sciences. I’m sure that this technology is extended to different parts of the states and also globally. The investments by farmer and by the government will prove to be fruitful. There will not be chances of senile plantations, low yielding varieties, which could be addressed through this scientific approach.

With the ever-increasing demand for RCN, what are the steps taken by Indian government and other institutions to increase the area under cashew?

Fortunately for the last three years, India is ranking high for its horticultural production over agricultural crops. This consistency of improvement in horticulture area and production is because of the intensive investment support given by Indian Government under the schemes like NHM. Now it has been renamed as MIDH. These schemes that have contributed for the intense investment on these crops, that’s why horticultural overall production has increased over the years. Similar type of interventions and mission modes has been applied to other crop production. I am sure that we can certainly see a considerable change in cashew industry as well as our mission of increasing the income of farmers going forward.

Please tell us about FPO and its benefits

Earlier the trend was towards the co-operative movements, but now the phase of growth of cooperative movement is slow, hence a different form is given to these cooperatives known as Farmers Producers Organisation (FPO) and it has been supported by various other programs. Through these programs, farmers are being supported and strengthened at the grassroots level helping farmers come out as a group and thus help them to make a federation, which will strengthen the bargaining capacity of farmers, improvement in technological access to farmers, commercialisation as in primary processing and value addition can be decided by the stakeholders. If this is being initiated and extended to crops like cashews, we can see consolidation at

field level, involvement of farmers and other stakeholders and the understanding between the different stakeholders improves.

What according to you are the challenges that the cashew sector is facing?

As far as India is concerned, it's basically productivity. There are various new technologies available in different institutions. By pooling up all these things and improvising a new model type of exposure to the farmers, there lays a greater scope for countries like India to encourage the progressive intention of farmers. If this can be attempted, we will certainly achieve success. The only thing is the stakeholders, who involve at the helm of phase through policy formulation, mission mode and collaboration of different stakeholders. India can improve a lot especially on the enhancement of the unit productivity. Secondly, we have to translate this concept to non-traditional areas, where cashew is not being grown. If we, scientifically identify and tackle those areas with the available interventions we can make a head way in promoting cashew sector.