

Press Release (26.9.2008)

Council of Scientific & Industrial Research

**Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP), Lucknow
and
Central Salt & Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCRI), Bhavnagar**

Jointly Win

CSIR Award for S&T Innovations for Rural Development - 2008

Prof. Samir K. Brahmachari, DG, CSIR on the occasion of CSIR Foundation day, announced bestowing of CSIR Award for S&T Innovations for Rural Development (CAIRD) - 2008 jointly upon Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP), Lucknow for "Biovillage strategy for agri-business of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants" and Central Salt & Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCRI), Bhavnagar for "Innovations in the area of salt for rural development".

CSIR had instituted in 2006, "CSIR Award for S&T Innovations for Rural Development" to recognize and honour S&T innovations that have helped transform the lives of rural people. The award carries a cash prize of Rs.10 lakh, a citation and a shield.

Providing details on the innovations made by both the institutions, Prof. Brahmachari mentioned that shrinking land holdings, decreasing productivity of Indian soils and increasing input costs to agriculture are resulting into diminished returns from conventionally grown crops. The backbone of Indian economy, the traditional agriculture is gradually proving to be uneconomical. There is a felt need thus to improve strategically the agri-economics for rural farmer. This is possible only by augmenting and introducing some economically viable specialty crops along with the traditional agricultural crops. CIMAP has gainfully utilized Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) for this purpose by conceptualizing "Biovillage Mechanism" and operationalizing it strategically. Varieties and agrotechnologies of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) have been developed and disseminated, aiming at sustainable production and commercialization of these plants in rural areas. This has helped in economic upliftment of farmers in a big way.

CIMAP has backed the concept of Biovillages by developing several new cultivars of mint, artemisia, geranium, patchouli and khus suiting to diverse agro-climates. Linkages with industry have also been established for necessary buy back of the produce from farm itself thus benefiting farmers directly. A dependable complete package for managing distillation waste, farm waste, weed waste etc. has also been developed and integrated to generate biofertilizer. CIMAP's Biovillage Concept has inputs of end-to-end innovation for benefit of rural farmers.

Explaining CSMCRI innovation, Prof. Brahmachari further added that out of the total 20 million tons salt produced in the country annually, about 6 million tons is produced in the rural sector by the marginal salt producers. The salt produced by marginal salt manufacturers is of inferior quality due to the presence of higher amounts of certain ionic impurities and other insolubles. The rural manufacturers also lack scientific knowledge of salt manufacturing. Thus, this type of salt fetches very low price.

CSMCRI has developed various processes for the recovery of high purity salt by rural salt producers addressing the problems faced by the rural salt manufacturers.

Processes for removal of impurities through heap washing and desulphatation, utilizing distiller waste liquor of soda ash plants which otherwise poses the problem of disposal and creates environmental pollution have been developed. CSMCRI has specifically seen that no additional time or infrastructure is required to implement the processes developed and significant improvements in salt purity and whiteness are brought about. With CSMCRI's innovation, even rural salt producers are producing salt of purity >99.5% and whiteness index of 87–91. Rural salt producers of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Orissa have greatly benefited from these efforts. Further, CSMCRI innovations have enabled the rural salt producers to enhance their income by many folds. Being easy to adopt, eco friendly and cost effective, these innovations can be implemented without any risk in any rural salt works irrespective of the source of brine and the type of salt works.

Prof. Brahmachari hoped that bestowing of CAIRD-2008 jointly upon CIMAP and CSMCRI would inspire scientists engaged in the profession and business of innovation, particularly aimed at rural development in the country, to accelerate their efforts of innovating on one hand and implementing them successfully at ground level on the other. The livelihood of our rural brethren would be elevated and transformed in a sustainable and gradual manner this way elaborated Prof. Brahmachari. These efforts would also build a newer form of support to Indian economy.