

(IPR) A two-day Buyers Seller Meet (BSM) under scheme Mission Organic Value Chain Development (MOVCD), Sikkim Organic Mission, began today with enthusiastic participation from Farmers Producers Organizations of all the Districts of the State and six reputed companies (Buyers) from different parts of the country. An initiative of the Horticulture & Cash Crops Development Department, Government of Sikkim, the BSM has been organized to create a direct link between the Farmers Producer Organizations and reputed Buyers to ensure that the Organic produce of the State get the deserved value in the national and international market. The BSM has been organized in coordination with International Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture (ICCOA), a research Institute headquartered in Bengaluru, which is the Knowledge Partner for the two-day Meet.

UNICORN (Hyderabad), NED SPICE (Kochin), ORGANIC LRM (Delhi), AVT McCormick (Kerala), E Lite (Hyderabad), and SUS AGRI (Delhi) are the six Buyer Companies participating in this BSM. Executives of these Companies dealing with import and export of Organic Agriculture produce were present to participate in the deliberations and engage with the Farmer Producer Organizations of Sikkim.

The inaugural session of the BSM had the august presence of Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture & Horticulture Dr. Mechung Bhutia as the chief guest, and MLA Burtuk Mr D.R. Thapa as the Guest of Honour. Also present were Mr S.C. Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary cum Agricultural Production Commissioner, Government of Sikkim, along with Mr Khorlo Bhutia, Secretary Horticulture, and Mr Puneet Kansal, Commissioner cum Secretary, Agriculture, and officials of the Department.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Mechung Bhutia underlined the importance of this Buyers Seller Meet and urged the members of the FPOs present to make the most of the opportunity provided by the Department. He lauded the efforts of the farmers in the State whom he termed 'the backbone' of Sikkim Organic Mission. He suggested that the learning from such workshops and engagements should percolate down to each and every farmer in the State. Dr. Mechung further stated that the Organic Mission envisioned by Chief Minister Mr Pawan Chamling is a result of consistent hard work and dedication of the Officers of the State Government and the active participation of the farming community. He thanked the Executives of the Buyers Companies for visiting Sikkim to participate in the two-day Meet.

Likewise, Mr D.R. Thapa in his address exhorted the members of the FPOs to work in an organized manner to meet the huge demand for organic produce in the national and international market. He called for the need to be more professional and consistent in our approach towards farming, and also stressed on the multiple benefits of dairy farming. While underlining the Organic farming potential of

Sikkim, the MLA maintained that the upcoming airport at Pakyong will further boost marketing of our organic produce.

Additional Chief Secretary cum Agricultural Production Commissioner Mr S.C. Gupta termed the two-day Buyers Seller Meet as historic as it helped address the greatest challenge faced by Sikkim Organic Mission, that of Marketing. He added that MOVCD has helped institutionalize farming through formation of clusters to be managed by FPOs. Speaking about the BSM, he explained that this direct interface between the FPOs and reputed Buyers aims to eradicate the existence of middlemen, thus ensuring optimum benefit to the farmers. He however stated that Government will provide handholding to a certain level, after which the FPOs will have to take the responsibility to sustain the Organic Mission of the State. He urged the FPOs to think and act like businessmen while dealing with the prospective buyers.

Secretary Horticulture Mr Khorlo Bhutia provided a brief background of the processes involved in making Sikkim an organic farming state, and also apprised about the MOVCD scheme and the stages of its implementation in the State. He explained the role of the Research Institutes in providing technical support to the FPOs. The Secretary directed the RIs to register the respective FPOs to the new GST regime within a month's time for transactions in future.

Likewise, Commissioner cum Secretary Agriculture Mr Puneet Kansal in his address cautioned individual farmers not to deal directly with the Buyers, but to approach them through respective FPOs. He expressed hope that the two-day meet will help farmers of Sikkim realize the right prices for their agricultural produce.

Earlier, Executive Director, SOM, Dr. S. Anbalagan gave an overview of the commercialization of Sikkim's organic farming sector vis-a-vis the implementation of MOVCD Scheme. He also gave a brief introduction about the two-day BSM and its objectives.

Mr Manoj Kumar Menon, Executive Director, ICCOA, made a brief presentation highlighting the Organic Farming potential of Sikkim and what it had on offer for the buyers. He also provided the Buyers a basic know-how of the State such as its location, and the key potential crops.

The inaugural session was followed by a technical session which was chaired by Executive Director, SOM, Dr. S. Anbalagan. The session had presentations by the representatives from the Research Institutes working with the FPOs in Sikkim namely ICCOA, EDA, and IGS.

This was followed by presentation by business leaders from the leading organic companies (buyers), and focused trade and business meeting between the buyers and the FPOs.

The second day of the BSM will have field visits and interaction with the producers and FPO Board Members, which will be followed by Signing of Letters of Intent (LOI) between the Buyers and the FPOs in the presence of Departmental Officials and RIs.

