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Diversity in food availability - Problem and prospects

Biodiversity is the law of nature and that will stay to keep a balance in the ecosystem. But why not every child, man and woman should have access to nutritious food in sufficient quantity to satisfy their hunger? The entire world is concerned about food security and UNO and various international and national organizations are seriously concerned providing adequate food to present and future generation. In fact food security has become a matter of concern due to several challenges viz., ever-growing population, consequent urbanization leading to land crunch, changing climate, frequent price increase in commodities and over and above unprecedented losses due to plant pests and disorders causing 40% reduction in yield. Therefore, the responsibility of agricultural scientists get increased towards increasing productivity from limited or ever-reducing land thereby producing more food to sustain the requirement of growing population and bringing price down, timely monitoring of pests, advising growers to take preventive measures. In most of the cases due to lack of timely diagnosis and preventive measures losses go unchecked. Therefore to remove anomaly and ensure rational food distribution, I propose multi-pronged action aimed at increasing productivity, 1) By adopting good and innovative agricultural practices to produce more facilitating reduction in prices, 2) Strengthening plant healthcare by commissioning of more 'plant health clinic' in rural and urban areas, providing free diagnostic and advisory support to reduce losses, by providing latest integrated crop management /integrated pest management technology and uninterrupted communication with grower using print and information technology - SMS, internet etc - more specifically forecasting/issuing Plant Disease Warning and relaying the message through local radio station and satellite channel so that farmers may take speedy action in protecting the crop, which the author has practiced with great success. Similar alerts may also be issued for insect and other pests. Additionally we need to bring more printed material from time to time to empower growers and field functionaries in diversified publications in simple language in the form of leaflets, pamphlets, handbook, bulletin providing tips on seed treatment, improved cultural practices, preventive measures for pest and diseases emphasizing integrated pest management, shedding total reliance on pesticides until necessary and recommended by plant doctor. Pest control warning. Informative bulletins like Plant Pathology Courier aimed at providing latest know-how and development in plant disease control brought out by the author may also be brought out. Diagnostic role of plant health clinic should not be confined to diagnosis of diseases only; rather it should be multidisciplinary plant hospital to cover insect-pests, weeds, and various disorders, for which world class labs need to be provided for facilitating diverse pests. Therefore under one roof, farmers may seek advice on all fronts. Since diagnosis is experience-driven process, the diagnosticians should be experienced and familiar with wide range of problem in all disciplines, with adequate knowledge on pesticides, pesticide resistance, integrated crop and integrated pest management, including pesticides. And finally art of writing prescription and dealing farmers with utmost patience. Bumper productivity and ensuring crop protection would be the key to sustained production with reasonable affordable price.

Biography

Mahendra P Srivastava, formerly Director Planning and Professor & Head Plant Pathology, Haryana Agricultural University is known for his contribution in extension plant pathology and innovative periodicals - Plant Disease Warning and Plant Pathology Courier. He is credited with popularization of plant health clinic by delivering special lectures in India and abroad. In recognition of his outstanding contribution in extension, he was invited to speak on Technology flow in 7th International Congress of Plant Pathology (ICPP) at Edinburgh 1998, deliver Keynote address in 8th ICPP 2003, New Zealand besides invited lectures in China. He has won several awards which include Fellowship of National Academy of Sciences 1988, Best Extension Scientist Award 1996, Man of the Year 1998 Award USA, Dr. Radhakrishnan Gold Medal 2013, International Technological Achievement Award 2013 and Lifetime Achievement Award "National Pride Award" 2014 amongst others. Plant Clinic, Food Security & IPM are his key areas of interest. Currently he is rendering online advice on establishment of Plant Clinic and diagnosis and advisory free of cost through his web portal.

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