

ICAR-NBAIR Showcases Landmark Success in Biological Control of Cassava Mealybug in India

The ICAR–National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources (ICAR-NBAIR), Bengaluru, organized a historical event, the “Cassava Field Day” on 13 November 2025 at Rasipuram, Namakkal District, Tamil Nadu, under the leadership of Dr. S. N. Sushil, the Director, ICAR-NBAIR in the gracious presence of Sh. V. S. Matheswaran, Hon’ble Member of Parliament (Namakkal Constituency), Sh. K. R. N. Rajeshkumar, Hon’ble Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), Dr. V. S. Mathiventhan, Hon’ble Minister for Adi Dravidar Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu, Sh. A. K. P. Chinraj, Ex-MP (Namakkal Constituency) and Dr. Poonam Jasrotia, ADG (PP&B), ICAR, New Delhi. The event marked India’s success in the classical biological control programme of the cassava mealybug (*Phenacoccus manihoti*) through the introduction, mass multiplication and release of the efficient parasitoid, *Anagyrus lopezi*.

The programme also witnessed by the Senior officers from the Department of Horticulture and Plantation Crops, Department of Agriculture, Government of Tamil Nadu, Central Integrated Pest Management Centre (CIPMC), State Agricultural Universities, and Krishi Vigyan Kendras. In addition, the programme attracted more than 500 participants, including farmers, scientists, policymakers, and representatives from industries, and showcased how scientific innovation and farmer participation together revived cassava cultivation in South India after a devastating pest outbreak.

Dr. S. N. Sushil, Director, ICAR–NBAIR, welcomed the gathering and presented the remarkable journey of how ICAR-NBAIR, successfully managed the invasive cassava mealybug through classical biological control, in collaboration with state departments, sago industries, and other stakeholders and thereby rescuing India’s cassava industry. He further stated, the intervention, using the natural enemy, *Anagyrus lopezi*, demonstrated substantial economic benefits, with the Cost-Benefit Ratio increasing from 0.857 to 1.525, which is estimated to generate an annual economic impact of around Rs. 3,480 crores, besides the additional savings of approximately Rs. 286 crores annually from the reduced use of chemical pesticides.

In his Chief Guest address, Sh. V. S. Matheswaran highlighted that the timely release of parasitoids by the farmers has paid rich dividends by restoring cassava yields to 30–35 t/ha. The economic impact of this biological control programme is such that it saved several crores of rupees for cassava growers.

Sh. K. R. N. Rajeshkumar, Hon’ble Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) acknowledged that he is one of the beneficiaries of the biological control activities undertaken by ICAR-NBAIR with respect to Cassava mealy bug and complimented ICAR–NBAIR for its sincere efforts in bringing this biological control technology for the benefit of farmers.

Dr. V. S. Mathiventhan, Hon’ble Minister for Adi Dravidar Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu, also appreciated the initiative of ICAR-NBAIR and the role of parasitoids in protecting Tamil Nadu’s cassava crops from pest outbreaks.

Sh. A. K. P. Chinraj, Ex-MP, appreciated ICAR as one of the cleanest, most transparent, and dedicated organizations committed to the welfare of farmers and for the progress of Indian agriculture.

Dr. Poonam Jasrotia, ADG (Plant Protection & Biosafety) ICAR, New Delhi remarked that the introduction of the parasitoid, *Anagyrus lopezi* from IITA, Benin and development of mass production protocols for the parasitoid are the noble initiatives by ICAR–NBAIR for saving the cassava farmers which also aligns well with the principles of organic farming. She noted that this programme stands as an exemplary model of a successful classical biological control initiative.

As part of the Cassava Field Day, an exhibition was also organized for the benefit of farmers, displaying improved cassava varieties and the latest technologies available to enhance crop productivity and strengthen pest management practices.









