

National Bamboo Mission: Tree breeding institute to set up hi-tech nursery soon

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Coimbatore: With Tamil Nadu being one of the 19 states chosen for the central government's National Bamboo Mission, scientists at the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding here are all set to begin production of bamboo seedlings. The institute, working on the project to promote the plant variety, would soon set up a hi-tech nursery that will produce 1 lakh quality seedlings of four chosen bamboo varieties per year, for three years. They plan on releasing the first set of seedlings in June 2019. "We have been allocated Rs 50 lakh to establish a hi-tech bamboo nursery on 2 hectares of land," said the institute's bamboo breeding expert, Dominic Savio. "The facility will include infrastructure like a shade net, a well-equipped green house, a mist chamber to maintain the required moisture and humidity levels and mother plants," he said. The institute says the bamboo nursery will also be an accredited nursery, where every seedling bought will come with a certification. "The certificate will bear the species name and the age of the stock, which plant it was multiplied from and that it was bought from us," said Dominic. For the mission, instead of multiplying well-known species - Bambusa Bambos - experts in IFGTB will be producing four species developed by the state forest department. "These four species are easier to maintain and farmers growing the crop can pick a convenient variety, based on the market they want to sell it to, growing conditions and maintenance facilities they have," said the scientist. In a bid to boost bamboo cultivation, the central government has introduced schemes through which farmers get paid for planting and maintaining bamboo trees for three years. Farmers who plant 400 bamboo seedlings within a hectare of their land could get a subsidy of upto Rs 50,000 over three years. If a government institution takes up the same initiative, they could earn upto Rs 1 lakh over the same period. There also subsidies adding upto Rs 1 crore for entrepreneurs wanting to set up bamboo-based value addition industries. "Tamil Nadu has been included in this year's bamboo mission because last time, the state's farmed bamboo hectareage went from 0 to 2,838 hectares. So, this year we have been given a target of achieving 1 lakh trees a year, or three lakh trees in three years," Dominic Savio said. The mission in Tamil Nadu also focusses on creating a market for the farmers growing them. The government is trying to woo panchayats to consider planting bamboo in government schools, panchayat offices and unused pieces of land.

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