

TNAU showcases drone technology for pesticide application

Field trials conducted in districts to arrive at standard operating procedure

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Soon farmers in Tamil Nadu could be using drones to spray pesticides or apply fertilizers or nutrients to crops.

And, this could be in the near future as the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University is ready with the technology and standard operating procedure, crop-wise. Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare M.R.K. Panneerselvam in the presence of Agriculture Production Commissioner C. Samayamoorthy, senior officials and Vice-Chancellor N. Kumar, viewed the demonstration at the university on Wednesday.

The university said the Department of Remote Sensing and GIS' study since 2018 on the use of drones had helped it identify the right type of drone, the concentration of pesticide, herbicide, nutrient, etc., standardise the spray volume and speed for paddy maize, pulses, sugarcane, tomato, tapioca, vegetables and a few other crops.



Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare M.R.K. Panneerselvam (third right) viewing a demonstration on using drone to spray pesticides at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in the city on Wednesday. ■ S. SIVA SARAVANAN

It had conducted field trials in Coimbatore, Perambalur, Tiruvannamalai, Salem and a few other districts to arrive at the standard operating procedure.

The drones that it had ordered after customisation ran on petrol, had the capacity to carry up to 16 litres of pesticide and could fly non-stop for three hours.

The study had revealed that the drone could accomplish in a few hours the task that two labourers required a day to do - spray pesticides or apply fertilizers on a hectare, the university said.

The advantages identified during the field trials were that the farmers could use the drones for localised application of pesticides or fertilizers for effective crop management and they could do it within a very short time.

Early application of the pesticides or fertilizers would help the farmers save crops.

If they were to depend on labourers for the same it could take time and the time difference could prove critical in saving crops.

As for using the drones on

coconut, arecanut or other plantation crops, the university officials said it was in the pipeline.

At present the university was engaged in standardising the drone application on a few more crops and thereafter it would concentrate on plantation crops.

The farmers could hire the drones to spray pesticides or apply fertilizers but it was for the Agriculture Department to take a call. At the university,

Mr. Panneerselvam viewed the use of drone on a mango orchard.