

**Workshop on Agar Cultivation-extraction of Agar oil and its trade**

Agar tree is the State Tree of Tripura. In order to promote its cultivation, a one-day workshop on Agar cultivation, extraction of Agar oil and its trade was held at Agartala on 19-12-2018 in the JICA Project Building. The workshop was a part of the consultation process which was initiated by Tripura Forest Department for identifying the issues and opportunities to develop this high potential sector for the benefit of people interested in agar cultivation for the prosperity of the people of the State. The workshop was organized by NTFP Centre of Excellence, a recently created Autonomous Body for the systematic development of NTFP sector in the State in collaboration with Forest Research Centre for Livelihood Extension, a unit of Rain Forest Research Institute (RFRI), Jorhat.

Shri Mevar Kumar Jamatia, Minister for Forest & Tribal Welfare inaugurated the workshop in presence of Dr Alind Rastogi, PCCF & HoFF Tripura, Dr. RSC Jayraj, Director, RFRI Jorhat, and senior scientists from Botanical Survey of India and officials from Assam, Tripura Forest Department and 74 participants from amongst agar growers, traders and other stakeholders from Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Tripura.

The participants discussed the conservation of wild varieties of Agar trees, opportunities in the world Agar market, the statutory requirements that are required to be complied with for promoting the sustainable harvesting of agar, the technology available for artificially inducing agarwood formation in trees of cultivated variety, simplification of process of harvesting trees from non-forest land to encourage its cultivation in complete detail. The scientist from RFRI gave a live demonstration of scientific method of inoculation in the Agar plantation. Experiences were also shared among the participants. Issues discussed also included the status of cultivation and extraction of Agarwood in Assam, production of Agar and extraction of Agar oil, status of Agar in the wild and its future prospect.

Minister Shri Jamatia advised the Department to set up an Agar Conservation Foundation at Agartala under NTFP Centre of Excellence and work to assimilate entire information on all related processes. The foundation would work as single window source for providing any help relating to agar cultivation, processing, trade and export and sustainable management. PCCF Dr Rastogi assured the participants that a sincere attempt would be made to simply and streamline the process in compliance with CITES norms for developing the sector.