**National Fish Farmers’ Day jointly organized by CAEPHT (Ranipool) and CoH (Bermiok) at Bermiok, Namchi district**

National Fish Farmers’ Day 2024 was celebrated by All India Coordinated Research Project on PEASEM (ICAR sponsored project), Gangtok Centre and M4agri (Jaivik Varta) project of CAEPHT (CAU), Ranipool and Multi Technology Testing Centre and Vocational Training Centre (MTTC & VTC), College of Horticulture (CAU), Bermiok on 10th July, 2024 with participation of 100 farmers, faculty, students, and project scientific staff and staff members at the auditorium hall of the College of Horticulture, Bermiok.

Dr. Y. Rupert Anand (Co-PI of AICRP-PEASEM & Assistant Professor, MTTC and VTC, CoH, Bermiok) welcomed all the participants and distinguished experts, and briefed everyone present about the activities taken by both the colleges during the last two-days as part of the celebrations of National Fish Farmers’ Day. He informed the gathering that he and Prof. D. Jhajharia, PI of AICRP-PEASEM and M4agri collected water samples from the plastic lined dugout ponds situated in farmers' fields from Pabong village on 09 June, 2024.

The day-long celebrations started with the delivery of a useful and pertinent lecture relevant to the special Day on “Water Quality Analysis of Fish-ponds” by Dr. Ghanashyam Singh Yurembam (Assistant professor (SS), SWCE Dept., CAEPHT, Ranipool). Prof. Yurembam practically showed the difference between different water samples collected from plastic-lined ponds concerning a few important criteria for testing the quality of water, such as dissolved oxygen, EC, pH, etc., and their effect on the health of the fish in the pond. Later, he also showed an innovative technology of water quality monitoring system related to the use of a “smart water quality rover” for real-time monitoring of the water quality of lakes, ponds and other water bodies. Prof. Yurembam informed the August gathering about the design patent on the “smart water quality rover” granted to him and his team consisting of himself, Prof. Jhajharia, and a few other students of the college that will prove quite useful in maintaining good health of our precious water-bodies. A case study on spatial water quality monitoring of Loktak lake using remote sensing and GIS technology was also discussed in the gathering by Dr. Ghanashyam, Singh Yurembam.

After this informative lecture, Dr. B. K. Singh, Assoc. Prof. (PFE Dept., CAEPHT) delivered a lecture on “Fish-feed management”. He informed the gathering about the different types of feeding materials that can be used for different fish species under different types of climatic conditions in Sikkim. He explained formulation of feed using local materials and preparation of feed at pond site. He explained proper feed management to ensure high growth rate and to reduce the cost of feeding. He also explained the total cost of construction of polythene lined ponds are recovered in one year of production. He also explained how to maintain pond environment to keep it disease free and maximise the yield. **As Co-PI of the project “Mobile Based Agro Advisory Services in Sikkim”,** Dr. B. K. Singh**, who himself is an aquaculture engineering expert, suggested raising queries (toll-free no. 1800-102-3141) related with aquaculture and other fisheries related activities, and getting the “right information” through the experts by dialing the Jaivik Varta number.** About 6000 farmers of Sikkim are digitally registered through the m4agri app in the Jaivik Varta, a project of MeitY (Govt. of India), which is jointly implemented by Digital India Corporation, New Delhi and CAU (Imphal). Prof. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, Professor and Head, Dept. of Plant Protection, CoH, Bermiok talked about the diseases management in Grass Carp fish.

Prof. Jhajharia started his address by narrating a success story of a farmer from Nessa Tashiding, Shri. Girman, who is efficiently using the dug-out pond provided to him by the AICRP-PET since 2018. He converted his plastic-lined dug-pond into a poly-pond house with full technical and financial support from CAEPHT. The progressive farmer is a successful entrepreneur in the whole state by making efficient use of plastic engineering techniques, such as, mulch for growing Cherry Pepper, and cultivation and value addition of ginger, turmeric and large-cardamom. Prof. Jhajharia also talked about the importance of the rain-water harvesting to overcome the problem of water shortages, and suggested to construct more and more dug-out ponds to harvest water that would be crucial as life-saving irrigation during the lean period.

Prof. A K Pandey, Dean, CoH (Bermiok) highlighted the importance of Day and informed about the important role played by fish-farmers of Sikkim in cold-water fisheries. Prof. Pandey congratulated the fish-farmers and informed about the joint efforts of the scientists of both colleges, and farmers taken in aquaculture during last two years in Bermiok area. During last two years, the CAEPHT and CoH through two national level projects, i.e., the AICRP-PEASEM (CAU), Gangtok Centre and M4agri project have successfully installed/laid out plastic (250 GSM) pond liners in six nos. of dug-ponds and supported in fish-farming by distributing more than 1000 fish fingerlings, and by providing technical knowledge and skill through training and awareness camps. The AICRP-PEASEM, CAEPHT (Ranipool) and CoH (Bermiok) have planned to distribute more than 1000 fish fingerlings to the fish farmers during the week-long celebrations in this month by targeting new beneficial farmers in Bermiok area of Namchi district.

Input distribution of seeds and seedlings of vegetable crops, such as Tomato, Chilli, Okra, Spinach and green beans were distributed among 40 farmers of Bermiok area, South Sikkim during the program. The programme was also attended by faculty members of CoH, namely, Dr. Nangsol D. Bhutia, Dr. Dipika Sarmah, Dr. Diana Sagolsem, in-charge of MTTC and VTC, CoH, Dr. H. Sanjita Devi, Dr. M Victoria Devi project scientific staff, students, and staff members of college. Dr. S. Vinodh (Assistant Professor, MTTC and VTC, CoH, Bermiok) gave the vote of thanks.