

SFAC launches Agri-Business Promotion Unit in state

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 30 JULY

An Agri-Business Promotion Unit (ABPU) was launched in West Bengal as a joint initiative by Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) in collaboration with the state government and a private company. The initiative is expected to help affiliated farmers achieve 20 per cent more revenue than the others.

"SFAC has started a pilot project in collaboration with a professional agency, ABPU. Around 30 pilot projects have been chosen, ten each for the states of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, for about two years. The private agency will consult and help in implementing capacity building, business plan

The initiative is expected to help affiliated farmers achieve 20 per cent more revenue

preparation, credit and marketing linkages. Eventually, the Farmer Producer Companies (FPC's) is expected to build up on their own" said Mr Sumanta Chaudhari, IAS, managing director of SFAC of the Government of India.

Mr Chaudhari also said that SFCA currently has about more than 800 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) which consists of more than eight lakh farmers. The funding pattern falls under central sector scheme.

The approved guidelines of the department of agri-

culture is that of 40 Lakhs for every FPC which includes the cost of mobilization, support, business plan, he said. He further added that SFAC provides a matching equity grant up to ten lakhs. Apart from this, a credit guarantee programme is also present where banks can lend collateral free to the FPCs. The guarantee of which is no less than one crore.

Regarding the Prime Minister's statement about doubling of farmers' income, Mr Chaudhari informed that it is important because about 90 per cent farmers in India are marginal, so they do not get economy of scale benefit. However, farmers affiliated to SFCA or any other FPIs for that matter get 20 per cent more revenue than the non-affiliated farmers.

