

MINUTES OF THE 90th BOARD MEETING HELD ON-LINE ON 07-05-2021

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**MINUTES OF THE 90th BOARD MEETING HELD IN VIRTUAL PLATFORM
ON 07-05-2021**

The 90th Board meeting was conducted at 11 am on 7th May 2021, in virtual platform observing COVID 19 protocol. The following Members were present.

1. Shri D.Sathiyam, IFS	Chairman-cum-Secretary
2. Shri GVL Narasimha Rao, Hon'ble MP	Member
3. Adv. Dean Kuriakose, Hon'ble MP	Member
4. Shri Manish Bhardwaj, IAS, Secretary Agriculture, Gujarat	Member
5. Shri Ajit Pai, OSD, Niti Aayog	Member
6. Dr C. Vanlalramsanga, Economic Advisor, MoC	Member
7. Dr. Santhosh J Eapen, Director, ICAR-IISR, Calicut	Member
8. Dr. Sridevi Annapurna Singh, Director, CFTRI	Member
9. Shri Stany Joseph Pothen	Vice-Chairman
10. Shri Rajendra Kasat	Member
11. Ms. Annu Shree Poonia	Member
12. Shri Sen Thabab	Member
13. Shri T T Jose	Member
14. Dr. Dasam Umamaheswara Raju	Member
15. Shri Nandyala Satyanarayana	Member
16. Shri S G Medappa	Member
17. Dr Varghese Sebastian Moolan	Member

Leave of absence granted to

1. Shri B Y Raghavendra, Hon'ble MP	Member
2. Dr. Poonam Malakondaiah IAS, Special Chief Secretary, Govt of Andhra Pradesh	Member
3. Shri Rajendar Kajaria, Secretary to Government, Horticulture & Sericulture Department, Karnataka	Member
4. Shri Arun Kumar, Dy Secretary, M/o Labour & Employment	Member
5. Director, Indian Institute of Packaging, Mumbai	Member

The following officers were present:

1. Shri P.M. Suresh Kumar, Director (Administration and Marketing)
2. Dr. A.B. Remashree, Director (R&D and Finance)

Shri D Sathiyam IAS, Chairman-cum-Secretary presided over the meeting.

Chairman-cum- Secretary welcomed all the members including the new 3 members Dr Poonam Malakondaiah, IAS, Special Chief Secretary, Govt of Andhra Pradesh, Shri Manish Bharadwaj IAS, Secretary (Agri), Govt of Gujarat and Dr Vanlalramsanga, Economic Advisor, Dept. of Commerce, Govt of India. He wished all the members good health and safety during the Covid 19 pandemic. After welcoming the Board members, Chairman-cum-Secretary briefed on the activities of the Board.

Chairman-cum-Secretary highlighted that, there was an increase of 25% in volume and 20% in value of spices export during the period from April 2020 – February 2021 compared to last year. The increase in US\$ is 12%. By February 2021 itself, the spices exports crossed the previously set landmark of 3 billion US dollars. This shows that the export of spices shows an increasing trend. All the stakeholders of spices sector deserves appreciation for their contributions to achieve this landmark.

He apprised the members on the following initiatives taken by the Board in the recent months:

He informed that 15 Buyer Seller Meets were organized by the Board on the virtual platform, after the last Board meeting, across the country focusing on various spices and spice products. These Buyer Seller Meets (BSM) provided excellent chance for direct interaction between the producers as well as traders and exporters to sell their products. With a view to strengthen the spice trade between India and Azerbaijan, Spices Board in association with the Embassy of India in Azerbaijan organised a BSM on 9th April 2021 by involving the spice stakeholders of both the countries. He explained the steps being taken by the Board in resolving the problems faced in the export of cardamom to Qatar and Saudi Arabia. He also informed the progress made in on-boarding all citizen centric services on the online platforms of the Government of India as part of ease of doing business and the end to end digitization programme of the Union Government. He also briefed the follow-up actions taken based on the decisions of the last Board meeting in allotting vacant plots in Spices Parks.

During the current financial year, the Board disbursed nearly Rs.18.47 crores as subsidy to farmers of spices across the country, benefiting nearly 13,500 farmers. A large chunk of farmers from North Eastern region also have benefited. The Board conducted more than 100 Webinars and online training programmes for the benefit of spice farmers on various aspects.

He also informed that the Board signed MOU with the UNDP on 5th April 2021 for developing a block-chain based traceability interface for e-Spice Bazaar portal as a value added layer. The Board was also strengthening the e-Spice Bazaar portal by engaging suitable service providers to provide end to end trade facilitation services. The Board started implementing the project 'Strengthening spices value chain', funded by STDF of WTO and having FAO as partner. The pilot project covers cumin, fennel, coriander and black pepper in four States. In order to enhance competitiveness of Indian spices by doubling the export of spices in line with the Agriculture Export Policy(AEP) and increase the farmers income, Spices Board in association with the Quality Council of India has started implementing certification of selected spices under IndGAP certification programme for the first time. The project is conceived with multiple objectives such as quality assurance, agro biodiversity, traceability, GAP certification mapping of sustainable development goals etc.

He informed that the Board is in the process of organizing online training programmes jointly with Amazon for domestic and global selling of Spices by Exporters and, also, direct selling by FPOs.

He also informed that 8th Quality Evaluation Lab of the Board at Kolkata started functioning from February 2021. This QEL caters to the needs of various stakeholders in the Eastern and North Eastern region.

He also informed the members about the successful organization of the fifth edition of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH), which was held virtually for the first time from 20th to 29th April 2021. CCSCH is the youngest of the CODEX Commodity Committees under FAO, which is chaired by India and Spices Board serves as its Secretariat. The Board took the challenge of organising the latest session on the Virtual mode, making CCSCH the first commodity committee to have done so, with arrangements for multi lingual simultaneous translations and involving coordination of multinational participation. CCSCH-5 recorded the highest ever participation with 275 delegates from 65 member countries, along with one member organisation which is European Union and 11 international observer organizations. In terms of results also, the CCSCH-5 has produced unprecedented success. He highlighted that draft standards for four new spices namely cloves, oregano, basil and ginger were finalised for sending to the Codex Alimentarius Commission for adoption, in its next session. The total number of standards finalized by the CCSCH has now become eight, from just five sessions, making this one of the most productive Codex Committees currently active.

As regards the research activities, Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that the Board has recently started its new initiative to provide soil health analysis services to cardamom farmers. Spices Board has entered into an agreement with Indian Institute of Information and Technology Management Kerala, to develop an App based fertiliser recommendation for climate resilient cardamom cultivation. About 1000 geo referenced soil samples have been collected and analysed.

He informed that, based on the suggestion of members in the last Board meetings, the Spices Board has scaled up the production of quality planting materials of cardamom, through its research farm at Myladumpara. The Board's pepper nursery at ICRI, Myladumpara, one of the accredited nurseries under DASD in Idukki district, has also scaled up its production by covering 22 elite pepper varieties.

He informed that the prime challenges in the Spices Export are quality and food safety issues, demonstration of traceability and meeting the increasing stringent food safety norms of importing countries while maintaining the competitiveness of our spices in the international markets. He sought the continued support of all the Board members for various activities and initiatives of the Board in addressing these challenges.

After the message of Chairman-cum-Secretary, the Board members were invited for self introduction.

Thereafter, the Chairman-cum-Secretary invited the Director (Marketing & Administration) and Director (Research and Development) of the Board to present the Agenda items one by one.

Item No.1 : Confirmation of the minutes of the 89th meeting of the Spices Board held at Kochi on 5th Nov 2021

The Board confirmed the Minutes of the 89th Board meeting.

Item No.2 : Action taken on minutes of the 89th Board Meeting

In regard to action taken on Item No.4 of the 89th meeting (additional allocation for Turmeric boilers & polishers), Director (R&D) briefed about the additional fund allocated for turmeric boilers & polishers.

In regard to action taken on Item No.7 in the 89th meeting (exploring the possibilities of facilitating the Lab facilities already available in the universities to test farmers samples), it was

informed that the Board issued letters to 20 States and received response from Tripura and West Bengal.

The Board also noted the actions taken based on the suggestions of Board members in the 89th meeting (Item No.7 - additional action taken report) on concerns raised by Qatar on presence of pesticide residues, MRLs for pesticide residues in agricultural commodities for Thailand, using the facilities available in NABL accredited lab in Indian Institute of Horticulture Research(IIHR) for pesticide testing and providing necessary technical advice and support to APMC, Guntur.

Item No.3 : Proposal for continuation of Spices Board's integrated scheme for export promotion & quality improvement of spices, and Research & Development of cardamom, beyond 31st March 2021.

Chairman-cum-Secretary briefed about the proposal submitted to the Commerce Ministry for continuation of Spices Board's integrated scheme for export promotion & quality improvement of spices, and Research & Development of cardamom for the period from 2021-22 to 2025-26. The overall objective is to improve the export of spices with the intervention aimed at post harvest improvement and export promotion and the scheme is expected to play an important role in achieving the export target of 5 billion US dollar in 2025. Approval of the scheme is awaited from the Govt.

Replying to a query on the likely quantum of funding, the Chairman cum Secretary clarified that a communication has been received from the Ministry to propose the Scheme for getting approval from Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) for the next 5 year period limiting the proposal to 5.5 times of the actual expenditure during 2019-20. Our proposal has slightly exceeded 5.5 times, ie. Rs.681.15 crores. The Ministry has informed that it will be discussed by the EFC Committee and approval will be intimated to the Board in due course.

The Board noted the information.

Item No.4 : Approval for establishing the Spice Complex at Pakyong, Sikkim.

Director (Marketing) briefed that the Executive Committee of TIES at its 13th meeting held on 9th February 2021 approved the Board's proposal to establish the Spice Complex at Pakyong, Sikkim at a total outlay of Rs.26.51 crore; out of which Board's share will be Rs.8.77 crore and contribution from TIES will be Rs.17.74 crore. The Dept of Commerce,

Govt of India has released the first installment of Rs.8.87 crore to the Board in March, 2021 under TIES.

Director(Marketing) informed that, as per the advice of the Ministry and NITI Aayog, the Board is not taking up any new projects for establishing spice parks; instead the Board is providing technical support to States to submit proposals under the revised TIES programme of MoC. However, Sikkim Spice Complex, was an old project proposed in 2017 which was approved by the Executive Committee of TIES this year on 9th February 21, with a total outlay of 26.51 crores. Hence the Board is taking steps to implement this project within a period of 3 years and has requested the CPWD, Gangtok to execute the project.

The Board noted the proposal.

Item No.5 : Commencement of operation of Quality lab at Kolkata

Director (Marketing) explained that Spices Board had established the Quality Evaluation Laboratory in Kolkata which is the 8th Laboratory of the Board in an area of 0.84 acres of land allotted by Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority in Baruipur of South Kolkata. Now the lab has started functioning for testing of both the physical and chemical parameters of the export consignments with effect from February 2021.

Shri GVL Narasimha Rao, Hon'ble MP enquired about the expenditure involved in establishing the Quality lab at Baruipur, Kolkata. It was informed that the land was made available on free of cost by Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority(KMDA) and expenditure for the construction of building was Rs.6.00 Crores.

The Board noted the information.

Item No.6 : Status of establishment of QEL at Spices park, Jodhpur for physical parameters for export consignments of cumin

The members, especially Ms. Annu Shree Poonia welcomed the proposal and thanked the initiatives taken by the Board for establishing a Quality Lab in Spices Park, Jodhpur for testing the basic parameters.

Director (Marketing) explained the difficulties being faced by the Board in making further progress in establishing a Quality Lab in the present situation of Covid 19 and informed that the Board would try to complete the work as quickly as possible.

The Board noted the information.

Item No. 7 : Review on export of spices during the current financial year (Apr-Feb)

In regard to export of spices during the period from April 2020 to February 2021, Mr. GVL Narasimha Rao congratulated the Spices Board, farmers and exporters for the very good performance in exports even in the Covid Pandemic year. He also observed that even though the export is increasing in terms of volume but it is showing decrease in terms of value as well as in foreign exchange. In the present situation of Covid, immune boosting spices like Turmeric have very good demand. The volume growth of Turmeric showed 32 percent, but the value growth was only 16 percent. In the case of Ginger also, the volume growth is high but it is not reflected in the value growth equally. He requested the Board to analyse the reason behind this and to initiate steps to rectify it in future. He also asked whether it was in terms of lower value or in terms of lower realisation.

Mr. Ajit Pai, from NITI Aayog, pointed out that the data in the website of Spices Board was showing the prices of spices only up to December, 2019 due to an incorrect hyper link in the web site which he has raised in an earlier Board meeting. He emphasized the need for making available the latest export data and suggested to make sure that all hyperlinks in the web site are correct and consistent. Director (Marketing) informed that export data upto December, 2020 is accessible from Board's website and it will be updated soon with 2020-21 data. Chairman-cum-Secretary directed the Marketing Dept. to check the hyperlinks and remove the incorrect link, if any, immediately.

Mr. Ajit Pai also asked the reason for poor export performance of Pepper and Director (Marketing) replied that it was due to the stiff competition from Vietnam and other countries in terms of prices. Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that our cost of production of Pepper is high compared to others. Chairman cum Secretary expressed thanks to Mr. Ajit Pai for his intervention and valuable remarks.

Mr Ajit Pai asked about the performance of Indian spices exports in the global trade of spices. Secretary thanked Shri GVL Rao, Hon'ble MP for his remarks congratulating the Board, its Officers and stake holders for the excellent export performance. Chairman-cum-Secretary also

stated that detailed analysis will be done by the Marketing Dept., as suggested by the members regarding less value growth for Turmeric & Ginger and the performance of Indian spices with global trade scenario for spices.

The Board noted the information.

Item No.8 : Conducting Buyer Seller Meets (BSM) for building direct linkages

Director(Marketing) informed the Board that, 18 virtual BSMs focusing various States and Spices grown there and one international BSM has been organized during the financial year 2020-21. A total of around 1700 stakeholders participated in the BSMs.

Ms Annu Shree Poonia told that there was no BSM conducted at Rajasthan. Chairman-cum-Secretary explained that all the BSMs have been conducted virtually and farmers from across India have participated in the BSMs. Farmers from Rajasthan also participated in all the BSMs conducted for Seed Spices. Chairman-cum-Secretary accepted the suggestion of the Member to conduct a BSM in the current year, focusing mainly on spices of Rajasthan.

The Board noted the information.

Item No.9 : Entrepreneurship development training programs

Director(Marketing) informed the Board that 11 Entrepreneurship Development training programmes had been organized through virtual platform for stakeholders of the spices sector, with the active participation of officials from other line departments/organizations such as NABARD, APEDA, MOFPI, SABC, DGFT, DGRT, NRCSS, RSAMB, MSME etc. A total of 1258 participants attended the programme

The Board noted the information.

Item No.10: Invitation of EOI for allotment of land and leasing out the common processing facilities in the spices parks.

Director(Marketing) referred to the discussions in the last Board meeting and informed that EoIs were already released for allotting the vacant plots available in Spices Park at Kota, Raebareli, Guna, Guntur & Sivaganga to prospective investors for establishing Spice processing units in the Park and identifying suitable operators for Chhindwara and Sivaganga Parks. The last date for receiving EoIs (22ndApril 2021) was extended up to 15th May 2021 in view of the Covid-19 situations. Number of responses received as on date were also informed to the Board.

The Board noted the information.

Item No.11 : Status of functioning of Spices Parks

Director(Marketing) briefed on the status of utilization of facilities established in the Spices Parks, the EoIs released for identifying suitable operators for the common processing facilities and also the leasing out of vacant plots in the Parks.

Shri Medappa requested to provide the status of his request to establish a Spice Park for the development of spices in Karnataka. It was clarified Spices Board had been advised not to take up any fresh proposal to establish Spices parks and the Board could give technical support. Now, States are encouraged to apply directly to the TIES and establish Spice parks.

Shri Stany Joseph Pothen raised a query whether Spices Parks are going to be handed over to State Govts and he suggested that Spices Park at Puttady, Kerala should not be handed over to the State Govt and it should be run by the Spices Board itself because it is very useful for spice farmers, traders, auctioneers etc. It was clarified that there was no proposal to hand over Puttady Spices Park to State Govt. Earlier, the Board had written to Govt of Madhya Pradesh to take over the Spices Parks established in Guna and Chindwara but there was no progress. It was informed that the Board would like to facilitate taking over of these spice parks by the State Governments, with the approval of the Ministry. The overall objective is to activate each Spices Park quickly.

Smt Annu Shree Poonia enquired about the possibility for establishing a common Effluent Treatment Plant(ETP) in spice parks. It was clarified that ETP was not included in the scope of Spices Park projects and no fund was earmarked for establishing common ETP. Individual Industry has to establish their own ETP like the one established by an entrepreneur in Guntur Spices park. Replying to the suggestion of Smt Annushree Poonia for establishing ETP in a particular plot in the Spices park at Jodhpur, Secretary informed that, there is no provision at present to allot a plot for establishing such facility. The Board will examine this aspect and, if required, a policy decision will be taken.

The Board noted the information.

Item No.12 : Cardamom (Small and Large) productivity award during 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Director (Dev) explained the proposed revised guidelines for Small Cardamom Productivity Award and Organic Small Cardamom Productivity Award. She also informed the details of award winners for Small Cardamom Productivity Award (SCPA), Large Cardamom Productivity award (LCPA) and Organic Small Cardamom Productivity Award (Organic SCPA) for 2019-20 and 2020-21. As a reply to the query raised by Shri Medappa, it was informed that the award is for individual farmer.

Shri GVL Narasimha Rao suggested that similar recognition/award should be made for other spices also especially for Chilli which would help progressive and small farmers who have adopted good agricultural practices. He requested to take up his suggestion with the Ministry. Chairman-cum-Secretary pointed out the limitation of the Board for launching awards for other spices due to lack of mandate for production over them. Shri Stany Pothen opined that in a collaborative manner the State Government could constitute a panel with officials from Spices Board as members to select the awardees. Secretary informed that the suggestions of the members would be taken up with the Ministry. Shri Stany Pothen congratulated the selected award winners and welcomed the changes in the criteria adopted for selecting the winners.

Dr Santhosh Eapen suggested a clause in the guidelines for selecting the award winners with regard to the judicious use of legally permitted safe pesticides. It was informed that the suggestion would be considered for inclusion in the guidelines.

The Board approved the proposed revised guidelines and the award winners.

Item No.13 : Sugandhasree Project

Director(R&D) highlighted the proposed training programmes, activities and assistance under the pilot project titled "Sugandhasree" for uplifting the socially backward scheduled caste farming community and youths/students belonging to SC community for the year 2021-22 which is under the consideration of the Ministry.

It was informed that, in Spices sector, the beneficiaries from SC community is very less and, in the past, the Board faced difficulty in spending the earmarked fund for the benefit of SC community in full which resulted in surrender of funds. Hence the Board proposed to widen the scope by extending assistance to forest dependent SC communities, arranging training programmes for SC communities, establishment of model Spice Garden in Schools and allied activities, assistance for adoption of SC village etc. The Board is awaiting approval from the Ministry.

The Board ratified the action and noted the project proposal.

Item No.14 : Submission of application for getting GI status to Ramnathapuram Mundu chilli

It was informed that the Board supported TNAU to successfully file the application with GI Registry for obtaining the GI Tag for Ramnathapuram Mundu Chilli on 16-11-2020 and the application was under process at the GI registry.

The Board noted the information.

Item No.15 : Issuance of auction licence for cardamom for the next block period

Director (Marketing) informed the progress made in processing of applications for issuance of auction licence for cardamom for the coming block period. Shri Stany Joseph Pothan asked whether there was any maximum limit in the number of Auctioneer licence and whether license would be issued to all the eligible applicants. It was informed that as per the Cardamom Marketing and Licensing Rules, there is no limit for issuing e-auction license and there is no decision to restrict the number of e-auctioneers.

It was also informed that the Board has been conducting e-auction in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The Board was giving licence to conduct manual auction in those States where there is no e-auction by Spices Board. It was also informed that the applicants who submitted application for manual auction licence during the fag end of the extended period of Licence of last block year were requested to submit fresh applications. Chairman-cum-Secretary suggested to place the applications received for auction Licence and recommendation of the committee constituted for the purpose before the Market Development Committee.

The Board agreed.

Item No.16 : Amount of Bank Guarantee (BG) for awarding the e-auction licence.

Director (Marketing) briefed on the need for collecting Bank Guarantee (BG) for allotting the e-auction licence and amending the rule for the value of BG amount proportional to the volume of trading done by each auctioneer. It was further explained that as per the present rule, the value of BG is equivalent to the average auction sale value of cardamom in one auction during the immediately preceding block period of three years for the block period for which the applicant desires to obtain the auctioneer licence. The value of BG is not correlated with the performance of

the individual e-auctioneer. The Board has received representations from auctioneers trading with lesser volumes regarding the higher average value of BG. It is proposed to revise the value of BG based on individual auctioneer's performance during the past 3 years and make suitable amendments in the Cardamom (Licensing and Marketing) Rules to enable this.

Mr. Ajit Pai desired to know the criteria for selecting the Auctioneer, quality of the auctioneer and continuation of the auctioneer. Director(Marketing) informed that the notification for issuing auction licence was released nation wide and licenses would be issued to all those who satisfy the eligibility conditions.

It was informed that Cardamom is a high value crop and auctioneer gets 10 days time to make payment to farmers towards the sale value of cardamom. BG is collected from the auctioneers to cover the cost of cardamom pooled in the auction thus protecting the interest of farmers. Many of the auctioneers are farmer producer organizations.

After detailed deliberations, the Board approved the proposal to bring suitable amendments in the Cardamom (Licensing and Marketing) Rules and issue the e-auction licence for the forthcoming three year block period, commencing in June, 2021, with the existing rate of BG, subject to the condition that the BG amount would be enhanced / lowered on notifying the amendment in the rule proposed.

Item No.17 : Issuance on CRES to exporters through online with 3-year validity

Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that the online System for CRES was implemented from 1st April 2021 for the first time and 1800 Certificate of Registration as Exporter of Spices (CRES) issued within a period of the first 30 days.

The Board noted the information.

Item No.18 : Quality concerns on export of small cardamom & other spices

Director (Marketing) briefed on the quality concerns on export of Small Cardamom & other spices. Chairman-cum-Secretary informed about the proactive steps taken by the Board to streamline the export of Cardamom to Saudi Arabia and the Board would continue to follow up with Saudi Food Authorities to address these issues. Replying to a point raised by Shri T.T.Jose regarding Cardamom exports taking place to Saudi Arabia through certain ports outside Kerala with test reports of private labs, it was informed that introduction of mandatory tests for export of Cardamom was communicated to all customs. Cleared test report of Board's Quality Lab has been

made mandatory for Cardamom Export to Saudi Arabia. It was informed that the matter would be taken up with Customs.

Secretary informed that Qatar has also started to impose quality & food safety standards on Indian Spices including Cardamom and the Board is trying to address the issue through Indian Embassy. It was informed that the Board proposed to arrange an online meeting with Qatar Authorities with the help of Indian Embassy so as to find a solution soon and that the response from Qatar authorities was awaited.

Recently, European Union (EU) raised the issue of ETO treatment in Spices consignments. This was reported by many of our exporters. While USA used to accept the ETO treated spices, the EU is not allowing ETO treated spices. The Board is creating awareness among the exporters to avoid ETO treatment for Spices intended for exporting to EU countries. A series of meetings were conducted with the stakeholders, Indian Mission at Brussels, Officials of European Union etc so as to address the issue and enable smooth conduct of export transactions to EU. Latest meeting took place on 5th April 2021.

Dr. Varghese Moolan pointed out that Saudi Arabia is insisting for Conformity Certificate from few labs approved by them in India for export of Cardamom to Saudi Arabia. He requested the Board to take up this issue with Saudi Arabia and convince them that the test report issued by Board's Quality Lab should only be accepted as the certificate of conformity for Cardamom exports to Saudi Arabia. Director (Marketing) informed that, this issue would be raised in the next meeting with the Saudi Food Authority.

The Board noted the information.

Item No.19 : Digitization of key interfaces for facilitating trade and enabling ease of doing business

Director (Marketing) briefed the digitization of Key Interfaces for facilitating trade and enabling Ease of doing Business being undertaken by the Board namely fully online system for issuing Certificate of Registration as Exporter of Spices (CRES), Cardamom Dealer Licence (CDL) & Cardamom Auctioneer Licence (CAL) and online Submission of Quarterly Export Returns (QER). It was informed that CRES was made online recently and the other tasks would be completed by July 2021.

The Board noted the information.

Item No.20 : Guidelines for obtaining GI authorised user certificate from GI registry for GI obtained by Spices Board.

Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that Spices Board obtained Geographical Indication (GI) registration for Malabar Pepper, Alleppey Green Cardamom, Coorg Green Cardamom, Guntur Sannam Chilli and Byadagi Chilli. The Board is the Registered Proprietor (Custodian) of these five GI tagged spices. The users of GI are required to obtain Authorised User Certificate from GI Registry, Chennai for placing GI tags in their consumer packs and at present, the number of authorised users are very meager or Nil. In order to increase the Authorised User base, the procedure for obtaining Authorised Users Certificate has to be popularized among the stakeholders.

In this connection, the guidelines for obtaining Authorised User certificate by the Producers / Producer Groups and Buyers / Exporters from GI Registry have been prepared in consultation with GI registry in respect of the above five GI tags and hosted in the Board's website.

The Board approved the guidelines.

Item No.21 : Webinar on e-commerce for domestic and global selling of branded consumer packs of spices.

The Board noted the information which was also covered in the introductory speech of Chairman-cum- Secretary.

Item No.22 : Recruitment of two Research Associates (one for bio technology lab and one for analytical chemistry work) at ICRI, Myladumpara

Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that this proposal is for Indian Cardamom Research Institute (ICRI), under the administrative control of Spices Board. The staff strength got reduced gradually due to retirement of staff. Approval of Recruitment Rules of the Board is still awaited from the Ministry. Meanwhile, to enable the Board to undertake certain new projects and to continue the ongoing projects, the proposal is made to allow ICRI to engage two Research Associates with suitable qualification. Shri Stany Pothen strongly supported this proposal.

The Board approved the proposal.

Item No.23: Renovation of labour quarters and trainees hostel at ICRI, Myladumpara

Director (Research) briefed on the requirement and justification for renovating labour quarters and trainees hostel at ICRI, Myladumpara at an approximate amount of Rs. 44.00 Lakhs.

Board approved the proposal.

Item No. 24 : Establishment of minimal infrastructure facilities at ICRI, Regional Research Station at Thadiyankudisai, Tamil Nadu

Director (Research) briefed on the importance of activities of ICRI Regional Research Station at Thadiyankudisai, Tamil Nadu. She also highlighted the need and justification for establishing minimal infrastructure facilities for the Regional Research Station at Thadiyankudisai, Tamil Nadu to implement various activities of Spices Board in the land allotted by Government of Tamilnadu at Rs.47.00 Lakhs.

Board approved the proposal.

Item No.25 : Modified Spices Board Recruitment Regulations (RR) 2021

Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that draft recruitment regulations including preamble and schedules were placed before the Board for ratification.

Secretary informed that, the approved staff strength of the Board got reduced to 379 as per the restructuring proposal approved for the Board by the Ministry. Based on the approved restructuring proposal, the Board was asked to prepare modified Recruitment Regulations (RR) and the RR thus prepared was submitted to the Ministry. It was informed that the RR is presently under the scrutiny in Law Ministry and approval is awaited.

The Board ratified the action.

Item No.26: Draft Spices Board (Service) Regulations 2021

Secretary informed the Board that there is no service regulation for the employees of the Spices Board as in the case of other Commodity Boards. Hence in exercise of the powers conferred by clause (a) of sub-section 2 of section 39 of the Spices Board Act 1986, a draft regulation on the terms and conditions of service of the officers and employees of the Board – Spices Board (Service) Regulations 2021 adopting the service conditions and service rules of Central Civil Service employees is prepared and placed before the Board for approval.

The Board approved the proposal

Item No.27 : Conduct of work study by Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Kozhikode

Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that the Board received many representations concerning pay scales, career progression etc. from various ranks of officers working in Spices Board. While the Board tried to address some of them by proposing suitable amendment in the Recruitment Regulations, all the issues could not be addressed through amendments in RR. Certain issues needed a proper work study. The Board had written to the Ministry for conducting a work study by its internal work study unit (IWSU). The Board was advised by the Ministry to identify a suitable agency to do the study as there is no internal work study unit (IWSU) existing in the Ministry of late. Accordingly, based on the advice of the Ministry and considering the Covid-19 situations prevailing since March 2020; non-availability of public transport, restriction in air/train travel, lock downs, need for Covid tests & travel pass and quarantine applicable for people coming to Kerala, the Board identified a premier and reputed institute located in Kerala namely IIM, Kozhikode for conducting the work study at a cost of Rs.14,86,800/- including GST. This was necessary to complete the work study at the earliest possible.

The Board noted the information and ratified the action.

Item No.28 : Registration of a Society to support the Spices Board activities for promotion, and intervening effectively in the entire supply chain of spices.

Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that a new Society by the name 'INSPIRES' is proposed to support and strengthen the entire supply chain and support the FPOs. It was noted that other Boards too have similar Societies. Considering the requirement of sector it was felt that it is high time to form a new society. This would facilitate an effective coordinating role with the stakeholders and help to undertake some urgent activities/projects to address issues in supply chain in view of the partial mandate given to the Board in production development. The Society would work in support of the objectives of the Board and it is expected to contribute in increasing the spices export further so as to achieve our export targets. The proposal and objectives of forming a society were discussed at length.

Shri Ajit Pai desired to know the functioning of societies in the other Boards and also about the proposed funding for the society. Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that MPEDA and Rubber Board have formed societies to cater to the needs of the stakeholders. As per the proposal, the society could be partly funded from the approved schemes of the Spices Board, while it would mobilize additional financial resources from various national and international agencies as

permitted by law, like United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) etc. by way of donations, grants, loans, advances & other contributions and would also generate its own internal resources by offering various services by way of fees, subscriptions etc.

It was further informed that it is proposed to register the Society under the Kerala Society Act. As per the present regulations, for the initial constitution, 7 founder members have been identified and their consent taken, including two of the current Board members from Kerala apart from the Board's officials. Overall, it is proposed to have around 40 members having representations from various States, Govts, FPOs, Research institutions.

Dr Santhosh Eapen informed the Board that IISR Society is functioning for the last 30 years as a registered society and suggested to explore the possibility of expanding the Indian Society for Spices located at IISR, Calicut. Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that the Society in IISR is mainly research oriented and the one proposed by the Board is with a much wider scope so as to address the pressing issues in the entire supply chain of spices.

Shri Varghese Moolan informed that it is a well framed concept and recommended the registration of the society, stating that formation of Society is a right step. He stated that, at present, it is very difficult to collect good quality spices from the farmers, and society would be helpful for the exporters and farmers and it would enable us to compete with the international markets with quality products.

Chairman-cum-Secretary further added that, through the Society, the Board would be able to implement many projects in collaboration with stakeholders and private players which would otherwise be difficult considering the limited staff strength of the Board. In a scenario when every State could contribute to the export basket, the support of the Board is required for each and every State and in this sense the Society would play an effective supporting role in achieving the objectives of the Board and serve the entire supply chain of spices sector.

The Board considered all the above points and approved the proposal to form the Society 'INSPIRES'.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Addl Item No. 1 :Status of consignment samples analyzed by quality labs of Spices Board

The Board was informed about the number of samples and parameters analysed by the Quality Evaluation Labs. Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that the analytical charges of Board's quality labs are lower when compared with the charges of the private labs for the same service. The analytical charge is the main source of income for the Board. Even though the objective of the Lab is not for making profit, since the operating charges had increased several times, there was a need to revise the charges. It was also pointed out that the existing labs of Spices Board could not satisfy in full all the latest testing prescribed by the various importing countries. It was also informed that accreditation of private labs is also being considered, in a limited way, by the Board for enhancing the reach of the Board to several new areas and to expand the capacity to undertake new testing requirements. It was informed that the Board would adopt a balanced approach by maximizing utilization of its own labs, minimizing the revenue losses to the Board and facilitating extended reach of services to the stakeholders.

The Board noted the information.

Addl Item No.2. Report on fifth session of Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH)

Chairman-cum-Secretary briefed the importance of CCSCH, Board's Role and achievements in the last 4 meetings of CCSCH. Spices Board is the Secretariat for this prestigious Committee along with its chairmanship. Secretary also informed that in the 5th Session of Codex, another 4 standards have been developed and on adoption, the total number of standards will become 8; making this as one of the most productive Codex Committees currently active.

The Board noted the information.

Addl Item No.3 - Strengthening e-Spice Bazaar portal to facilitate sourcing of spices for exports

Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that the Board signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with UNDP India's Accelerator Lab on 5th April, 2021, for developing a Blockchain Traceability Interface for Indian Spices, proposed to be integrated with the e-spice bazaar portal to enhance traceability in supply chain and trade. Further, it is proposed to strengthen the e-spice bazaar web portal by engaging suitable service providers. In this regard, the Board has invited Expression of Interest (EOI) to select and appoint suitable firms capable of providing end-to-end integrated solution in relation to pre-sale, sale and post sale activities for spices produced in the

specified project areas or any other States/ UTs across the country through Board's e-spice bazaar portal to facilitate sourcing for exports.

The Board noted the information.

Addl Item No.4: Severe shortage of man-power and proposal for contract employment for fixed period to meet the urgent needs.

It was informed that while the approved staff strength, after restructuring was 379, the current staff strength is less than 300. The acute shortage of man power put extra burden and stress on its human resources and has restricted its effectiveness and reach. The Board had set an ambitious export target for which the Board requires adequate man-power. The Board submitted the Recruitment Regulations (RR) to the Ministry for its approval and it is still awaited. The Ministry is expected to permit the Board to recruit staff only after the approval of RR. Considering the delay in getting this approval and the current acute shortage of staff in the Board, it was proposed to engage temporary contractual employees for short term periods without affecting the promotional opportunities of the existing staff up to the level of Asst Directors. It was proposed that this arrangement would cease once recruitments could be successfully finalized in the Board with the approval of the Ministry.

Shri Ajit Pai enquired how the promotional opportunities of the existing employees would be protected. It was clarified that there are vacant posts with no eligible candidates in the feeder cadre for promotion. Such vacant posts and other posts which are earmarked for direct recruitment would only be considered for contract employment. For such posts, it was proposed to go for contractual appointment for a period of one or two years. The proposal was supported by Shri Stany Pothan who emphasized the need to have enough staff so as to ensure effective services to the stakeholders.

The Board approved the proposal.

Addl Item 5 : Construction of cold storage in Spice Park, Guna - payment of penal interest to APEDA

It was informed that this item is in continuation to the agenda item No.42 in the Board meeting held on 16th Nov 2019. Even though Guna Spices park project was successfully implemented, as there was a deviation in the construction of cold storage, based on the observation of CAG and

advise of MoC, the entire amount of Rs.578.96 lakhs received from APEDA for construction of cold storage with penal interest was paid back to APEDA. The penal interest was met from Board's IEBR as suggested /advised by the Ministry.

The Board noted the information

OTHER ITEMS DISCUSSED WITH THE PERMISSION OF CHAIR

i) Shri Medappa suggested to conduct a BSM for chilli focusing on Karnataka as chilli being harvested now and available for supply. Chairman-cum-Secretary agreed to the suggestion for conducting a BSM.

ii) Shri T T Jose requested to take action to get the export incentive (MEIS) on the exports taken place during 2020-21 from DGFT under Commerce Ministry, which will be a great relief for the exporters. Chairman-cum-Secretary replied that clearance of MEIS backlog was already taken up with the Ministry. Other export promotion councils also have been raising this issue before the Ministry and a decision is still awaited.

iii) Shri Stany Pothan requested that a Quality Evaluation Lab should be set up in Myladumpara, which is in the main growing belt of cardamom and also that the auction centre is located nearby. It was informed that, in the earlier Board meeting, this proposal was agreed in principle to provide facilities for testing farmers samples and that the Board is in the process of exploring the possibility of getting funds to take it forward.

iv) The price fall of cardamom was brought to the notice of the Board by Shri Stany Pothan, Vice-Chairman who requested the Board to take steps to recommend to Ministry of Commerce to fix minimum support price (MSP) ie. Rs,2500/- to the cardamom for the benefit of farmers. He informed that the cardamom price had gone upto Rs.4000/- per Kg an year back but subsequently has fallen to below Rs.1000/-per Kg at present, which has affected cardamom growers adversely. He also suggested to take steps to continue the cardamom e-auction without interruption for the smooth trading of cardamom to avoid hardships to farmers. He also pointed out the price hike of fertilizers. He told that the price of some fertilizers had increased up to 40% which seriously affected the farmers who were suffering from the fall in Cardamom price. He requested the Board to intervene with the concerned Ministry to reduce the price of fertilizers.

These suggestions were noted for further action by the concerned Dept of the Board. It was further informed that fixing of MSP is not coming under the purview of Spices Board. It was informed

that the Board had already taken up the matter with the Ministry of Agriculture through the Ministry of Commerce and that it would be followed-up.

It was also informed that the e-Auction software was modified to indicate the type of lot, whether it belonged to a planter or trader ('P' for planter; 'T' for trader), so as to ensure suitable display on the buyer terminals, main display in Auction hall and in youtube also.

It was also informed that controlling the price of fertilizers is not under the purview of the Spices Board. But considering the interest of the stakeholders, the issue would be taken up with IISR and other Govt agencies concerned.

v) Shri Dean Kuriakose, Hon'ble MP also pointed out the fall in price of Cardamom and highlighted the need for fixing MSP. Further he requested the Board to set up a Quality Evaluation Lab in Idukki, the main Cardamom growing area. Hon'ble MP informed that he had sent a letter to the Commerce Minister and he would do the follow up on this. He requested the Board to send letters to both District Collectors of Idukki and Theni for the easy movement of auctioneers and traders during lockdown.

In reply to the query raised by Shri Dean Kuriakose, Hon'ble MP regarding conduct of auctions, Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that the Board would continue the present system of conducting auctions at Puttady and Bodinayakanur with equal importance and informed that there was no move to shift auctions to Bodinayakanur. It was further informed that considering the seriousness of the 2nd wave of Covid and the directions of district administration, e-Auctions at Puttady and Bodinayakanur were to be temporarily suspended, which would be resumed again as soon as the District authorities allow, considering the prevailing pandemic situation.

Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that the Board is exploring the possibility of approaching the Ministry of Food Processing and Industry for funding to establish a testing Lab in ICRI, Myladumpara. Right now, the application window of Ministry of Food Processing Industry is closed and the proposal would be submitted once it is opened.

vii) Shri Varghese Moolan enquired whether the Board received any reply to his letter written to Ministry of Commerce to bring 25 spices from agriculture department under the purview of Spices Board. Secretary informed that Ministry has asked comments of the Board on the matter and the Board had submitted its comments and that the matter is perhaps still under the consideration of the Ministry.

He further enquired, when the prices are very low, whether it would be possible for the Board to purchase the spices from farmers, store and sale when the price goes up. Chairman-cum-Secretary informed that at present there is no such proposal and that the Board is not in a position to procure, store and sell as suggested due to various constraints.

Director (R&D) proposed a vote of thanks and the meeting came to a close at 2.45 pm.
