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Revolutionary agri ideas get awarded

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NEW DELHI: Two revolutionary ideas showcased at an agricultural conclave here could help improve the shelf life of vegetables and change the way fish is consumed in the country. One, called Veg Sav, will substantially reduce post-harvest loss of vegetables by using edible film (coat) while the other, 'FishPaneer', is a value added item that can be processed into various products like the way milk paneer is processed in the country.

The World Bank-funded National Agriculture Innovation Project (NAIP) of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has identified these two indigenous innovations.

Both these innovations caught the attention of participants at the Agri Innovation Conclave, which concluded at the National Agricultural Science Centre (NASC) Complex, Pusa on Monday.

Veg Sav, developed by young farm scientist V Ponvizhi Ramya of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, is a Bacteriophages-based based technology.

The presentation, made before experts of ICAR and UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) during the conclave, explained that Bacteriophages-based bio-control measurements had great potential to enhance micro-biological safety. It could be coated on vegetables using edible film which does not have any harmful side effect.

"An edible film is defined as a thin layer which can be consumed, coated on food/vegetables or placed as a barrier between the food and the surrounding environment," Ramya said in her presentation.

The scientist claimed that the vegetable's cooking quality would not be altered by the edible coat and the country could save up to 90% of post-harvest loss by using natural preservative (bio-preservation).

Onno Ruhl, World Bank's country director for India, awarded the Veg Sav innovator the first prize for the best presentation while scientist Joshykumar Khangembam of Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Mumbai, who developed FishPaneer, got the second prize.

FishPaneer is a Surimi-based valued added fish product. Surimi is the Japanese term for de-boned and washed fish meat which is a wet concentrate of proteins.

According to the presentation on FishPaneer, the value-added item has the nutritional quality of fish and textual characteristics of milk paneer which made it a unique product. There is no item like this in the market. It is a ready-to-cook product which can be processed into various products. "The technology is simple and can be easily adopted," the presentation said.

The two-day conclave was organized to identify, support and encourage young agri-students and entrepreneurs with high potential in business start-ups in agriculture.

Speaking on the occasion, FAO representative Peter Kenmore said India was on the march towards attaining food security and NAIP had contributed towards this aim through innumerable innovations and interventions.

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