

# 'Farmers should get the benefits extended to industrial sectors'

According to the Revenue Minister, the state and Central Governments should take the agriculture sector more seriously as 70 per cent of the population depends on it

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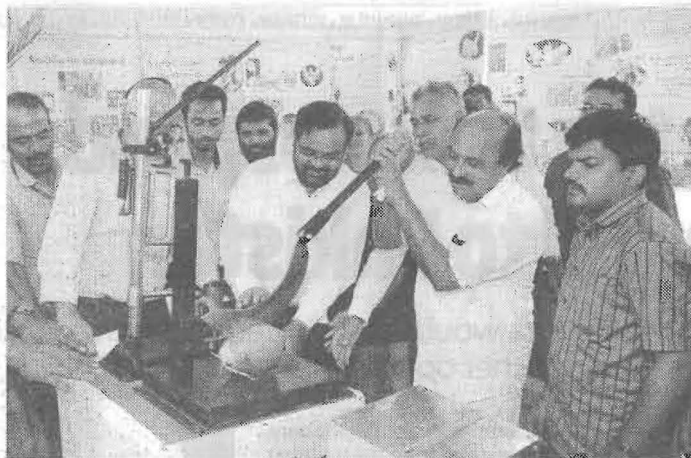
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EVEN when the agricultural sector is hailed as the backbone of the country, the governments are not giving it the benefits given to the industrial sectors, said Revenue Minister E Chandrasekharan.

He said banks are writing off loans worth lakh crores of industrialists with the express consent of the Central Government. "But you know how banks behave when a farmer defaults on repaying loans of ₹5,000, ₹10,000, ₹25,000 and ₹50,000," he said. "This policy should be changed."

The minister was speaking after inaugurating the six-day agri expo of the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute in Kasargod on Friday. He said the governments should take the farm sector more seriously because 70 per cent of the population is dependent on it.

Chandrasekharan also urged research institutes to introspect if their findings and acquired knowledge are trickling down to the farmers. "Lots of money is spent on farmers, but it is not reaching them," he said.



Revenue Minister E Chandrasekharan inspects the coconut husking tool designed by PCPRI on Friday | EXPRESS

The minister said farmers could get better prices if they get access to proper warehouse facilities and processing technologies.

## Dwarf jack and 'kappa' pasta turn heads at agri expo

One of the highlights of the Agri Expo was the exotic fruit sapling

stall run by Jobby Eapen.

Saplings of two exotic dwarf jack varieties - Vietnam Super Early and Nimmi Thai - were selling like hot cakes. Eapen, who runs Ananthakkad Nursery, said the jack would bear fruit in one and a half years, and the tree would grow only up to 10ft.

Saplings of Thailand's Dong Surya, which has red fruit, were also fast disappearing from the

stall. The Brazilian grapetree or jaboticaba was also catching the fancy of the people visiting the expo.

Thai red apple, Lebanese fig, Singapore cherry, maparang and southern pepper piqued the interest of the visitors. Cherupuzha-based Tejaswini Coconut Producer Company Limited had an array of products - from hand-made soaps sans animal fat in rose, sandal, turmeric, jasmine fragrances; coconut oil derived from copra dried without using sulphur; to Dr Fly, a spray to keep away flies; hair oil, skin oil, and virgin coconut oil.

The Central Tuber Crops Research Institute in Sreekariyam was selling the technologies to make noodles, pasta, papadam, sago and chips from tapioca. All the dishes were lined up in its stall. The Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) in Kochi had ready-to-eat dried mackerel curry and rohu fish molly sold in packets. Another innovative product was fish papadam. Omana, a homemaker-turned-entrepreneur, stunned the guests with her prawns kurkure and sausages. The fair will end on January 10.