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## Soon, UAVs to spray pesticides in arecanut plantations

- [Staff Correspondent](#)



**New Approach:**The UAV will be operated in arecanut plantations in the State on trial basis in 2017.

The Central Plantation Crop Research Institute (CPCRI), Kasargod, has planned to develop an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) to ensure controlled and uniform spray of pesticides in arecanut plantations.

CPCRI director P. Chowdappa said that the work of spraying pesticides is executed by UAVs, including drones, in countries like Israel and Australia and several European nations.

In order to introduce a similar technique for pest management in arecanut plantations here, CPCRI had conducted discussions with the scientists serving with the National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) that has an expertise in manufacturing UAVs.

The institute has requested NAL to develop for it an UAV that will have a capacity to carry a payload of 20 litres. The proposed UAV is expected to finish spraying pesticide on a 10-acre arecanut plantation in one hour.

CPCRI has set aside Rs. 30 lakh to develop the vehicle. Apart from developing the UAV, NAL would be entrusted with the responsibility of getting necessary permission from the authorities concerned to operate the vehicle, he said

Arecanut farmers in Karnataka and Kerala are facing acute shortage of labour for activities like harvesting and for spraying pesticide . A major chunk of farmers in Malnad and coastal Karnataka region could not take up the second round of spraying copper sulphate and lime solution, commonly called mailututta in 2013, owing to incessant rain and shortage of labour. This resulted in the outbreak of fruit rot disease, popularly known as koleroga, due to which there was a decline in the yield to the tune of 40 per cent.

The proposed UAV would provide solution to such problems by minimising the role of human labour in the operation of spraying pesticides, Mr. Chowdappa said.

He said that the UAV would be operated in arecanut plantations on trial basis in 2017. After the mass production commences, the cost of producing an UAV is likely to come down to Rs. 20 lakh.

Farmers can purchase the vehicle through the village-level cooperative societies. The government can also purchase the vehicle for the custom hiring centres of agriculture equipment that it has established at hobli level and farmers can hire them on rent basis, he added.