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**Agro-advisory (31st March to 7th April, 2020) and
safety measures against spread of COVID-19 to farming
community of jute and allied fibres**

Agro-advisory services by ICAR-CRIJAF, Barrackpore from 31st March to 7th April, 2020 to farming community of jute and allied fibres. The COVID-19 epidemic has affected many countries of the world and the World Health Organisation has declared it 'Pandemic'. Government of India (GOI) and State Governments have been taking several proactive preventive and mitigating measures and declared lockdown till 14th April, 2020 in order to prevent spread of deadly COVID-19 virus.

This lockdown period has been coincided with sowing period of jute and allied fibres. Sowing after lockdown will change soil moisture regime and adversely affect the quantity and quality of fibre. The exemptions of different agricultural and allied activities from lockdown (like Farming operations by farmers and farm workers in the field ; Custom hiring centres (CHC) related to farm machinery etc. are highly beneficial for jute and allied fibres farming community for time bound farming operations like land preparation and sowing of jute and harvesting of flax, sunhemp. To facilitate the scientific method of sowing and other cultivation practices, following agro-advisories and safety measures to prevent spread of COVID-19 virus have been issued by ICAR-CRIJAF for the period from 31st March to 7th April, 2020 for the benefit of farming community of jute and allied fibres.

Agro-advisory (31 March to 7 Apr 2020) for Jute Growers

1. No rainfall is predicted in next 5-7 days. Max. Temp is expected to be around 32 to 38 OC and Min. Temp to be around 22-25 OC, so field preparation needs to start immediately for jute sowing to get the benefit of residual soil moisture.
2. To get good yield and quality fibre, use JRO 204 (Suren) variety of jute seed and treat the seed with Bavistin 50 WP or Carbandazim (2g per kg seed), at least 4 hours before sowing.
3. Sowing should be done in line through CRIJAF Multirow seed drill machine and required seed rate will be only 350 - 400 gm / bigha.
4. Line sowing with row spacing of 20-25 cm and sowing at depth of 3 cm are recommended.
5. Laddering of field after sowing which will act as dust mulch for conservation of soil moisture which will be helpful for better germination of seed.
6. For medium and high fertility land , the recommended fertilizer will be N: P₂O₅ : K₂ O : : 60:30:30 kg / ha. For low fertility land it will be 80:40:40 kg / ha. Nitrogen needs to be applied in 2-3 split dose. However phosphorus and potash should be applied as basal. Farmer can also refer Soil Health Card for actual NPK application as per their soil test



Safety and preventive measures to be taken to prevent spread of COVID-19 virus

Farmers are to follow social distancing, safety measures and to maintain personal hygiene by washing of hands with soap, wearing of face mask, protective clothing at each and every step in the entire process of field operations in order to prevent spread of COVID-19 virus.

1. In case of manual sowing, accomplish the operation in 4-5 feet spaced strips assigning one strip to one person. This will ensure adequate spacing between the engaged labours.
2. All the persons engaged in land preparation, sowing, weeding, irrigation should use face masks and ensure hand washing with soap at reasonable intervals.
3. Prefer sowing operations by CRIJAF seed drill over the manual wherever feasible. Also stagger the field operations wherever possible and avoid engaging more number of persons for sowing and land preparation on the same day.
4. Proper sanitation and cleanliness of machine like seed drill, nail weeder, irrigation pump, tilling equipment, tractor etc. are to be maintained especially when machines are shared and used by farmer groups. Copious washing of machine parts frequently touched with soap is advised.
5. Also maintain safe distance of 3-4 feet during rest, taking of meals, seed treatment at home, loading/unloading of manures and fertilisers.
6. Engage only familiar persons to the extent possible and after reasonable enquiry as to avoid the entry of any suspect or likely carrier during field activity.
7. Collect the seed from known shop and after returning from market immediately wash your hands and exposed parts of the body. Always use face masks while going market for seed purchase.

Besides above measures, during the lockdown period the scientists are in contact through phone with individual farmers, progressive farmers, farmers club, FPOs and constantly advising them to carry out the essential farm operations with utmost care taking all precautions to check the COVID-19 spread and contamination in their locality.

- The farmers are also being informed over phone to estimate the jute seed requirement of specific variety in their areas in group and the possible date of sowing. They are being advised to prepare the land as per the moisture and tractor availability and inform the concerned scientists.
- The farmers are updated that in the lockdown situation the essential agricultural operations particularly arrangement of seed, fertilizers and implements can be done while maintaining social distancing.
- In this context the contact farmers are being advised over phone to collect the seeds from the Institute with sufficient prior information (at least 2-3 days) on amount and the variety and fix the time in consultation with respective scientists so that the farmers collect the seeds in staggered manner.
- The farmers are advised to call the institute in case of any sort of emergency in the present situation related to the farming and personal matter.