

Scientists urged to work for combating malnutrition

Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute's Winter School inaugurated

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Expressing concern over the rate of malnutrition among children in the country, Manju Sharma, former Union Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, called for an integrated approach to develop technology to ensure food and nutritional security for the people of the country.

She was speaking after inaugurating the 21-day Winter School at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), which will train young researchers on the latest trends in developing natural products from the sea against various diseases, said a press release here.

"Malnutrition is still a grave issue in India. Every year, 2.1 million children die of malnutrition in the country," she said citing data from the United Nations Development Programme. She urged scientists and professionals to take up the challenging task of combating malnutrition.

Regular training and awareness camps should be organised, particularly involving women in rural areas, she added. "A people-centred approach focussing on farmers, technological empowerment and rural community



Manju Sharma, former Union Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, and CMFRI Director A. Gopalakrishnan at the Winter School programme at the CMFRI in Kochi on Tuesday.

should be developed," she said.

Referring to Kerala, she said that there should be a 'Kerala Model' in introducing technology-driven projects to upgrade the living standards of the rural community. She also called for simplifying bio-tech interventions for better public understanding of agri-biotech.

Organised by the Marine Biotechnology division of the CMFRI, the Winter School on 'recent advances in bioactive compounds from marine organisms' is being attended by 25 researchers and officials from various institutes under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and universities from across the country.

CMFRI Director A. Gopalakrishnan presided at the inaugural function. He said that many natural products developed by the institute from marine organisms were in the pipeline for commercialisation.

"Anti-microbial therapeutic product from marine bacteria as oral applicant and natural synthetic products derived from seaweeds as potential pharmacophores are some of the products developed by the CMFRI and are in the line for commercialisation," he said.

He pointed out that there was a growing demand for the marine derived bio-active compounds in recent years.