

Lab-to-land programme

By Our Staff Reporter

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research has launched its lab-to-land programme at Narakal where the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute is helping small farmers to undertake Prawn culture.

More than 100 Harijan families

are among the beneficiaries.

Under the lab-to-land programme, launched by the ICAR to mark its golden jubilee, necessary technology will be transferred to 50,000 farm families during this year.

Mr. Sujan Singh, MP and governing body member of the ICAR, told newsmen in Cochin on Wednesday, after visiting Narakal, that he would recommend adequate incentives to farmers so that full and productive utilisation of the coastal areas could be extended throughout the country.

According to Mr. Singh, who is an agriculturist by profession and training, a farmer could earn an annual income of Rs. 50,000 per hectare from sea farming.

In this context, Mr. Singh wanted the State Governments to protect small and marginal farmers from big business houses who were trying to get on lease big farms around the villages where they would reap the benefits of the latest techniques developed by the ICAR.

Mr. Singh wanted big houses to exploit the vast marine wealth contained in the exclusive economic zone extending up to 320 km. Under no circumstances should they be allowed to operate within

15 km from the shore, he said.

The governing body member, who visited the operational research project of the ICAR at Kovalam, expressed his satisfaction at the good work being done there. The project is helping fishermen to get additional income and he wanted the ICAR to take up such projects on sea farming at several other centres.

With a view to intensifying research, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute and the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology will be further developed and expanded, he said.

A Rs. 320 lakh CMFRI Laboratory Complex will start functioning in Cochin in another two years along with several research centres along the coasts. A research vessel will be provided to the Institute this year to carry out advanced applied research.

The benefits of these efforts will go to the fishermen, small and marginal farmers and landless labour resulting in the improvement of their socio-economic conditions, he said.

Mr. Singh wanted pearl culture, the technology of which was developed by the CMFRI, to be taken up on a commercial scale.