

ICAR-NBAIR scientists participated in the virtual farmer's scientist interaction meeting on cassava mealybug management

Dr. N. Bakthavatsalam, Director, NBAIR, Principal Scientists, Dr. A.N. Shylesha, Dr. M. Mohan and Scientist, Dr. M. Sampath Kumar participated as resource persons in the virtual farmer's scientist interaction meeting on the recently invaded cassava mealybug (*Phenacoccus manihoti*) management on 02.12.2020 organized by Dept. of Horticulture and plantation crops at Rasipuram, Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu. Mr. K. Megraj, I.A.S, Namakkal district collector presided over the meeting attended by several cassava growing farmers from Namakkal district.

The Director, NBAIR addressed the farmers about the status of the cassava mealybug and NBAIR's inevitable role initiated in introduction of the classical biological control agent, *Anagyrus lopezi* for the cassava mealybug management. He also urged the cassava farmers to abstain from the use of chemical insecticides, so as to preserve the native natural enemies.

Dr. M. Mohan spoke about the bioecology of cassava mealybug, symptoms, level of damage caused by this invasive pest, and natural enemies being documented from the surveillance studies undertaken by NBAIR during June-August 2020 at Namakkal and Salem districts.

Dr. M. Sampath Kumar, briefed the timeline of activities that are being undertaken by NBAIR since interception of this mealybug during May 2020, by issuing pest alert from time to time at various forums and obtaining import permit for introduction of the parasitoid, *A. lopezi* from Thailand and Benin. Quarantine procedures to be followed in introduction of the parasitoid, approximate time for getting approval from DPPQS for field release of the parasitoids were also explained by him to the farmers.

The Namakkal district collector, Deputy Director of Horticulture, Assistant Director of Horticulture and their team moderated the interactive session.

NBAIR scientists also addressed several queries raised by the farmers on cassava mealybug management. A total of 56 progressive farmers including Sago mill owners from the cassava growing belt of Rasipuram, Namagiripettai, Venandhur, and Senthamangalam blocks of Namakkal district participated and benefitted from the interactive meeting.

