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Pune virology institute develops high-potential papaya

17 February 2014 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

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The regional office of the IARI, which is a part of Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) system, has done significant work in the control of plant viruses and has developed virus resistant varieties of many fruits and vegetables.

It has also developed production strategies for managing virus diseases in a large number of crops. Virus diseases lead to large-scale losses in many important horticultural crops such as papaya, citrus fruits, capsicum, tomato and cucurbits.

Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, on February 16, inaugurated the new building of the institute. On this occasion, Mr Pawar expressed the hope that the new infrastructure being set up would help the institute to utilize the most modern technology in control of plant diseases. This new facility would also help state agricultural universities and sister institutes of the ICAR in Maharashtra, he said.

Mr Pawar informed that this institute started way back in 1938 as the first research centre on plant virology and has done pioneering research in the control of plant viruses. The Department of Biotechnology has recognized it as an 'accredited test laboratory, under its National Certification System.

The institute's Pune Selection -III papaya variety gives an average yield of 40 tonnes per hectare even under high disease pressure. It recently signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) with a biotech company for production of virus-free tissue culture raised banana seedlings. This, Mr Pawar expects, will ensure high returns to farmers.