

## University takes technology to farmers



**Simplifying things:Extension workers at the district Krishi Vigyan Kendras of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University holding a meeting through video conferencing.**

COIMBATORE: The persistent grouse among the agricultural academia is the poor percolation of farm information to the grassroots. Lab-to-land transfer of latest agricultural technologies is inadequate.

Even with 52 State Agricultural Universities, more than 100 institutes of Indian Council of Agriculture Research and 572 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) across the country, the flow of information to the farmer is very poor. Realising the fact that bringing the farmer to the technology is a daunting task, the e-Extension Centre of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has taken the technology to the farmer, putting to optimum use Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

The State has 30 KVKs, out of which 14 come under TNAU. The University has a server linked multiple video conferencing system, established with financial support from National Agricultural Development Programme (NADP). This links the university with the 14 KVKs, 36 research stations and 10 colleges. According to E. Vadivel, Project Officer, e-Extension Programmes of

TNAU, it is possible to simultaneously link all the 60 centres for holding meetings, sharing power point presentations and also chatting on-line. An agritech portal [www.agritech.tnau.ac.in](http://www.agritech.tnau.ac.in) with nearly 50,000 html pages is also made available round-the-clock for any user.

However, the main function of the conferencing system is to enable face-to-face interaction among the stake-holders – scientists, KVK extension workers and farmers. For this, each centre of the university is provided a computer with Web cam. A server linked URL ID is created by each individual using the centre's name and identification name.

With the conferencing facility, the farmer can come to one of the 60 centres at his convenience, use the centre's log in and have interface with any other centre or the university itself or just get information from the portal. The scheduled meeting timings are informed to farmers to enable them get connected. Even those who cannot attend it live can get to see the recorded version later.

“Hi-tech technologies in agriculture have started flowing in. Except a handful of enterprising farmers many remain ignorant about these. ICT intervention is very much needed to bridge this gap. Unfortunately, the agriculture sector has been the last to adopt this route,” Mr. Vadivel says. What is unique about the project is that the whole system has been devised by the agricultural scientists themselves. The University is now planning to extend the conferencing facility to all block offices and also take the portal and conferencing facility to mobiles. The ultimate aim is to see that access is just a finger touch away for the farmer – a touch screen facility in every block office is the University's next step in the ICT ladder.