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THE HINDU

Are vegetables healthy?

VEGETABLES ARE good for health. But, are the vegetables healthy and eco-friendly? No, say the experts.

Agricultural scientists say most of the vegetables coming to the market are generally harmful, as farmers use more toxic chemicals and insecticides. They are likely to contain residues of insecticides.

To persuade the farmers to adopt safe pest management measures, a 'vegetable exhibition', with special reference to integrated pest management strategies, will be held at the Agricultural College and Research Institute (ACRI) in Madurai, on March 26. The exhibition is open to the public. The State-level exhibition brings together farmers from all vegetable-growing districts such as Theni, Ramanathapuram, Pudukottai, Tiruchi and Dindigul. The 'healthy' vegetables will be on display.

The ACRI Dean, N. Kempu Chetty, said the purpose was to make farmers produce vegetables free of toxic chemicals. And that was possible only when they tried out biological control methods.

According to N. Muthukrishnan of the Department of Entomology, ACRI, the focus of the exhibition would be on vegetables and vegetable-related technologies. Brinjal, tomato, chillies, gourds and cauliflower were among the vegetables that would be displayed.

Farmers as well as domestic growers could go in for neem oil, instead of pesticides. This is the tip for growing healthy vegetables.

"When we procure vegetables from the market, they contain chemicals, and that can be avoided by adopting our suggestions," he said. There are also ways of increasing the productivity of vegetables and reducing the cost of production.

With over 300 farmers expected to take part in the exhibition, some leading companies in vegetable technology will introduce new technologies to the farmers.

The National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation, Nasik, and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University are the co-sponsors.

From Shastry V. Mallady

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