**Mega Event with Participation from 89 organizations of 29 states/UTs**

**Two days National Conference on World Environment Day organized at ICAR- CIARI, Port Blair**

ICAR- Central Island Agricultural Research Institute, Port Blair in collaboration with Andaman Science Association and Department of Biotechnology, New Delhi organized two days virtual National Conference on ‘Underutilized Horticultural Genetic Resources: Conservation and Utilization’ on the occasion of World Environment Day during June 3-4, 2022.

The conference was inaugurated by Dr. Chittaranjan Kole, President, Intl. Climate Resilient Crop Genomics Consortium; Former VC, BCKV, Kalyani and Raja Ramanna Fellow. He emphasized upon conserving the precious biodiversity of the islands and its sustainable utilization for mitigating the challenges posed by the climate change. Dr. B.K. Pandey, ADG (HS), ICAR served as the Guest of Honour.

Padma Shri Dr. Brahma Singh, Founder, Prof. Brahma Singh Horticultural Foundation, New Delhi delivered his Keynote address on importance of underutilized horticultural genetic resources with special reference to Sea buckthorn. He also sensitized the participants about the potential of local species to cater the global markets. Dr. N.K. Krishna Kumar, former Deputy Director General (HS), ICAR, New Delhi and former Regional Representative, Bioversity International, Rome delivered a Keynote lecture. He explained the interdependence of various organisms, which forms the balance of system in total. He also highlighted the need of adopting the holistic approach to achieve environmental, ecological and economic security.

Dr. E.B. Chakurkar, Director, ICAR-CIARI and President, Andaman Science Association in his welcome address highlighted the purpose of conducting this important conference. He also threw light upon the work carried out by ICAR-CIARI in the field of diversity, conservation and utilization of horticultural genetic resources.

During the valedictory session, the Chief Guest- Dr. A.K. Singh, Deputy Director General (HS), ICAR, New Delhi highlighted the need to take up systematic research on perennial lesser known horticultural species, especially in the wake of climate change. Dr. T.V.R.S. Sharma, Former Member, GB, ICAR stressed upon the vulnerability of island ecosystem to climate change and role of crop wild relatives in meeting the challenges of horticultural sector. Dr. S. Dam Roy, Former Director, ICAR-CIARI emphasized upon the timeliness of conducting the conference on such important aspect.

During two days, various technical sessions were conducted in which discussions on various aspects of conservation, domestication, cultivation, improvement, postharvest management and marketing of underutilized horticultural species were held. Four invited talks from well-known researchers, 33 oral presentations and 55 poster presentations by academicians and research scholars from various parts of the country enriched the knowledge of the participants.

Dr. Ajit Arun Waman and Dr. Pooja Bohra, Scientists, ICAR-CIARI, served as Organizing Secretaries of the event, which was attended by 291 participants from 89 organizations of 30 states/UTs of the country.