

'Govt should boost competitiveness in plantation sector'

Our Bureau

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The Government has a major role in promoting sectoral competitiveness in the economy including plantations, says Dr Nagesh Kumar, Chief Economist, UNESCAP and Director UNESCAP for South and West Asia.

Dr Nagesh Kumar said this here on Monday while speaking at a seminar on 'Building competitiveness in a globalised world: Experience of India's plantation sector' organised by the Centre for Development Studies (CDS).

COMMON CAUSE

The seminar is being held as part of the National Research Programme on Plantation Development sponsored by the Union Ministry of Commerce.

The very fact that the plantation sector is largely unorganised allows scope for the Government to make effective and result-oriented interventions to make common cause with the aspirations of the sector.

For instance, it can set up common infrastructure for players of varying sizes, scales and capabilities in the sector.

Dominated by small and marginal holdings, it would not be viable for most of them to set up the required infrastructure by themselves; nor would it make perfect business sense either.

SELF-HELP GROUPS

The Government could also initiate the formation of self-help groups in the sector which can deliver common services to the benefit of these players, he said.

Similarly, common research and development infrastructure and



technological extension services have acquired relevance of a scale imagined never before in these times of competition for survival.

These are must elements that need to be embedded in any meaningful intervention strategy aimed at improvement in yield, quality and overall productivity.

Two other major aspects that should not be lost sight of are the Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (SPS) and the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) standards.

GOVT ASSISTANCE

The Government must come up with some expert guidance and an assistance programme for the plantation sector as the latter comes to terms with the rarefied field of trade negotiations and with immediate relevance to the export sector.

Marketing and promotion of brands is another area that calls for enhanced levels of sophistication on the part of sectoral players.

Organic farming and filing for geographical indications are two other issues that come to one's mind when thinking about enhanced 'facilitator' role of the Government.

The plantation sector needs to be sensitised on the need for moving up the value chain through focus on processing of value-added products, Dr Nagesh Kumar said.