

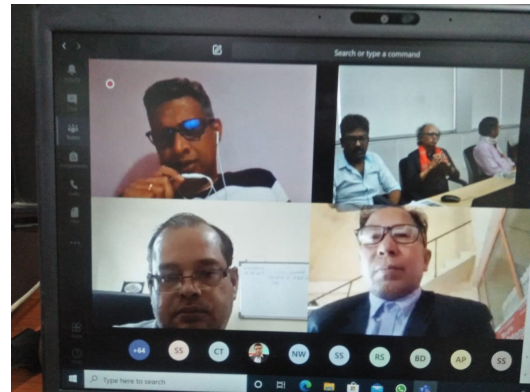
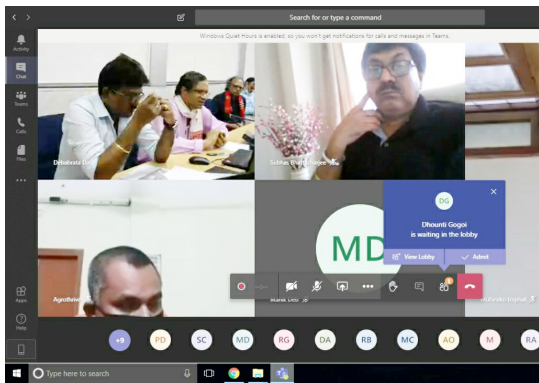
CSIR-NEIST's success in connecting virtually to more than 300 villages in NE India through STINER in the first attempt.

Council of Scientific & Industrial Research-North East Institute of Science & Technology (CSIR-NEIST), Jorhat has organized WEBINAR on 02 June, 2020 which is an endeavour to reach out to 500 villages of NE India under the aegis of its flagship project called Science & Technology Intervention in North Eastern Region (STINER), which is a Ministry of DoNER sponsored project being materialized through the NEC, Shillong. The programme was attended by the director of CSIR-NEIST Dr G. Narahari Sastry apart from other experts which include Dr K. Karthikeyan, CEO, North East Agriculture Technology Entrepreneurs Hub (NEATEHUB), Assam Agricultural University (AAU), Jorhat; Prof. V. Ravishankar, Director, National Institute of Design (NID), Jorhat; Dr Saurabh Baruah, Chief Scientist; Dr M.J. Bordoloi, Chief Scientist; Dr S.P. Saikia Pr. Scientist, convenor and moderator of the programme, Dr Mantu Bhuyan, Pr. Scientist & PI of STINER; Dr Jatin Kalita, Pr. Scientist and Dr Mohan Lal , Sr. Scientist & co-convenor, all from CSIR-NEIST. Dr Sastry said that the main goal of STINER is to bring all the relevant proven rural technologies which is ready for translation to the field and are lying at the disposal of CSIR-NEIST, to the reaches of farmers and artisans community of rural areas of North Eastern Region (NER) of India, so that the quality of their profession can be boosted further through science and technological intervention. He further added that the main aim of WEBINAR is to listen to the voices of the villages of NE India. As such an online interaction has been initiated by CSIR-NEIST wherein scientists from various R&D domains of agro sciences of the institute, as well as experts from other institutes like NEATEHUB, AAU and NID participated, in order to reach out to three hundred odd participants from all across NE India which include farmers, rural aspiring entrepreneurs, full-time entrepreneurs, NGOs, Self Help Groups (SHG) etc. The chief objectives of this online programme are to empower farmers, innovation and entrepreneurship development, issues of migrant workers and hand-holding poor farmers. The focus is to address by scientific intervention the day-to-day productivity issues being faced by the rural producers in their own spheres of livelihood in general. As told by a CSIR-NEIST communiqué, the programme started with opening remarks by Dr S.P Saikia followed by the comments articulated by all the experts. Dr G. Narahari Sastry welcomed all the participants and thanked DoNER ministry, NEC, NEATEHUB, NID, School of Agricultural Sciences and Rural Development (SASRD), Nagaland University, Nagaland, NGOs, SHGs etc. whose active support and cooperation made this programme possible. He opined that the

villages always played a significant role since ancient civilization, and in the current scenario too they are a growth engine as our country's economy is agriculture driven. Therefore, it is imperative to boost the rural productivity by optimum usage of science & technology. He spoke about reverse migration of people that is from urban to rural areas provoked by this COVID-19 pandemic prompted series of lockdowns. Dr Sastry mentioned that the policy makers and the scientific community is left out with the burgeoning responsibility to address the concerns of these migrant workers and rehabilitate them with new employment avenues as most of them are in the verge of losing their livelihood. Therefore, this programme is also a way forward to churn out employment scopes which are rural centric and based upon rural resources and technologies, and may prove to be a launch pad for employability of migrant workers who retreated to their homeland and are faced to be rendered jobless. Dr Karthikeyan expressed that there is a great urgency for developing and nurturing an entrepreneurial ecosystem in order to promote enterprises and start-ups in the agricultural sector and create more jobs in order to alleviate the mounting unemployment issue. In this context he explained the role of technology incubators in maturing a technology so as to make it resilient before being translated into the market, and in the process help start-ups take off by proper mentoring at various vital stages, which finally leads to connecting the entrepreneurs to the farming sector in the backyard and at the same time linking them to the potential market in the front yard. Prof. V. Ravishankar spoke about the importance of marketing a product in which the role of packaging is cardinal in creating a brand by starting from commodity to creation of a product. He highlighted upon design education and design services for a meaningful and sustainable development of mankind by means of indigenous technologies with a human face and also for a sustainable and balanced environment as a whole.

The participants enquired with a volley of questions ranging from types of crops to be grown depending upon soil and climate type, augmentation of yield, linking up to prospective buyers, value-addition of agricultural produce and augmentation of quality of agro products, marketing, post-harvest management, proximity of distillation units, installation of oil distillation units for citronella and lemon grass, to ward off pest and manage diseases in cultivated aromatic crops and other cash crops, about multiple cropping issues, farming techniques and related trainings, market value of different cash crops and their products, reduction of cost of production and profitability etc. The experts answered the queries raised to everybody's understanding and satisfaction and urged them to be in constant touch with CSIR-NEIST. They were assured that every possible measure will be undertaken to address their concerns in the future too by visits of scientists physically to the sites, as well as by

imparting guidance through virtual mode too. Upon culmination of the interaction session the experts unanimously and emphatically stated that STINER is a one step solution to a plethora of rural economy development issues and the farmers and rural entrepreneurs should make judicious use of this platform. The experts urged the participants to choose suitable technologies available under STINER which needs to be befitting to their requirements and make an optimal use of the rural technologies for catalyzing the growth of social rural entrepreneurship for a flourishing rural economy and that will subsequently uplift the sagging GDP of the country. WEBINAR is a step taken by CSIR-NEIST to boost social rural entrepreneurship and is in resonance with the honourable prime minister of India Shri Narendra Modi's appeal to the citizens of the country on "Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan" or "Self-reliant India campaign" and "go vocal for local" in these times of economic crunch.



Photos: Scientists and experts at CSIR-NEIST seen interacting with WEBINAR participants online