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# Agriculture college to start in-house organic course for farmers

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MADURAI: In a major move to give thrust on organic farming, Agricultural College and Research Institute (AC & RI), Madurai of Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with organic farming community of Aruppukottai.

Through this MoU, TNAU will share its expertise on organic farming, providing in-house training to this farmer's group. The college will be signing the MoU with Sustainable Agro Alliance (SAAL) of Aruppukottai during the inauguration of golden jubilee year on Tuesday.

The 90-day in-house training programme will be carried out through open and distance learning centre of TNAU. Explaining about the programme, P Shanthi, director of ODL, TNAU said a group of organic farmers from Aruppukottai approached them to learn organic farming in a more scientific manner. The first batch of 30 farmers will start their training from September.

During the training, they will be allotted five to 10 cents of land inside the AC & RI premises and they will be taught to carry out organic farming. Most candidates who opt for the course are organic vegetable farmers and they can harvest the vegetable crop within 90 days.

The minimum qualification for attending this course will be a pass in Class 8. However, most candidates who approached them for the course were ITI (Technical Institute) diploma holders who had become organic farmers, she mentioned.

The course fee has been fixed as Rs 4,000. Around 250 farmers from Aruppukottai region are part of SAAL and willing to learn organic farming and there will be steady flow of candidates for training, she said.

Jayabala Murugan of SAAL from Aruppukottai said that they have been carrying out organic farming for more than a year under the guidance of an agency called Christian Aid in Aruppukottai.

"We have sought technical expertise from TNAU and we will be able to absorb these trained hands in our organization as agro-entrepreneurs. Further the ones trained under TNAU can act as master trainers to reach out more people educating them on organic farming", he said.

Shanthi also stated that B F Technology (Bachelor of Farm Technology) course offered by TNAU through ODL is a great success and they are getting steady stream of students from all walks of lives. "There is increased interest among people to take up farming and we have lot of candidates for the course", she added.

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