



Union Agriculture Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan orders expert panel on litchi crisis in Bihar

Expert task force formed on directions of Shri Shivraj Singh to protect litchi crop in Bihar

Team comprising scientists, officials and experts to submit report within a week

Posted On: 08 MAY 2026 1:46PM by PIB Delhi

Taking serious note of the problems faced by litchi farmers in Bihar, Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, and Rural Development, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan has initiated immediate and sensitive intervention over the damage being caused to crops by the litchi stink bug. Following concerns raised by farmers, Shri Chouhan directed the constitution of a special expert task force that will visit the affected areas and submit a report along with recommendations for remedial measures.

The issue was raised before the Union Agriculture Minister during a farmer interaction programme organised on May 7 at the Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture, Lucknow. Farmers informed Shri Chouhan about the extensive damage being caused to litchi crops due to the litchi stink bug. Taking immediate cognisance of the matter, the Union Minister directed officials to form a specialised task force.

According to an order issued on May 7 by the National Research Centre on Litchi, Muzaffarpur, under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the task force will assess the current situation related to the litchi stink bug, visit affected regions, scientifically study crop losses and suggest both immediate and long-term measures to provide relief to farmers.

The task force will also recommend necessary advisories and extension activities for farmers, besides suggesting interventions required at both the state and central levels.

As per the order, the expert task force has been constituted with scientists, officials and specialists from various institutions. The Director of the National Research Centre on Litchi, Muzaffarpur, has been appointed as the chairperson of the panel.

The members of the task force include representatives nominated by the Director of Horticulture-cum-Bihar State Horticulture Mission, Bihar government; representatives nominated by the Director of Plant Protection, Agriculture Department, Bihar government; a representative nominated by the entomologist of Dr Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa, Samastipur; a representative nominated by the Principal Scientist (Entomology) of Bihar Agricultural University, Sabour, Bhagalpur; and a representative nominated by the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture.

The panel also includes scientist Dr Jaipal Singh Chaudhary from the ICAR Research Complex for Eastern Region and the Centre for Agricultural Systems Research for Hill and Plateau Region, Ranchi; Dr M Sampat Kumar from the National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources, Bengaluru; scientist (Entomology) Dr Ipsita Samal from the ICAR-National Research Centre on Litchi, Muzaffarpur; and Principal Scientist (Entomology) Dr Vinod Kumar, who will serve as the member secretary of the task force.

According to the order, the task force will soon visit the most affected blocks in litchi-producing districts of Bihar. The team has been asked to submit its report to Union Agriculture Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan within one week so that necessary action can be taken in a timely manner.

RC/MS/MK

(Release ID: 2258998) Visitor Counter : 590

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