To

The Director of Agriculture
Vikas Bhavan, Thiruvananthapuram
Kerala 695033

Sub: Advisory on incidence of Cassava mealy bug (*Phenacoccus manihoti* Matile-Ferrero) in Kerala-regarding

Sir/Madam,

I have the honour to bring to your kind notice that the incidence of Cassava mealy bug (*Phenacoccus manihoti* Matile-Ferrero) has been confirmed and diagnosed/identified by the taxonomist at ICAR-NBAIR, Bangalore based on diagnostic characteristics. As per the Pest alert issued by National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Insect Resources, NBAIR (copy enclosed), the pest was observed on around 2000 square meter experimental plot of Cassava (*Manihot esculenta* Crantz) in Thrissur district of Kerala. As the pest is reported for the first time in India, proactive interventions are imperative to manage and check its spread to new areas.

Following strategies are suggested to contain, suppress and eradicate the pest population:

- To evade further spread of the pest, complete destruction by burning of the infested plants in the specific areas is recommended.
- Farmers and other stake holders should be advised through extension functionaries to use suitable systemic chemical pesticides in heavily infested sites.
- Constant surveillance of the affected spot /kitchen gardens may be taken up involving stake holders.
- Awareness may be created in the affected village involving extension workers and public including women members of the family.
- The pest is found to survive and breed on weeds like *Alternanthera sessilis* (sessile joyweed), *Syngnilia nodiflora* (nodeweed) and *Blumea lacera* (Malay blumea) which may support the carryover of the pest during absence of Cassava crop. Therefore, maintaining field sanitation and practicing clean cultivation is advised.
- Avoid use and transport of setts from the infested area for propagative purposes.
In view of the Pest alert issued by NBAIR, it is advised to undertake monitoring of Cassava crop on regular basis. If any incidence of Cassava mealy bug is reported by the farmers, survey of the affected area may be conducted immediately and the concerned officials at district/division/block may be advised to take need based plant protection measures to contain/suppress/eradicate the pest population. The hot spots of Cassava mealy bug should be identified through survey for regular monitoring. The detailed information may also be sent to the Directorate through e-mail appa.ipm-ppqs@gov.in urgently to apprise the same to Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare.

Yours faithfully

Encl: As above

(Rajesh Malik)
Plant Protection Adviser

Copy for information:
1. Joint Secretary(PP), DAC&FW, Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110001
2. PPS to PPA
3. Officer In-charge, CIPMC- Ernakulam with directions to conduct regular survey in the area to ensure containment and eradication of the pest.