

# NITK-ADBI project to restructure agri system in Odisha

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mangaluru:** NITK Surathkal is working on restructuring the agricultural system and cognitive stimulation through an ADBI-funded project, in several tribal villages in Odisha.

The ongoing project is titled 'Impact of soil health card on crop productivity and farmers' income'. It has been running effectively in the Koraput district of Southern Odisha since 2021. It is funded by the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), Japan, and undertaken by NITK Surathkal.

## CLIMATE SMART

The project is headed by Pradyot Ranjan Jena of the School of Management, NITK Surathkal. The total cost of the project is US\$90,266.

Jena said that Koraput district is known for its agricultural and natural diversity. It has been declared as a global agricultural heritage hotspot by the UN. A significant part of the district's population is tribal. The major crops grown by these tribes are paddy, maize, sugarcane, millet, green gram, potato, sweet potato, ginger, Niger, and vegetables.

"Over the years, they have followed the same agricultural methods, and the ongoing project also aims to promote climate-smart and climate-resilient agricultural practices in

the region," said Jena. Jena said the main focus is to enhance a sustainable agricultural system in the region. "Due to the indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers, the soil quality in many parts in the district has been degraded significantly. Therefore, recently, a training programme by Raja Rajendra Timilsina from ADBI and PhD scholar Purna Chandra Tanti was organised in 14 villages of the district. It brought together around 500 farmers. During this training, several sustainable agricultural practices were demonstrated. Further, the importance of soil testing, for the improvement of soil health and crop productivity was explained to the farmers."

## Cognitive stimulation

The second main aspect of this project is to help with the cognitive stimulation of farmers. "We are trying to help them visualise their growth for another 20 years, through cognitive stimulation techniques, and compare it with the current scenario, in order to internalise the necessary actions required to be taken in agriculture. Such cognitive stimulation is often very useful to change farmers' behaviour," said Dr Timilsina from ADBI. In the last aspect, emphasis is given to making the voices or views of farmers' heard at the highest decision-making level, especially among the Union government ministries.