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Title: Need to establish a regional centre of Central Research Institute for Dry-land Agriculture (CRIDA) in South-Western part of West Bengal.

DR. TAPAS MANDAL (RANAGHAT): Agriculture is one of the major professions of the people of West Bengal. Agroecologically, it is a very diverse state with full potential for export oriented agricultural produce. Though it has almost 62% irrigated land but still 38% land remains rain-fed. Districts like Purulia, Bankura, Birghum, parts of West Midnapur, Murshidabad are rain fed and in these districts productivity is now low due to less use of resources and lower cropping intensity. But these districts also receive more than 1000 mm annual rainfall. So in these districts better water utilization, soil and water conservation, farm mechanization, implementation of contingency plans and some of the innovative crop and soil interventions are required in conjunction with integrated watershed development and livelihood improvement. Till now ICAR -Central Research Institute for Dry Land Agriculture does not have any regional centre. Though it is serving the dry-land and rain-fed regions of India through its network centres (25 All India coordinated Research Project for Dryland Agriculture and 25 All India Coordinated Research Project for Agrometeorology) mostly under the umbrella of State Agricultural Universities and recently under National Innovation on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) project, 121 KVKs were added based on climatic vulnerability. But West Bengal's share is only one AICRP on Agrometeorology centre located at Kalyani and 3 KVKs (Coochbehar due to high rainfall), Malda (due to flood) and South 24 Paraganas (due to Cyclonic storm) adopted under NICRA Technology Demonstration Component (TDC).

Geographically as well as Socio-economically south western part of West Bengal, Eastern part of Jharkhand and North Western part of Odisha have faced multiple constraints as well as these areas are inhabited by poor farmers. These areas have huge potential to contribute in the countries food basket. CRIDA has proven track record of dealing with rainwater management, watershed development, resource conservation technologies in rain-fed areas, agro-forestry etc. But developments of location specific technologies are of prime need. Though there are many technologies available for other similar areas but such technologies were not tested under these conditions where a large area is undulated plateau. In this connection again, I would like to state departure of rainfall from normal rhythm particularly in rainy months and reduced span of winter period to grow cold loving rabi crops are another two typical climate vulnerabilities faced by farmers of these areas in current decade. Presence of institute like CRIDA could address some of these problems.

I think without increasing the productivity of these areas, it is not possible to achieve the goal of BGREI (Bringing Green Revolution in Eastern India). If regional centre of ICAR - CRIDA is established in South Western part of West Bengal, it can cater to the needs of Assam, Tripura, Manipur and other north eastern states also.