
Microbial pesticides find their way into farms

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Kochi: The growing awareness against pesticides in food items and the demand for safe-to-eat products have forced farmers to look for organic or residue-free solutions. Though costlier than chemical pesticides, microbial pesticides or biocides are finding their way to farms.

“The pineapple is the best intercrop for rubber. It is highly resistant to most diseases but



SAFE FOR CONSUMPTION?

mill bug and rot disease do affect the fruit. We have been running trial crops in two fields for the past two years, one using certified chemical pesticides and other using biocides. We have found the crops almost

equal in yield while there was no residue for these organic pesticides,” Vazhakkulam Pineapple Growers and Processors (VPGP) executive director Baby John said.

Biocides are microbial extracts collected after exposing microbes to extreme stress. “These are sprays or targeted medicine. They need to be sprayed when the disease is seen and they work as a curative as well as preventive medicine,” said Sundaresh Krishnamoorthy of Camson Bio

Technologies, which had inked an agreement with VPGP.

The VPGP is a collective of 500 large pineapple growers who cultivate in over 30,000 hectares across the state.

Agriculture scientist K P Kuriakose said chemical pesticides were effective but they had to look for alternatives as they were not really safe for consumption. “It was a matter of saving the farmer initially, then we decided to work with farmers and find a solution to their problems.”

There are others who work with farmers in Coimbatore, Chennai, Hyderabad and Karnataka. “Farmers from Coimbatore sell their produce in Kerala. We address their issues, ensure good agricultural practices and also guarantee the marketability of the produce, as an end-to-end supplier,” said Palat Vijayaraghavan, founder director of Lawrence Dale Agro Processing.

He said around 2,000 farmers were cultivating vegetables under their guidance.