

**MINUTES OF THE 96th BOARD MEETING HELD ON HYBRID MODE AT KOCHI ON
26TH JUNE 2025**

The 96th Meeting of the Spices Board was conducted in hybrid mode on 26th June 2025 at Kochi. The meeting commenced at 10:30 AM and was chaired by Ms. Sangeetha Viswanathan, Chairperson, Spices Board.

Out of the 15 members of the Board at present, the following participated:

1. Ms. Sangeetha Viswanathan – Chairperson
2. Shri S. K. Sathyanarayana – Vice-Chairman
3. Ms. P. Hemalatha, IAS – Secretary (In-charge), Member
4. Ms. S. Jothimani – MP (Lok Sabha), Member
5. Shri S. Thirumurugan – Member
6. Dr. R. Dinesh – Director, ICAR-IISR, Member
7. Dr. Vanlalramsanga, IES – Economic Adviser, MoC, Member
8. Ms. Anuradha Batna – Senior Adviser, NITI Aayog, Nominated Member (Online)
9. Shri Govind Ram – Deputy Secretary, MoLE, Nominated Member
10. Shri Gautam Ghosh – Member (Online)
11. Shri Akkiseti Babu Rao – Member
12. Shri Chandrasekhar Singh Raguvanshi – Member (Online)

In addition, the following Directors of the Board attended the meeting with the permission of the Chair:

1. Dr. A. B. Rema Shree – Director (Research & Finance I/c)
2. Shri B. N. Jha – Director (Marketing I/c)
3. Shri Jijesh T. Das – Director (Administration I/c)
4. Shri Dharmendra Das – Director (Development I/c)



ITEM NO. 1: CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE 95TH BOARD MEETING HELD IN HYBRID MODE ON 29.06.2024 AT VANIJYA BHAVAN, NEW DELHI

The Board confirmed the Minutes of the 95th Board Meeting held in hybrid mode on 29th June 2024 at Vanijya Bhavan, New Delhi, as circulated.

ITEM NO. 2: ACTION TAKEN REPORT

2.1 Revamping of Firefighting Systems at Spices Park, Guntur:

The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that the work order for revamping the firefighting systems at Spices Park, Guntur, had been issued to CPWD, Vijayawada, and the installation work has been completed. The No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Response and Fire Services Department is awaited.

2.2 Conduct of Auctions without License from Spices Board:

The Director (Marketing) informed that a team of officials from the Board had conducted inspections at the premises of M/s. Cardamom Auction.com and M/s. Elaichiroyal Private Limited. In the case of M/s. Cardamom Auction.com, an explanation has been sought for violating the Cardamom (Licensing and Marketing) Rules, 1987, and the reply is awaited. For M/s. Elaichiroyal Private Limited, based on the inspection and available records at the premises, no evidence was found to suggest that the firm is conducting cardamom auctions.

2.3 Monitoring Mechanism for Cardamom Auctioneers through Random Inspections:

The Director (Marketing) informed that the Board has constituted a committee to conduct surprise inspections of auctioneers' offices, godowns, and pooling centres to verify documentation and payment compliance.

Inspections were carried out at the premises of the M/s. Spices More Trading Company and M/s. Koko Spices. The committee observed that M/s. Spices More Trading Company had violated certain provisions of the Cardamom Licensing and Marketing (CLM) Rules. A show cause notice was issued, and the reply received was found unsatisfactory. Accordingly, action is being initiated by the Board.

In the case of M/s. Koko Spices, the firm's representative did not permit inspection, citing the absence of the Managing Director, who was abroad. The same response was received during

a follow-up inspection conducted after a few months. A show cause notice has been issued to the firm, and a response is awaited. Necessary action will be taken as per the provisions of the CLM Rules.

3. Status of Functioning of Spices Parks: The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that, as per the suggestions received during the previous Board Meeting, it was decided to engage a competent agency, such as NIFTEM or NABCON, to visit all Spices Parks and assess their performance, challenges, and operational feasibility/efficiency. The evaluation would explore alternative operational models such as outsourcing, contracting, or Public-Private Partnership (PPP), and the selected agency would be expected to submit its recommendations to the Board.

Accordingly, a committee was constituted, comprising stakeholders from various regions, officials of the Board, and experts from IIPM. The committee has conducted three rounds of meetings and has finalized the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the selection of a competent agency, in accordance with the provisions of the General Financial Rules (GFR).

4. Status of establishment of spice complex at Sikkim: The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that, as per the update received from CPWD, Gangtok, approximately 75% of the work related to wire fencing, gate, protection wall, and associated electrical works has been completed. Additionally, around 24% of the civil construction work, including the Administrative Building, Core Processing Unit, and Bio-agent Production Unit, has been completed. Out of the total budget of ₹11.77 crore released by the Board, an expenditure of ₹2.74 crore has been incurred so far. The balance amount of ₹9.02 crore is available with CPWD for further progress.

As per the PERT chart submitted by CPWD, the construction is expected to be completed by November 2025.

The matter is also placed as a note under Agenda Item No. 5 for further deliberation.

5. Export of Spices from India During 2024-25 in Comparison with Previous Years: The Director (Marketing) presented an analysis of the export performance of value-added chilli products from India, indicating a positive growth trend over the period from 2020-21 to 2024-25.



During 2024–25, the total export value of chilli crushed/ground from India was ₹2,485.38 crore, as compared to ₹1,635.45 crore in 2020–21, marking a 58% increase. The major export destinations for chilli crushed/ground were: USA – 33%, UAE – 8%, UK – 7%, Other countries including Saudi Arabia, etc.

Similarly, the export of Capsicum Oleoresin from India during 2024–25 stood at ₹1,285.81 crore, up from ₹867.30 crore in 2020–21, registering a 48% growth. The primary destinations were: USA – 24%, South Korea – 13%, Indonesia – 8%, China – 5%, Other countries. Further, the Director informed that exports of whole chillies to Mexico have shown an increasing trend since 2020–21. A detailed note on this subject is attached as Annexure–III(a) for the Board's reference.

5.1 The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that there was a significant reduction in the export of chilli to Mexico during 2017–18 due to the detection of *Kapra* beetle. As a result, the Mexican authorities imposed stringent import norms on chilli imports from India with effect from 24th April 2017. Consequently, during 2018–19, there was no export of chilli to Mexico.

However, following corrective measures taken to address the phytosanitary concerns, exports resumed and have shown an increasing trend from 2019–20 onwards, reaching a level of USD 15.86 million. Currently, India exports approximately 2300 to 5500 metric tonnes of chilli annually to Mexico.

The Spices Board has taken proactive steps by sending a letter to DPPQ&S, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, requesting the framing of a work plan and procedural framework as shared by the Mexican authorities. In response, DPPQ&S has shared their comments on the proposed work plan and also communicated the same to the Embassy of India in Mexico.

However, the Embassy has expressed reservations on the proposal, stating that it involves a non-practical approach, especially since exports to Mexico are already taking place under the inspection and supervision of the Mexican authorities.

The Spices Board is working closely with DPPQ&S to initiate a second round of discussions, with a view to arriving at a mutually agreeable and practical solution before engaging in formal talks with the Mexican regulatory authorities.



On 15th March 2024, the Board had sent a D.O. letter to the Plant Protection Adviser, Directorate of Plant Protection, Quarantine & Storage (PPQ&S), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, NH-IV, Faridabad, requesting a meeting to discuss the issues related to chilli exports to Mexico. A response is still awaited.

5.2: Ethylene Oxide (EtO) Issues in Exports: The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that India's spice exports during 2024–25 have reached an all-time high in terms of both volume and value. During the period, India exported approximately 17.99 lakh metric tonnes of spices and spice products, valued at USD 4,712.65 million, as compared to 15.40 lakh metric tonnes valued at USD 4,464.17 million in 2023–24, registering an increase of 17% in volume and 6% in value (USD terms).

It was also noted that, during April 2025, there has been 12% increase in export value in rupee terms and 9% increase dollar terms as compared to the same period in the previous year. The above data indicates that effective measures taken by the Board to address the issue of Ethylene Oxide (EtO) residues have had a positive impact, and EtO-related concerns did not adversely affect the export performance of spices and spice products from India. To specifically address the EtO-related issues in key markets such as Hong Kong and Singapore, the Spices Board has made it mandatory to conduct residue analysis for EtO in spices prior to export to these destinations.

5.7:a. Addressing Challenges in Export of Chilli to Mexico: The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that necessary steps have already been initiated by the Spices Board, in consultation with DPPQ&S, to address the phytosanitary challenges related to the export of chilli to Mexico.

In addition, the Board has organized various international online Buyer-Seller Meets (BSMs) to facilitate direct linkages between Indian exporters and international importers, thereby enhancing market access and confidence despite regulatory constraints.

5.7: b. Roadmap to Achieve Export Target of USD 10 Billion by 2030: The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that, based on the recommendations of the Chintan Shivir, the Spices Board has initiated strategic measures to evolve a comprehensive roadmap aimed at achieving the spices export target of USD 10 billion by 2030.



Currently, approximately 50% of the total spice exports comprise value-added products, while the remaining are in whole/raw form. To realise the ambitious target, the following key focus areas have been identified:

- Enhancing productivity to ensure exportable surplus
- Promotion of GI-tagged spices to leverage regional branding and uniqueness
- Strengthening quality control, testing infrastructure, and traceability systems across the supply chain
- Encouraging value addition, including the export of seasonings, sauces, and other high-end processed spice products
- Expanding exports of spice oleoresins and essential oils, where Kerala is a major hub for extraction and processing
- Promoting menthol, a significant value-added product, which contributes notably to India's spice export basket

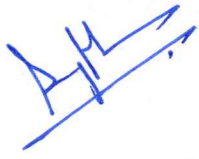
The Board continues to align its efforts with market trends, regulatory requirements, and international demand to ensure sustainable growth and competitiveness in the global spice trade.

With regard to Research and Development (R&D) support for product innovation, the Secretary clarified that the budgetary support from the Government of India is specifically allocated for cardamom (both small and large), as the Spices Board's mandate covers development and export promotion of cardamom only.

However, the Board is also assisting institutes and other organizations in the development of innovative spice-based products aimed at enhancing exports.

In response to a query raised by Ms. S. Jothimani, the Director (Research) informed that the Board has a dedicated budget allocation for research activities on small and large cardamom, which is utilized to conduct various field trials and research programs.

For other spices, research activities are undertaken by ICAR institutes and other specialized research organizations.



6. Import of Spices to India During 2023–24: The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that a note on the import of spices into India has been attached as Annexure 3B for reference.

With regard to the increased import of small cardamom from the UAE, it was highlighted that the import price of small cardamom into India ranged between USD 11–12 per kg, while the domestic price in India was around USD 24–25 per kg. This price gap is due to the fact that cardamom produced in Guatemala is imported by the UAE and subsequently re-exported to India.

Despite a 70% import duty, Guatemalan cardamom continues to be imported into India, owing to its lower cost. The Government of India has fixed a Minimum Import Price (MIP) of ₹500 per kg, and such imports often take place under the Advance Authorization Scheme for the purpose of re-export.

The Director informed that the Spices Board is taking necessary action to pursue the matter with DGFT for possible measures in order to safeguard domestic interests. Further DGFT also seeks inputs from Spices Board before issuance of AAS for cardamoms for value addition and re-export.

Shri S. Thirumurugan, Member, pointed out that the increase in import of small cardamom is not due to any shortfall in domestic production. He further noted that there is no structured R&D in Guatemala for cardamom, resulting in average-quality produce, although it is generally pesticide-free. Moreover, as domestic consumption of cardamom in Guatemala is negligible, a major portion of their production is available for export, creating supply-side pressure in the international market.

Ms. S. Jothimani, MP, suggested that the Board initiate steps for area expansion of small cardamom cultivation in feasible regions of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to enhance domestic production. She also assured her support for facilitating the allotment of additional land for the Research Station at Thadiyankudisai, through the Dindigul District Administration.

The Secretary, Spices Board, informed the Members that the Indian Cardamom Research Institute (ICRI) has recently developed and released a new cardamom variety, which is high-yielding and climate-resilient, thereby contributing to the sustainability and productivity of cardamom cultivation.



Shri S. Thirumurugan, Member, raised concern over the acute shortage of field-level staff in cardamom-growing areas, which is hindering the Board's efforts to educate farmers on the judicious and safe use of pesticides. He emphasized the need to strengthen field extension services to support responsible farming practices.

7. Study on Risk Mitigation, Clearance and Settlement Mechanisms – Commodity Exchanges and SEBI Regulations: The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that a meeting was convened by the Spices Board with bank officials to discuss and explore alternative mechanisms for payment settlement, including the possibility of implementing an escrow account system as a risk mitigation measure.

The Board is currently awaiting a formal proposal from the participating banks on the matter. During the discussions, representatives from HDFC Bank expressed the view that, in terms of risk mitigation, a Bank Guarantee continues to be the most reliable and preferred option.

The Board is also examining the systems followed by commodity exchanges and the regulatory guidelines of SEBI related to risk management, clearance, and settlement processes, including alternatives to bank guarantees.

7.4 a. b&C Non-Payment by Traders to Auctioneers and Non-Payment by Auctioneers to Growers: The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that the suggestion to allow auctioneers under the FPO category to pool/trade up to 200% of their Bank Guarantee (BG) amount in any auction was not supported during the stakeholders' meeting. It was noted that most auctioneers already belong to the FPO category, and the implementation of such a provision would not be feasible. Moreover, there is no separate classification for FPOs in the existing Cardamom Licensing and Marketing (CLM) Rules, and any such change would require amendments to the Rules.

In response to a query raised by the Chairperson regarding delays in payments to farmers by auctioneers, the Director (Marketing) informed that the Board is addressing all written complaints received from farmers in accordance with the provisions of the CLM Rules.

Regarding the query by Shri Govind Ram, Member, on non-payment issues and defaulters in cardamom auctions, the Director clarified that the Board has not received any formal written complaints from farmers on non-payment by auctioneers or traders. However, the Board is

conducting surprise inspections at auctioneers' premises to monitor payment mechanisms, and necessary actions are being taken as per CLM provisions.

The Director further informed that the Board regularly conducts stakeholder meetings to address issues related to cardamom auctions. During these discussions, auctioneers and traders expressed concerns about the practical difficulty of reducing the payment period to growers from the existing 10 days to 6 days, citing the high cost and sensitive nature of the cardamom trade.

Shri Govind Ram, Member, suggested that officials from DPPQ&S be involved in farmers' meetings, wherever possible, to promote Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices, as DPPQ&S also has a mandate for farm schools.

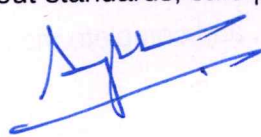
Ms. S. Jothimani, MP, suggested that the Board develop a comprehensive data bank of cardamom farmers to ensure their greater participation in stakeholder consultations and meetings.

11.2 a,b,c. Recall of Spices by Hong Kong & Singapore Due to Presence of EtO Above Permissible Limits: The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that, owing to the stringent measures implemented by the Spices Board during 2024–25, there have been no rejections or recalls of Indian spices exported to Hong Kong and Singapore on account of Ethylene Oxide (EtO) residues.

The Board has been proactively conducting awareness programmes for stakeholders, particularly processors and exporters, to address the EtO issue and ensure compliance with international food safety standards.

In response to a query raised by the Chairperson regarding awareness programmes conducted for farmers, the Director (Marketing) clarified that the EtO awareness programmes are primarily targeted at the processor level, as EtO contamination usually occurs during post-harvest handling and processing.

The Director (Development) added that the Board is also emphasizing quality compliance at the farm level through annual quality improvement training programmes for farmers, aimed at enhancing awareness about standards, safe practices, and market expectations.



11.2.d Mandatory Testing for Export to the UK, USA, and Other Countries: The Director (Marketing) informed the Board that the Spices Board has adopted a proactive approach to strengthen mandatory testing protocols for exports to countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, and other key markets with stringent food safety regulations.

As part of this initiative, the Board has initiated necessary action to implement mandatory pesticide residue testing for cumin exports, to ensure compliance with international Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) and maintain the credibility of Indian spice exports in global markets.

ITEM NO. 3: STATUS OF FUNCTIONING OF SPICES PARKS

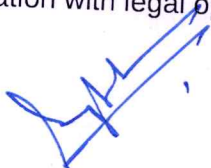
The Director (Marketing) presented the status of the common processing units and units established in the Spices Parks, along with their performance. He informed that during the financial year 2024-25, a total quantity of 68,774.079 MT of spices, valued at ₹89,951.69 lakhs, was processed in the common processing units and units established by exporters in the Spices Parks. Of this, 19,789.16 MT of spices/spice products, valued at ₹35,326 lakhs, were exported or supplied to exporters for export. Additionally, a total of 18,197.04 MT of spices, worth ₹26,261.76 lakhs, were stored in the warehouses at various Spices Parks. Furthermore, a total of 1,717 workers/labourers were employed across the Spices Parks.

The Board noted.

ITEM NO.4: CURRENT STATUS OF ALLOTMENT OF LAND IN SPICES PARKS

a) The Director (Marketing) presented the status of land allotment in the eight crop-specific Spices Parks. He informed that, based on the decision taken in the 94th Board Meeting, the Board had cancelled 21 plots in various Spices Parks. In line with the legal opinion obtained, the Board collected details regarding the procedures for taking possession of the cancelled plots as per the rules prevailing in the respective states.

b) The Director (Marketing) further informed that, based on the decision of the 95th Board Meeting regarding plot allotments where exporters had registered and held plots without completing construction, the Board had decided to authorize the Secretary to take appropriate action in this regard, in consultation with legal opinion, and complete the process before the next Board Meeting.



Ms. Jothimani, MP, raised a query regarding the reasons behind the large number of plots in the Sivaganga Spices Park where construction had not commenced. The Secretary clarified that the delays in construction were mainly due to clearance issues persisting since 2011, such as obtaining approvals from the Pollution Control Board. The Secretary mentioned that during her recent visit to the Park, she observed that a few constructions had started about four years ago after securing the necessary clearances. She added that the Board had been providing all necessary support to the exporters for setting up their units and had also coordinated with the district administration, when required, to facilitate the process. Some plot owners had cited legal complications in securing various licenses, which are now being addressed.

The MP suggested that the Board may approach the local minister of Tamil Nadu if any additional support is required.

The Chairman inquired about the current modalities for plot allotment in Spices Parks. In response, the Director (Marketing) elaborated on the existing modalities and explained the proposed changes aimed at ensuring effective utilization of the allotted plots. The current status of plot allotments was also presented, as detailed in Annexure-VI.

The MP further enquired whether plots could be allotted to Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), especially in Tamil Nadu, where several active FPOs are operational. The Secretary responded that the Board allows FPOs to submit Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for plot allotment, and some plots have already been allotted to FPOs. She added that the terms and conditions for allotment would be revised and made more liberal in future EOIs to ensure maximum and effective utilization of plots across the Spices Parks.

The Secretary also informed that necessary steps would be initiated to encourage stakeholders to set up more processing units in the Spices Parks through a regular monitoring mechanism.

The Board approved an extension of six months to monitor progress in the allotment and utilization of land in the Spices Parks.



ITEM NO. 5: EXPENDITURE INCURRED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SPICE COMPLEX IN SIKKIM

The Board noted the present status of the establishment of the Spice Complex in Sikkim.

ITEM NO. 6: EXPORT OF SPICES FROM INDIA DURING 2024-25 COMPARED TO 2023-24

The Director (Marketing) presented the export performance of spices during 2024-25 in comparison to 2023-24.

The Board noted.

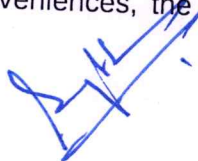
ITEM NO. 7: PROCUREMENT OF COMPUTERS, PRINTER WITH SCANNER, HARD-DISC FOR THE E-AUCTION CENTER, BODINAYAKKANUR

The Director (Administration) briefed the Board on the proposal for procurement of 69 computers as replacement of old computers and 11 additional computers for the back up purpose, one printer with scanner and two Hard disc with 2 TB Storage for the e-Auction Centre at Bodinayakanur. Dr. Vanlalramsanga, Member, suggested ensuring compliance with IT procurement guidelines for the purchase of IT equipment. The Director (Administration) clarified that the existing computers are over nine years old, and with a depreciation rate of 40%, their book value is now almost negligible. Given their age, outdated specifications, and minimal residual value, it would be appropriate to consider their replacement to ensure continued efficiency and support for current software and operational requirements and the procurement is in compliance with the applicable IT procurement guidelines.

The Board approved the proposal.

ITEM NO. 8: ANNUAL ACCOUNTS OF THE BOARD FOR THE YEAR 2023-24

The Annual Accounts of the Board for the year 2023-24 were audited by the Principal Director of Commercial Audit, Chennai and the Audit Report received. The Annual Accounts along with Audit Report were placed before both the Houses of Parliament in time. Since the Board meeting was not convened at the time of receipt of Final Audit report for the year 2023-24 due to administrative inconveniences, the same could not be placed before the Board for



approval in time. The Board examined the Annual Accounts for the year 2023-24 and ratified the action taken in this regard.

ITEM NO. 9: ANNUAL ACCOUNTS OF THE BOARD FOR THE YEAR 2024-25

The approval of Annual Accounts for the year 2024-25 had taken up for discussion. The Chairperson desired to know the pending audit paras and the action taken to rectify the same. Director Finance informed that some of the long pending advances carried over from previous years were reconciled and settled in current year accounts. Secretary informed the Board that some of the advances are long pending and action should be taken to resolve the same without carry forward endlessly to the next year. Board Member Sri Govind Ram has informed that there is audit observation that the internal audit has not taken place. Director Finance informed the Board that lack of enough staff in Audit Department is the constraint in conducting the internal audit of Board's offices in time. After detailed deliberations the Annual Accounts of the Board for the year 2024-25 was approved.

ITEM NO. 10: STATUS OF CONSIGNMENT SAMPLES ANALYZED BY QELs OF SPICES BOARD

The Director (Research) briefed the Board on the status of consignment samples analyzed by the Quality Evaluation Laboratories (QELs) of the Spices Board. The Chairperson enquired about the farmers' demand for testing of parameters at the laboratory set up at ICRI, Myladumpara. In response, the Director (Research) informed that the ICRI lab is not a NABL-accredited facility, unlike the other eight QELs of the Board.

The Chairperson suggested initiating necessary actions to obtain NABL accreditation for the ICRI Myladumpara laboratory. The Director (Research) responded that, due to acute staff shortages within the Board, managing the process would be challenging and assured that the matter of staff recruitment would be taken up with the Ministry of Commerce.

Ms. Jothimani, MP, enquired about revenue generation through the QELs. The Director (Research) clarified that the Board carries out mandatory spice testing on a fee basis to meet the part of operational expenses of the Quality Evaluation Laboratories (QELs). However, financial support from the Ministry is sought to cover other components such as manpower and infrastructure.



ITEM NO. 11: APPROVAL OF ANNUAL ACTION PLAN FOR FY 2025-26 UNDER SPICES BOARD'S SCHEME - 'SUSTAINABILITY IN SPICES SECTOR THROUGH PROGRESSIVE, INNOVATIVE, AND COLLABORATIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR EXPORT DEVELOPMENT (SPICED)

The Director (Finance) briefed the Board on the Annual Action Plan (AAP) prepared for ₹130.00 crore, as well as for ₹153.81 crore, in anticipation of the allocation of the Revised Estimate (RE) of ₹153.81 crore. The details are provided in Annexure-X

The Board noted.

ITEM NO. 12: KERA PROJECT- KERALA CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE VALUE CHAIN MODERNISATION (KERA)

The Director (Development) presented an overview of the Kerala Climate Resilient Agriculture Value Chain Modernisation (KERA) Project, highlighting its major objectives, budgetary outlay, the role of Spices Board, mode of implementation, and the current status.

The Chairperson enquired whether a budget had been earmarked for the implementation of training programmes for farmers under the project. The Director (Research & Finance) clarified that the Spices Board is acting as a facilitator in the project and that there are no direct financial implications for the Board.

The Chairperson suggested that awareness programmes for farmers may be conducted under the project framework. The Board observed that the project is a commendable initiative and serves as a model collaborative effort for the benefit of cardamom growers in Kerala.

The Board noted.

ITEM NO. 13: ANNUAL ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY IN SPICE SECTOR THROUGH PROGRESSIVE, INNOVATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR EXPORT DEVELOPMENT (SPICED) – DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The Director (Development) briefed the Board on the components implemented by the Development Department during the financial year 2024–25.

The Board noted.



ITEM NO. 14: RELEASE OF -THE NEW SMALL CARDAMOM VARIETY (ICRI-10) AS 'ICRI SUGANDHA BHARATHI'

The Director (Research) briefed the Board on the release of a new small cardamom variety (ICRI 10), named *ICRI Sugandha Bharathi*, and its current status. The Director, ICAR-IISR, enquired whether the variety has been registered with ICAR-NBPGR and the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPV&FRA). The Director (Research) responded that the necessary documents have already been submitted to both ICAR-NBPGR and PPV&FRA to complete the registration process.

He further informed that necessary action will be initiated for licensing the variety after registration and also proposed conducting All India Multiplication Trials through ICAR-AICRPS.

The Chairperson enquired about the performance of the variety in the Idukki district. The Director (Research) stated that in multiplication trials at farmers' fields, the variety recorded an average yield of 3,000 kg/Ha and exhibited better drought resistance compared to the commonly cultivated *Njallani* variety.

Shri Thirumugan expressed appreciation for the productivity of the variety and enquired about the availability of planting material.

The Board noted.

ITEM NO. 15: PROPOSAL FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RFCS (REVISED FLEXIBLE COMPLEMENTING SCHEME) IN SPICES BOARD

Shri Govind Ram enquired whether a committee had been constituted to study the proposal and its recommendations. He suggested that the committee, if formed, should examine the command and control aspects of the proposed promotion system and submit its findings to the Board along with recommendations.

The Secretary sought clarification on the expenditure norms applicable to the constitution of such a committee. In response, Shri Govind Ram noted that when introducing a new grade, key considerations include functional requirements, financial implications, and expected outcomes. He also advised that the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Finance should be referred to prior to the introduction of any new grade.



Dr. Vanlalramsanga, Member, observed that in the absence of an anomaly, the constitution of a committee may not be necessary at this stage.

The Board accorded in-principle approval for submission of the proposal to the Ministry and for constitution of a committee, subject to the instructions of the Ministry.

ITEM NO. 16: AWARDING CONTRACT TO M/S BROADCASTING ENGINEERING CONSULTANTS INDIA LTD. (BECIL) FOR PROVIDING OUTSOURCED MANPOWER SERVICES TO SPICES BOARD

Dr. Vanlalramsanga advised to send a letter to GeM with the difficulties faced while selecting the manpower agency in different locations across the country and seek advice from GeM.

Secretary informed that Board will take up the matter with GeM

The Director (Administration) informed the Board that approximately 172 outsourced personnel across various categories (watch and ward, housekeeping, gardener, driver, office assistant, caretaker, etc.) have been engaged for the smooth functioning of Spices Board offices.

He highlighted the challenges previously faced when engaging manpower agencies through tenders on the GeM portal, including non-compliance with statutory payments and coordination issues due to multiple service providers operating in a single location.

To address these issues, the Board entered into a contract with M/s Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Ltd. (BECIL), a Government of India Mini Ratna PSU, for a period of three years from 01.02.2022 to 31.01.2025, which has been extended by one year till 31.01.2026. BECIL has been providing satisfactory and uninterrupted manpower services, ensuring timely payment of wages and statutory compliance.

Dr. Vanlalramsanga enquired whether any terms and conditions had been changed in the recent agreement compared to the initial contract. The Director (Administration) clarified that the terms and conditions remain unchanged in the extended agreement. Dr. Vanlalramsanga and Shri Govind Ram advised that a letter be sent to GeM, highlighting the challenges faced in engaging manpower agencies across various locations and suggested seeking their advice on the matter.



The Board noted the details and ratified the awarding of the contract to M/s BECIL for the period from 01.02.2022 to 31.01.2026.

ITEM NO. 17: RELEASE OF LEAVE ENCASHMENT PAYMENT ON TECHNICAL RESIGNATION

The Director (Administration) briefed the Board on the issue of leave encashment for employees who have technically resigned to join other government or autonomous bodies. As per Rule 39-D of the CCS (Leave) Rules, 1972, and the Spices Board (Service) Regulations, 2021, such employees are eligible for leave encashment up to 300 days. This practice has been consistently followed by the Board.

However, during the compliance audit conducted in February 2023 by the Director General of Commercial Audit, a query was raised regarding the applicability of Rule 39-D in cases involving movement between autonomous bodies. Accordingly, a clarification was sought from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC) on 12.06.2023, and the response is awaited. Due to this, the payment of leave encashment for seven employees, amounting to ₹26 lakh, has been withheld.

Shri Govind Ram enquired whether the Board had approached the Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare or DoPT, as these departments deal with such matters. The Secretary clarified that the Board generally routes such communications through the Department of Commerce, rather than writing directly to other departments.

Dr. Vanlalramsanga advised that a letter may be sent to the Ministry of Commerce to seek clarification from the concerned departments. He also noted that leave encashment does not attract penal interest, hence the urgency may be moderate.

The Secretary informed the Board that the matter will be referred again to the Ministry, and assistance will also be sought from the Economic Adviser to obtain greater clarity on the issue.



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ADV. SANGEETHA VISWANATHAN
SECRETARY / CHAIRPERSON
SPICES BOARD
Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India
Palayamkottai
Kerala-682 025

ITEM NO.18: TRANSFER POLICY OF SPICES BOARD

The Director (Administration) informed the Board that, following the rationalization and restructuring of the Spices Board, the sanctioned staff strength was reduced from 513 to 379. In view of this, and considering the increasing number of representations, grievances, RTI requests, and court cases related to the existing transfer policy, a decision was taken to revise the policy in line with the new organizational structure.

A committee was constituted to review and draft a revised transfer policy, which has since been submitted to the Secretary. The revised policy aims to ensure fairness, transparency, and alignment with the reduced workforce (Annexure-XII).

Shri Govind Ram sought clarity on specific clauses of the revised policy. In response, the Director (Administration) assured that the policy would be cross-checked against the relevant DoPT guidelines to ensure compliance.

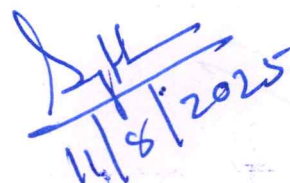
The Board approved the updated transfer policy, subject to compliance with the DoPT guidelines.

ITEM NO. 19: ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Board unanimously elected Shri Thirumurugan S. as the Vice-Chairman of the Spices Board for a period of one year.

ITEM NO. 20: RECONSTITUTION OF STANDING COMMITTEES AS PER RULE 11 (2) OF SPICES BOARD RULES 1987 AND SPICES BOARD (MEETING) AMENDMENT RULES, 2018

The Board decided to reconstitute the standing committees in the next Board meeting, after the vacant positions of Board Members are filled.


14/8/2025

एडवोकेट संगीता विश्वनाथन
Adv. SANGEETHA VISWANATHAN
अध्यक्षा / CHAIRPERSON
स्पाइसेस बोर्ड / SPICES BOARD
वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार
Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. Of India
पालारिवट्टम / Palarivattom
कोच्ची, केरल / Kochi, Kerala-682 025