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### 'Time for scientific upgrade of farming'

Staff Reporter

*Encourage farmer-to-farmer learning,  
says M.S. Swaminathan*



FROM A LEGEND: M.S. Swaminathan (fourth from right) presenting an award to a farmer in Pune on Friday.

A massive programme for scientific upgrade of agriculture throughout the country should be launched in 2012-13, which has been declared by the Centre as the year for Science and Technology, eminent agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan said here on Friday.

"Use of science in agriculture is important for its production, productivity, and sustainability," Dr. Swaminathan said.

He was addressing farmers at an awards ceremony organised by the Government of Maharashtra to honour outstanding farming practices. He emphasised on the boost to service sector in the rural sector, which would help non-farm employees too.

Mr. Swaminathan said that as the National Commission of Farmers had recommended, the government should encourage farmer-to-farmer learning. Hostels should be set up near the fields of 'outstanding' farmers to facilitate the learning. "This will result in high credibility. This kind of learning is much more important than laboratory-to-farm learning," he said. He urged that the practice be followed throughout the country.

Mr. Swaminathan said the question of "how to attract and retain youth in farming" was a challenge for India. "This will happen only when agriculture is made both intellectually satisfying and economically rewarding," he said. "There is a growing feminisation of agriculture," the scientist said. There was a need for a policy that addressed gender-specific needs in agriculture. The "Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana" should be renewed and methods of capacity building among women should be devised, he said.

To tackle the issue of food security, Mr. Swaminathan stressed on the importance of the management of uncertain monsoons and uncertain markets. He expressed hope that the National Food Security Act as suggested by the National Advisory Council was implemented in the country.

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