Help at hand for chilli growers in Andhra Pradesh

ITC teams up with govt. to form agri extension platform.

After working with tobacco farmers for years, the ITC-agri business division is now turning its attention to farmers cultivating chilli which is a major horticultural crop grown in Guntur, Prakasam, Krishna and Kurnool districts. With the ITC-ABD and Horticulture Department conceptualising setting up of an integrated agri extension platform in association with the State government, chilli farmers can now hope for

better days. It is aimed at benefiting farmers in one lakh acres. The State government is entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ITC-ABD for the project to be taken up in the PPP mode. Minister for Agriculture K. Kanna Babu and Chief Executive ITC-ABD Sanjeev Rangrass will sign the agreement on the premises of ITC-ABD on Saturday.

Unique interventions

The platform has a set of unique physical and digital interventions to improve production. A pilot project is all set to be implemented from this year in the four districts, covering 41 villages and includes 4,000 farmers holding 10,000 acres. A call centre has been established from where farmers can get inputs on best practices, pest and diseases. Qualified agri specialists will give necessary advice to enrolled farmers to improve productivity and quality. They will also provide information related to weather, variety profile, government schemes, market price and new technologies. "Growing awareness of food safety across the world has led to consumers demanding safe food products. A.P. is one of the largest producers of chilli in the country and we are collaborating with the Horticulture Department to improve the chilli farm value chain,'' said Mr. Rangrass. Further, a 'chilli farmer handbook,'' prepared by experts from the Horticulture Department, will be released on Saturday. Farmers will get practical inputs from demo plots called 'pradarsana kshetrams.'