

## **Medicinal Plant Cultivation Should Be Driven by Market Dynamics**

As a hub of Ayurveda, Kerala needs a road map for conservation, cultivation and augmentation of medicinal plants with focus on rare, endangered and threatened (RET) species and those with high demand from industry, according to Shobita Biswas, Chief Executive Officer, National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB).

In a chat with The Hindu during a visit to the city earlier this week from the inauguration of the NMPB-funded project to set up a herbal garden on the Raj Bhavan called for steps to identify the hotspots of endemic species of medicinal plants and promote cultivation of species with market potential.

Farmers have to be encouraged to study the market dynamics while taking up the cultivation of medicinal plants, she said. “In many instances, the cultivation of plants without market demand has led to a glut in the market and left farmers in crises.”

Ms. Biswas mooted the idea of a buyer-seller meet in Kerala to ensure market linkage for farmers. The State Medicinal Plants Board (SMPB) can facilitate the event and take the initiative to establish regulated wholesale market for medicinal plants, Such initiatives, she said, would help to streamline the fragmented supply chain.

Ms. Biswas said the SMPB could play a key role in the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) mechanism proposed by Kerala State Biodiversity Board. She, however, sees the need to balance the interests of industry with the livelihood concern of local communities. “Industry has to address the issue of market demand and raise the bar on quality.

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