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Maldives forms Agro Nat Company for crop development

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To address issues related to agriculture, the Government of Maldives have formed a state-owned company called â??Agro National Corporationâ?? (Agro Nat) which is focusing on crop development within the country. The company has targeted 17 crops, which can produce in the country, said Ibrahim Ameer, Finance Minister of Maldives in a special interview with Agrospectrum.

Ameer said,â?• During Covid 19 pandemic we understood the importance of food security, so our government is making sure, we should substitute some of the imports in terms of agricultural produce. Maldives imports most of the goods that we conceive, but we believe a lot can be done in the Maldives. So the government is focusing on the crops that can be developed in the country, and in a few yearsâ?? time we can reduce imports of some of the crops. We are working on food security,â? he said.

â??For the purpose of food security, Agro Nat was founded as a state-owned company to assist in developing agriculture. AgroNat is working towards enabling an efficient supply chain for agriculture, providing technical expertise and training,

expanding the role of women in farming and facilitating access to quality fertilisers across the nation. AgroNat aims to achieve economic targets relating to food security, import substitution, creation of jobs and improving the trade balance,â he added

On Challenges, Ameer said, â??In a country like Maldives, Challenge would be a scarcity of land. The Maldives is a series of small and remote islands scattered across the Indian Ocean. The countryâ??s economy is dependent primarily on tourism and fisheries. The Maldives grows corn, sweet potatoes, watermelon, eggplant, papaya, peppers and coconut. For agriculture, we have adopted innovative methods. Agro Nat will primarily target agricultural products in the Maldives.

One of the obstacles would be getting funds into this project, already there are issues of climate change and other issues. We want to attract finance not only from the tourism sector but other important sectors as well as fisheries and agricultural sectors. Agriculture Company will focus on new methods of agriculture, also adopting innovative methods in agriculture.â

AgroNat has completed the construction of 4 greenhouses with a fertigation system and irrigation network in Hd.Nolhivaram area under the â??Zakath Nafaaâ?? program initiated by The Ministry of Islamic Affairs and The Ministry of Economic Development. Four families of Hd. Nolhivaram received assistance to farm under this programme.

The four greenhouses, built on 5,000 square feet of land with the experience of AgroNat's technical personnel, are 16 feet by 50 feet in size. A modern irrigation system with wells and pumps has been installed on the rest of the land. Therefore, a large part of the farm will be Semi Automatically watered. While farmers have to spend two or three hours to water the field, the newly installed irrigation system will irrigate the entire field in at least 20 minutes.

Under this project, farmers have been provided with training and all the necessary resources such as fertilisers, seeds and pesticides through AgroNat. Apart From this Information on fertigation systems and agricultural technical assistance were given to the farmers.

Some of the crops are expected to be grown and harvested in the greenhouses in the coming months. AgroNat will buy all the produce grown by the farmers for a year under this contract. After one year, farmers will have the opportunity to sell their produce through AgroNat's contract farming program.

On plant-based meat, he said, â??Maldives is one of the fishing countries, our fishing is sustainable, Maldives is one of the nations that do polar line fishing. Fish provides the principal source of animal protein for the population, and almost half of the catch is consumed locally. Fisheries used to be the largest contributor to the Maldivian GDP. Our fish production is large, we export fresh fish and we are expanding the capacity of fish processing. Right now we export raw materials for frozen shilled Tuna to other countries for processing. But idea is that in a few yearsâ?? time, we have the capacity to process will be what we catch in the country and do the value addition and then export to other countries. So right now there is no plan to promote plant-based meat.â•

Agronat has launched a school gardening program as an effective way to promote lifelong healthy eating habits and connect students to the natural world. In this project, AgroNat will emphasis more on promoting, organic farming and using GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) in farming. School students will be engaged in every process of making the garden. The purpose of this is to ensure that students feel a sense of responsibility for their garden and the upbringing of the garden. On-going maintenance and looking after the farm will be carried out by the school management and students.

AgroNat will assist in providing training and making a schedule for farm activities. GAP will be introduced and AgroNat will assist school management and students in the application of GAP. In the gardening program, initially, conventional organic farming will be used to ensure students are active in learning the basics of agriculture. Organic farming will be promoted to reduce the usage of chemicals and to teach students about the benefits of organic farming to their health and well-being.

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