

14

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Indian farmers to get bioinformatics grid

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The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), the pioneer of supercomputing in the country, is now assisting the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to establish a national agricultural bioinformatics grid.

The initiative, the first of its kind in the country, will help scientists enhance agricultural productivity and address problems of food security.

Under the project, a three-day training-cum-workshop on 'parallel and high performance computing' began at C-DAC on Monday, with the participation of several scientists and researchers from New Delhi's Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute (IASRI) and other ICAR institutions.

The workshop will provide an insight into different aspects of high performance computing (HPC) with the goal of capability building in solving complex problems in agriculture and biotechnology. Speaking to DNA, C-DAC's group coordinator and head (HPC solutions group), Goldi Misra, said the use of HPC would help scientists address the problem of food scarcity at the grass-roots level.

"Now scientists have to wait for a production cycle to end to analyze various issues like quality of seed, weather pattern and quality of produce. But with the use of HPC the same can be known using simulation. This is for the first time in the country that a national agricultural bioinformatics grid is going to be started and C-DAC will be helping set it up," he said.

The World Bank-funded project in the first phase will connect National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, New Delhi; National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR) Karnal; National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources, Ludhrow; National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Microorganisms, Mau; and National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Insects, Bangalore.

"It will be rolled out from next month and is expected to be completed within a year. These institutions will be connected with high-speed network in the first phase. Once completed, the researchers will be able to handle huge datasets and also perform complex analytical processes," said Misra.

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