



## PRESS RELEASE



### **Hon'ble Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister Inaugurates Northeast India's Largest Organic Spice Processing Unit in Meghalaya**

*Union Minister Says Meghalaya's Deep-Rooted Culture of Sustainability and Community Stewardship Positions the State to Lead India's Premium Organic Agriculture Revolution*

*Future of Agriculture Lies in Producing Better, Cleaner, Safer and More Sustainable Products: Finance Minister*

*₹32 Crore Facility to Create New Economic Opportunities for 5,500 Organic Farmers*

**Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya, June 19:** Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, today inaugurated Northeast India's largest organic spice processing unit at Ri-Bhoi district, Meghalaya, and said that the future of agriculture belongs to those who produce "not merely more, but better, cleaner, safer, more traceable and more sustainable products."



The Finance Minister inaugurated the facility in the presence of Meghalaya Chief Minister Shri Conrad K. Sangma and Sikkim Chief Minister Shri Prem Singh Tamang.



Addressing farmers, community leaders and dignitaries at the inaugural programme, Smt. Sitharaman said Meghalaya possesses a unique natural advantage in an era when consumers

across the world are increasingly demanding high-quality, sustainably produced and traceable agricultural products.



Expressing her pleasure at being in the fertile heartland of Ri-Bhoi, the Finance Minister noted that the people of Meghalaya had embraced the principles of sustainability long before it became a global agenda. Referring to Khasi wisdom that emphasises the consequences of human

actions, she observed that this philosophy is particularly relevant to agriculture, where decisions regarding soil, water and farming practices determine long-term resilience and productivity.

She said Meghalaya's deep-rooted culture of community stewardship and sustainable farming practices positions the State to emerge as a leader in premium organic agriculture. The new processing facility, she added, reflects the growing recognition that the future of agriculture lies in quality, sustainability, traceability and value addition.

The Finance Minister described the facility as the culmination of nearly a decade of institution-building efforts by the Eastern Ri-Bhoi Organic Farmer Producer Company and a strong example of how targeted investments, community participation and sustained support can create durable and inclusive development outcomes.

Developed with an investment of approximately ₹32 crore, the organically certified processing facility is designed to process more than 10,000 metric tonnes of high-value organic spices annually. Equipped with modern infrastructure including cold storage, dry storage, washing, drying and pulverising facilities, the unit will process crops such as ginger, turmeric, black pepper and chilli.

The facility is the first organically certified spice processing unit in Northeast India and is certified under the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) and EU Organic Standards, enabling direct access to premium domestic and international organic markets. It is expected to directly benefit approximately 5,500 organic farmers across Meghalaya and the wider Northeast region through enhanced value addition, reduced post-harvest losses, stronger aggregation and quality control mechanisms, and improved market linkages.

Highlighting Meghalaya's premium agricultural products, Smt. Sitharaman noted that Lakadong turmeric, which received GI status in 2024, contains curcumin levels significantly higher than most commercially traded varieties. She also pointed to the growing reputation of Meghalaya's ginger varieties for their low fibre content, superior quality and strong market potential.



The Finance Minister emphasised that the objective should no longer be limited to exporting raw produce. Instead, she said, the focus must be on exporting finished products, trusted brands and world-class quality while retaining value, jobs and livelihoods within the region. Processing, branding, packaging, certification and market access, she added, are critical tools for bridging the gap between subsistence and prosperity for farmers.

She further stated that local value addition strengthens the entire agricultural ecosystem by creating backward linkages with farmers and producer organisations while expanding access to national and international markets through branded retail products, exports and e-commerce platforms.



Speaking on the occasion, Meghalaya Chief Minister Shri Conrad K. Sangma thanked the Union Finance Minister for inaugurating the facility and for her continued support to



development initiatives in the Northeast. He said that the government's efforts over the past eight years have focused on making meaningful improvements in the lives of farmers through targeted interventions, better infrastructure, enhanced market access and value addition.

Describing the project as a game-changing initiative for farmers, the Chief Minister said the government has sought to build upon existing strengths and traditional practices by providing financial support, technical expertise,

training and market connectivity to committed community groups.

Shri Sangma informed that eleven processing units are currently operational across Meghalaya, benefiting nearly 55,000 farmers and their families. He said these initiatives demonstrate how relatively small interventions can create significant positive impacts on livelihoods and rural incomes.

Recalling the Finance Minister's emphasis on logistics, exports and value addition during her earlier interactions with the State, he said Meghalaya has been steadily building the infrastructure needed to connect farmers to larger markets while improving product quality and shelf life.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the growing collaboration among Northeastern states and said that the region is witnessing unprecedented momentum, political stability and institutional capacity to drive development. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, he said, the Northeast is moving forward in step with the rest of the country and emerging as a key contributor to India's growth story.

Earlier, Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Government of Meghalaya, Shri Vijay Kumar D., IAS described the inauguration as a historic day for Meghalaya's 3.6 lakh farming households and the organic farming sector across the country.

He said the facility has the potential to increase the incomes of participating farmers by nearly 50 per cent within a single season and represents the realisation of a vision to establish world-class agricultural infrastructure even in the remotest parts of the State.



Shri Vijay Kumar D., IAS highlighted Meghalaya's pioneering community public-private partnership model under which the government provides investment support, private sector partners contribute technology and market access, and community institutions ensure ownership and sustainability. He noted that the project demonstrates how Government of India schemes, externally aided projects and convergence financing can be leveraged to build farmer-owned enterprises and market-driven rural infrastructure. Investments in aggregation, processing and value addition, he added, have the potential to transform smallholder agriculture into a sustainable and commercially viable sector.

The Eastern Ri-Bhoi Organic Farmer Producer Company comprises around 500 organic farmers from nine villages organised through 26 Farmer Interest Groups. Over the years, the FPC has developed an integrated ecosystem including collection and aggregation centres, processing facilities, cold storage infrastructure, vermicompost units, custom hiring centres and transportation facilities to support organic farming and strengthen market access.



The organic spice processing facility has been established by the Eastern Ri-Bhoi Organic Farmer Producer Company with support under the Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER), Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), the Government of Meghalaya and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The inauguration marks a significant milestone in Meghalaya's journey towards becoming a leading hub for premium organic agriculture and demonstrates how farmer-owned institutions, value addition and strategic partnerships can transform rural livelihoods, strengthen market competitiveness and create sustainable economic opportunities across the Northeast.