National Workshop on Eucalyptus Gall Wasp - Present Status and Future Strategies
10th June 2013

Several species of Eucalyptus are planted for production of pulp to meet the increasing demand from paper and related industries. India has 39,42,600 ha area under eucalypts cultivation with an average yield of 70-100 mt/ha during a 5 year rotation which fetches about Rupees one lakh and more per ha for farmers involved in eucalypts cultivation. Outbreak of an invasive gall -inducing insect, *Leptocybe invasa*, on eucalypts plantations and nurseries in several eucalyptus growing tracts in India was observed since 2007. To arrive at future strategies for the gall wasp management and eucalyptus cultivation, a National workshop on "Eucalyptus Gall Wasp - Present Status and Future Strategies" was arranged on the 10th of June 2013 at the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding, Coimbatore bringing together stake holders involved in large scale eucalyptus planting like Paper industries, State Forest Departments, Forest Development Corporations, farmers besides researchers who are actively working on the gall wasp and its management. Dr. J.P.Jacob, Organizing Secretary gave an overview of the plant galls in general and specifically of those that are economically important. He also mentioned that this workshop is to take stock of the present situation of gall wasp problem at a Nation level so that a roadmap for the future can be chalked out. In his introductory remarks Dr.A.Balu. *Senior Entomologist*, IFGTB highlighted the background of the workshop. Dr. N. Krishnakumar, Director, IFGTB highlighted the importance of species like Eucalyptus which is desired by paper and pulp industries for livelihood support. He stated that in the coming years the demand for paper would increase to 25 kgs per capita consumption from the present 9.3 kg consumption. To support this, a two pronged strategy is needed to enhance the productivity of Eucalyptus. Tree improvement programme is one and an efficient pest and disease management measure is another. Institutes like IFGTB play a key role in enhancing productivity of Eucalyptus and providing committed supply to stakeholders. Eucalyptus gall wasp which was a serious problem since 2007 has subsided in Southern States of India, but is still a major problem in Northern States posing a threat of a possible second outbreak in Southern States. This workshop, he said, would serve as a platform to assess the situation of this gall wasp problem at a National level and identify future course of action to contain this problem.

In his felicitation address Shir. Onkar Singh PCCF, *Vice Chairman and MD*, APFDC expressed his happiness to associate with the Eucalyptus gall wasp workshop as the major revenue of the Forest Development Corporation is from Eucalyptus. 45000 ha of land in Andhra is under Eucalyptus and of which 10% is of seedling orgin and rest Clonal plantations. Changes are taking place in forestry along with the evolution of technologies which has become a challenge for foresters.

Inaugurating the Workshop, the Chief Guest, Dr. K. Ramasamy, Vice Chancellor, TNAU congratulated the Director and his team for a focused discussion on a single pest which is a rare happening now-a-days. It is important to build a team of network of experiments to protect the crop. When a crop species is introduced care should be taken to identify pests and diseases associated with the crop. When an insect or a pathogen invades a plant, the plant reacts. In plant galls such a reaction is limited only in the gall area. Policies should identify research programmes and projects which will fulfill requirements of the stakeholders. He hoped that the workshop will identify the requirements and come with solutions.

This was followed by presentations by different stakeholders from seven states of the country. Presentations were by representatives from Forest Departments, Forest Development Corporations, farmers and researchers from Institutes, universities and wood based industries. A group discussion was arranged to draw the road map for the future course of actions. It was decided that

- Regular survey and surveillance of gall infestation in the eucalyptus plantations needs to continue.
- Screening and monitoring for new clones has to be done.
- Trait specific clones have to be developed
- Bio-ecology of gall needs to be studied in-depth
- Biotechnological interventions like gene silencing to be developed
- There is a need for documentation of the gall tolerant/ resistant clones all over the country and test them in different locations.

- Awareness and outreach / extension activities to support farmers and other stakeholders needs to be expanded.
- IFGTB to co-ordinate and develop a network to get a regular update on the situation in the country in addition to tackling the issue through research and management strategies.