

IIT consortium introduces online courses in agriculture

Press Trust of India

Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK) along with other institutes has announced the launch of a Massive Open Online Courses in the agriculture sector known as Ag(MOOC)s.

The members of the consortium are Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta (IIMC) and the University of Agricultural Sciences Raichur (UASR), IITK said.

The consortium is supported by NPTEL (National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning), a project of the Human Resources Development Ministry. NPTEL is among the largest publishers of open edu-

cational resources in the world. A spokesperson for the NPTEL said "Massive Open Online Courses enable thousands of aspiring learners to avail a course in a single offering. The scale is a major advantage in MOOCs. They can be developed fast by institutions with advanced expertise," IITK said.

The consortium will offer MOOCs mainly targeting professionals in agriculture, including students in state agricultural universities, teachers serving there and specialists or any interested and aspiring learner.

The first course of the AgMOOCs consortium will be launched on March 17, 2015.

The courses will include specialised sections on farm machinery and power; land and water resource management, food process

THE ONLINE OPEN COURSES WILL COVER FARM MACHINERY AND MANAGEMENT, FOOD PROCESS ENGINEERING, AQUACULTURE AND WATER AND LAND MANAGEMENT

engineering and aquacultural engineering which is a quality management system for cultivating fish in a biology lab.

There are also plans to translate courses and make them available in languages like Tamil, Punjabi and Bengali. But it remains to be seen how soon and how efficiently this plan is put in place.

IIT Kanpur has been spearheading research in Agriculture for many decades now. In 2009 a project mentored by Professor Jayantha Chatterjee lead to the creation of Agropedia – an online database of information related to agriculture in India. The aim of Agropedia is to empower farmers by providing them information.

Agropedia which is now backed by both the Government of India and the United Nations World Food Programme is a collaborative model built along the lines of wikipedia, made available in multiple languages. Currently Agropedia is working on gathering weekly alerts from scientists on different crops which can then be disseminated to farmers across the country through an SMS.