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IGC INDIAN GREENHOUSE GROWERS CONFERENCE

INDIAN GREENHOUSE GROWERS CONFERENCE CULTIVATING RESILIENCE

– Bureau Report

L-R: S Jafar Naqvi, Chief Co-ordinator & Editor, Media Today Group, Praveen Sharma, Founder & Promoter, Flora Consult, Murtuza Patel, President, Greenhouse Manufactures Association (India), Dr B N S Murthy, Ex-Horticulture Commissioner, GoI & Ex-Director, ICAR-IIHR & Deepak Pareek, Founder, HnyB on the dias during inagurural session

In a landmark step towards advancing innovation in protected farming and sustainable agriculture, Media Today Group hosted the inaugural Indian Greenhouse Growers Conference edition on the theme "Cultivating Resilience", coinciding with the 16th edition of AgriTech India 2025, held on August 2, 2025, at BIEC, Bengaluru. This first-of-its-kind gathering brought together stakeholders from across India and South Asia, addressing the nation's growing demand for food security and the urgent need to build a resilient agricultural ecosystem. The focus extended across the horticultural spectrum, encompassing fruit, vegetable, flower, ornamental, medicinal, and aromatic plant cultivation.

The conference served as a platform to showcase how greenhouse technologies can help growers overcome modern-day challenges—enhancing sustainability, productivity, and produce quality—while simultaneously boosting farm incomes. The event was held with the esteemed support of the Growers' Flower Council of India, Greenhouse Manufacturers Association India (IGMA), Federation of Karnataka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI), Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), Greenhouse Kazakhstan, and other leading horticulture trade bodies.

Inaugural Session–Setting the Vision

The one-day conference commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp, marking an auspicious beginning. This was followed by a warm welcome address from S Jafar Naqvi, Chief Coordinator & Editor, Media Today Group, who outlined the pressing relevance of the conference in light of growing market demand and active government support for protected cultivation, particularly in horticulture, as a means of securing national

...Continued on P1

GREEN CHHATTISGARH IN HARMONY WITH NATURE-POLICY, NATURE, AND CHANGE

On August 2, 2025, Vrindavan Hall in Raipur hosted a high-impact seminar titled "Green Chhattisgarh in Harmony with Nature – Policy, Nature, and Change." Organized by Prakriti Ki Aur Society, Chhattisgarh's oldest and most respected environmental organization, the event brought together leading experts, policymakers, academics, industry leaders, and civil society representatives to discuss strategies for achieving a sustainable and greener future for Chhattisgarh.

The primary aim of the seminar was to encourage inclusive policy making and public participation for enhancing green cover, controlling urban pollution, and advancing sustainable urban development in Chhattisgarh—particularly in rapidly growing cities like Raipur, Bhilai, and Bilaspur.

During the inaugural session, Mohan Balyani, President of Prakriti Ki Aur Society, delivered the welcome address, underlining the pressing need to embed environmental priorities within the core of urban planning and governance frameworks. Renowned horticulture expert Dr. Anil Singh Chauhan skillfully coordinated and steered the proceedings, setting a purposeful and solution-driven tone for the seminar. Chief Guest and Raipur Mayor Meenal Chaubey delivered a powerful keynote address, highlighting the pivotal role of women in environmental stewardship. She encouraged every woman to plant and care for at least one sapling, positioning them as catalysts for urban greenery. She also reaffirmed her commitment to bolstering policy initiatives

...Continued on P3

INSIDE STORIES

- **Free Farming, Not Freebies**
- **Chhattisgarh's Farmers and Exporters Set to Tap Global Markets Directly**
- **Haryana's Potato Seed Hub Vision: Dr. Arjun Singh Saini on Climate-Smart Potatoes & Global Linkages**
- **Agriculture Minister Unveils Visions for Maize Revolution at 11th India Maize Summit**
- **Agritech Platform Market is Projected to Surpass $41.6 Billion by 2032**

STANDING LIKE A WALL TO PROTECT INTERESTS OF FARMERS: PM NARENDRA MODI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated his personal commitment to protect the interests of farmers, livestock rearers and fishermen while alluding to the US' demand for greater access to India's agriculture and dairy markets, even as he said that there was an "urgent need" to produce fertilisers domestically.

"Modi will stand like a wall against any policy that threatens their interests. India will never compromise when it comes to protecting the interests of our farmers," he said while addressing the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort to mark the 79th Independence Day.

Prime Minister Modi has explicitly explained India's stand on trade negotiations, saying that he won't compromise on the interest of small farmers, dairy and livestock growers.

Earlier on the occasion of centenary celebrations of agriculture scientist MS Swaminathan in Pusa he ecohed the same sentiment. Now, when US President Donald Trump announced a 50% import tariff on Indian goods.

His comments were widely welcomed by some farmer groups, with the ministry of agriculture even organising a function to express its gratitude for the stand taken.

Sources said the high tariff and the little progress that the bilateral trade deal has made so far has been mainly due to India's steadfast reluctance to open up its farm sector to cheap imports from the US.

The US is seeking reduced tariffs on products like corn, soybeans, apples, almonds and ethanol, as well as increased import of its dairy products.

New Delhi is, however, opposing these demands as these will have a direct bearing on farmers.

India has never given any duty concessions to any of its trading partners on this, including Australia and Switzerland, with whom it has signed trade agreements.

Later in the day, agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also said that farmers in the US have lands which are in excess of 5,000 or 10,000 hectares, while in India land holdings are less than 1 hectare.

In such a situation, it is absolutely irrational to think that Indian farmers will be able to compete with their American counterparts. If any agreement on agriculture would have happened, Indian markets would have been flooded with cheap American goods, killing our growers, he said in an address to farmers.

Meanwhile, the Prime

...Continued on P4

...Continued from P1

CULTIVATING RESILIENCE

food security.

Praveen Sharma, Founder & Promoter, Flora Consult, delivered the opening remarks, noting the rapid advancements in protected farming and the accelerating pace of technology adoption in the sector. A special address was presented by Murtuza Patel, President, Greenhouse Manufacturers Association (India), on "The Role of IGMA in Building Resilience through Protected Agriculture". He underscored IGMA's dedicated efforts to support greenhouse growers in fortifying agricultural systems against the mounting challenges of climate change.

Another special address was delivered by Dr B N S Murthy, Former Horticulture Commissioner, Government of India, and Former Director, ICAR-IIHR, Bengaluru, on "Advanced Technology and Policy Support for Protected Cultivation in Achieving Viksit Bharat". Drawing from his distinguished career in policy-making and research, Dr. Murthy shared impactful success stories from across the country where protected cultivation has transformed regional agricultural growth trajectories.

The inaugural session concluded with a formal vote of thanks, marking the beginning of a day rich in dialogue, collaboration, and a shared vision for building a climate-resilient, technology-driven horticulture sector.

Session 1: Greenhouse Farming for Sustainable Food Security and Economic Growth

Following the inaugural ceremony, a high-powered panel discussion on the theme "Greenhouse Farming for Sustainable Food Security and Economic Growth" set the tone for forward-looking deliberations on the future of protected cultivation in India. Moderated by S Jafar Naqvi, Chief Coordinator & Editor, Media Today Group, the session explored how greenhouse technology can strengthen climate resilience, improve resource efficiency, and integrate advanced tools for precision agriculture. The discussion emphasized its vital role in ensuring year-round food production, enabling diverse crop cultivation—including exotic and off-season varieties—and unlocking new economic opportunities for farmers, entrepreneurs, and allied industries.

The panel featured leading voices from diverse domains of agriculture and agribusiness. Praveen Sharma, Founder and Promoter of Flora Consult, shared an insightful presentation on "Revoponics: Revolutionizing the Future of Vertical Farming". He outlined how Revoponics, a cutting-edge vertical farming system, combines hydroponics with modular design to optimize space, reduce resource use, and enable year-round cultivation even in urban and resource-constrained areas. The discussion highlighted its potential to address food security challenges while promoting sustainable agriculture in metropolitan environments.

Anand Zambre, Assistant Vice-President at Reliance Industries Limited, focused on "Plasticulture Applications and Precision Technologies in Protected Cultivation". He showcased how innovations in greenhouse films, drip irrigation, and fertigation systems—combined with precision sensors and automation—can significantly enhance productivity, reduce wastage, and improve crop quality. The session reinforced the critical role of plasticulture in scaling protected cultivation across diverse agro-climatic zones.

Jaysingh Hulwale, Production Head at Sai Roses and CEO of Pavana Sanskruti Farmer Producer Company Ltd. (PSFPC), delivered a thought-provoking address on "Small Innovations, Big Impact: Revolutionizing Indian Floriculture through Technology Transfer and Empowerment". Drawing from grassroots experiences, he demonstrated how accessible technological interventions—ranging from climate control tools to efficient post-harvest handling—can empower small-scale flower growers, improve market access, and enhance income stability.

Salhath Khan, Director – Fresh Business at Flipkart, closed the discussion with a compelling perspective on "Growing Together: The Greenhouse & E-Commerce Synergy". He emphasized how e-commerce platforms can bridge the gap between greenhouse growers and end consumers by ensuring efficient logistics, quality assurance, and market reach. The outcome of this segment underscored that digital retail partnerships could open new channels for high-value crops, reduce intermediaries, and bring fresh produce directly to consumers' doorsteps.

Collectively, the session concluded that greenhouse farming, when combined with vertical farming innovations, precision technologies, grassroots empowerment, and robust e-commerce linkages, has the potential to redefine India's agricultural landscape. Participants agreed on the importance of integrating technology transfer with market access to achieve both sustainability and profitability in the sector.

S Jafar Naqvi

Dr. B N S Murthy

Anand Zambre

L-R: S Jafar Naqvi, Chief Co-ordinator & Editor, Media Today Group, K V Bhaskar Rao, Consultant Agriculture GCC, Dr. Mandar Godge, CEO, Grain International & Global Council Member, World Agriculture Forum, Rahul Pagar, Head of Sales, East West Seeds India Pvt. Ltd., Sara Nour, Operation Manager, Biogrow Protec, Praveen Sharma, Founder & Promoter, Flora Consult, Murtuza Patel, President, Greenhouse Manufactures Association (India), and Jaysing Hulwale, Production Head-Sai Roses & CEO, Pavana Sanskruti Farmer Producer Company Ltd.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Greenhouse Farming as a Game-Changer – Proven potential to secure year-round production, diversify crops, and meet India's growing food demand sustainably.

Technology Integration is Essential – IoT, AI, automation, and plasticulture innovations are driving efficiency, reducing resource use, and improving crop quality.

Climate Resilience is Non-Negotiable – Controlled-environment agriculture shields crops from extreme weather, erratic monsoons, and drought, ensuring stability in uncertain climates.

Market Linkages Matter – E-commerce and direct-to-consumer platforms are creating profitable, transparent channels for greenhouse-grown produce.

Empowering Smallholders Pays Off – Even small-scale technological interventions can dramatically improve incomes, market access, and sustainability for growers.

Breeding for the Future – Developing crop varieties specifically tailored to greenhouse conditions is key to maximizing yield and resilience.

Soilless Systems Hold Huge Promise – Hydroponics and substrate cultivation can optimize nutrient delivery and space use, but require investment and skill-building.

Session 2: Climate-Resilient and Precision Agriculture in Greenhouse Systems

The momentum carried forward into the second technical session, themed "Climate-Resilient and Precision Agriculture in Greenhouse Systems", moderated by Deepak Pareek, Founder, HnyB. This session brought together global expertise to address one of the most pressing challenges of our time—ensuring agricultural productivity in an era of climate uncertainty.

Dr. Mandar Godge, CEO of Grain International and Global Council Member of the World Agriculture Forum, opened the discussion with an in-depth presentation on "Next-Gen iControlled Environment Agriculture in India: Scaling the CropBooster Programme for Climate-Resilient Global Farms". He outlined how the integration of intelligent control systems with the CropBooster framework can significantly enhance productivity while tailoring microclimates to crop needs, ensuring stability even under extreme weather patterns.

K V Bhaskar Rao, Consultant Agriculture, GCC, addressed "Resilient Agriculture: Navigating Challenges and Harnessing Opportunities in Arid Zones via CEA". Drawing from his work in the Gulf and other water-scarce regions, he demonstrated how advanced greenhouse systems can successfully grow high-value crops in harsh climates, transforming arid landscapes into viable agricultural zones through water-efficient technologies and climate-controlled infrastructure.

Sara Nour, Operations Manager, Biogrow Protec, explored "Opportunities and Challenges for Developing the Full Potential of Soilless Cultivation in India". She emphasized the advantages of hydroponics and substrate-based systems for nutrient precision, yield stability, and land-use efficiency, while also discussing scalability issues, investment needs, and farmer training as critical success factors.

Rahul Pagar, Head of Sales at East West Seeds India Pvt. Ltd., concluded with "Breeding for Resilience – Challenges and Opportunities for Vegetable Seed Breeding for Greenhouse/Protected Cultivation". He underlined the importance of developing crop varieties specifically adapted to controlled environments—varieties that are pest-resistant, nutrient-efficient, and capable of thriving under reduced water and chemical inputs.

The presentations collectively addressed how greenhouse farming combats extreme weather events, shields crops from high temperatures, unpredictable monsoons, and droughts, and improves yield consistency. The session also explored precision farming applications—optimizing water, nutrient, and space use—enabled by smart farming tools, IoT sensors, AI-based analytics, and automation. The discourse reinforced that merging climate resilience strategies with cutting-edge precision technologies is essential to secure sustainable, profitable, and environmentally responsible food production for the future.

Networking

The conference also featured a Networking Lunch Break that proved to be as enriching as the formal sessions themselves. In a relaxed yet purpose-driven setting, participants mingled freely, bridging gaps between regions, disciplines, and perspectives. Over an array of gourmet dishes and refreshing beverages, growers shared on-ground experiences, policymakers outlined emerging policy directions, researchers discussed breakthrough innovations, and agri-business leaders explored opportunities for collaboration.

Animated conversations flowed from technical know-how to market strategies, from climate-smart cultivation methods to export possibilities. Many participants used this time to initiate joint ventures, identify potential suppliers, or simply forge professional relationships that could evolve into long-term partnerships. The lively exchange of visiting cards and ideas reflected the conference's underlying spirit—that progress in agriculture thrives on collective effort and shared vision.

Open House Panel Discussion

The event concluded with an interactive Open House Panel Discussion, offering participants an opportunity to synthesize the learnings of the day and engage directly with experts. The session opened with reflecting on the overarching themes and innovations discussed during the conference. Their remarks underscored the importance of integrated solutions—spanning water management, protected cultivation technologies, and precision agriculture—in achieving long-term sustainability and profitability for growers.

Following this, the moderator presented the key deliberations and outcomes from the preceding sessions. This recap highlighted the major insights—from the role of greenhouse farming in enhancing climate resilience and crop diversity, to the power of digital marketplaces and breeding innovations tailored for controlled environments.

With the floor open for a Q & A session, participants actively engaged the panel with pointed questions on technology adoption, cost-benefit considerations, market linkages, and policy support for greenhouse farming. The exchange was lively, with practical case studies and hands-on experiences enriching the discussion.

The day's proceedings came to a close with a vote of thanks, acknowledging the contributions of speakers, partners, delegates, and organizing teams. The note of gratitude also extended to innovators, entrepreneurs, and farmers whose work continues to inspire the growth of sustainable, climate-resilient agriculture in India.

Way Ahead:

The inaugural Indian Greenhouse Growers Conference was a collective commitment to shaping a future where agriculture is not just productive, but also climate-resilient, technology-driven, and economically empowering for all growers. As participants left the venue, the shared sentiment was clear: the seeds of change have been sown, and with continued collaboration, India's protected cultivation sector will flourish into a pillar of sustainable food security. ■

Praveen Sharma

Salhath Khan

Dr. Mandar Godge

K V Bhaskar Rao

Sara Nour

Rahul Pagar

Jaysingh Hulwale

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GREEN CHHATTISGARH IN . . .

and fostering inclusive community participation in sustainable development.

The session concluded with a formal vote of thanks by Nirbhay Dharival, Secretary of Prakriti Ki Aur Society, acknowledging the contributions of all participants and supporters.

Panel Discussions and Expert Insights

The seminar featured a series of thought-provoking presentations from diverse sectors. The experts unanimously called for pragmatic, ground-level action supported by policy reform, inter-institutional collaboration, and public awareness.

Dr. Jitendra Singh from Mahatma Gandhi Horticulture and Forestry University emphasized the importance of prioritizing indigenous plant species over exotic ones, citing their superior ecological compatibility and long-term sustainability. Forest Conservator Vivekanand Jha highlighted the limited presence of urban forestry in current government schemes and advocated for its integration into city planning.

Representing the Chhattisgarh State Pollution Control Board, Amar Sawant detailed pollution control strategies and industrial monitoring mechanisms, underscoring the need for stricter compliance and active citizen participation. Santosh Jain from the Chamber of Commerce recommended that businesses incorporate environmental audits, water conservation practices, and regular tree plantation into their operational frameworks as part of their environmental responsibility. Shankar Bajaj of the Bhanpuri-Siltara Industrial Federation proposed developing at least 30% green cover within industrial zones to support ecological balance.

From the academic sector, Dr. Debashish Sanyal of NIT Raipur suggested implementing biophilic design, green infrastructure, and traditional drainage systems to address urban waterlogging, while offering technical assistance from NIT to the municipal authorities. Finally, Anand Singhania, Vice President of CREDAI India, called for the identification and utilization of vacant urban land to create green pockets and oxygen zones, affirming CREDAI Chhattisgarh's commitment to urban pond restoration and the rapid implementation of social forestry programs.

Stage Performances & Cultural Segment

Adding energy and engagement to the event, stage presenters Shining Shweta, Hardeep Kaur, Sarwat Sethi, and Shilpi Nagpuri delivered captivating presentations that underscored the cultural dimensions of environmental conservation.

Notable Dignitaries in Attendance

The seminar witnessed the enthusiastic participation of several esteemed individuals and environment-conscious citizens, including: Daljeet Bagga, D K Tiwari, R K Jain, Suresh Bani, Chhatar Singh Saluja, Laxmi Yadav, Rashmi Parmar, Ram Khatwani, C L Mahawar, Lakshya Target, Manish Trivedi, and others.

Their presence reflected a strong community commitment toward sustainable urban development.

Key Outcomes and Resolutions

The seminar concluded with a set of actionable resolutions aimed at transforming Raipur into a model green city. A key focus was to the development of designated oxygen zones, primarily using native plant species to enhance air quality and ecological balance. Alongside this, strong emphasis was to promote indigenous trees, recognizing their vital role in environmental resilience and long-term ecosystem support.

A major highlight of the outcomes was the commitment to empowering women as leaders in green initiatives, encouraging their active participation in plantation drives and tree care as part of a larger mass movement. To ensure broad-based impact, cross-sector collaboration is the key through joint efforts by the Municipal Corporation, Forest Department, industrial bodies, and academic institutions. The seminar also stressed the need for a community-centric transition in environmental policymaking, turning public awareness into concrete, on-the-ground actions.

Furthermore, industrial zones in and around Raipur was aimed to increase green cover by at least 30%, aligning with pollution control strategies and broader ecological objectives.

Conclusion

The seminar succeeded in creating a unified vision for a greener Chhattisgarh, blending policy insights, community action, industrial responsibility, and academic support. With strong consensus and committed voices, the event marked a significant step toward making Raipur a model green city. Prakriti Ki Aur Society reaffirmed its commitment to continue facilitating such forums to translate ecological goals into tangible results.

EXCELLENCE IN AGRICULTURE RECOGNISED AT NATIONAL SUMMIT

2nd Sustainable Agriculture Summit and Awards held on 7 August in New Delhi

Inspired by the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a Viksit Bharat by 2047, the second edition of the Sustainable Agriculture Summit and Awards was organised on 7 August 2025, in New Delhi. Themed 'Krishi 2047: Climate-Ready Farming, Future-Ready Bharat', the summit is being hosted by Sustainability Matters and IndiAgri. The event brought together policymakers, scientists, entrepreneurs, development organisations, corporates, and progressive farmers from across India to deliberate on the future of climate-resilient agriculture.

The summit honoured exemplary work across 33 categories in the domain of sustainable agriculture, recognising the contributions of individuals, organisations, companies, government bodies, innovators, and farmers. The jury and distinguished guests for the awards include Dr C D Mayee, former Agriculture Commissioner, Government of India; Dr Sriranjan, former IAS and former Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Meghalaya; Dr Jaydev Sarangi, former IAS and Secretary in Delhi and Goa; R K Sapra, former IFS and former Managing Director of the Haryana Forest Development Corporation; Dr J J Vashney, former Director, ICAR; Dr Siba P Mohanty, Managing Director, HURL; Dr K C Ravi, Chief Sustainability Officer, Syngenta India; Ramesh Singh, Regional Director, CARE Asia; Dr Vimala Prakash, Head of TIC (R&D), IPL Biologicals; and Kishore Jaiswal, Convenor, NFEI.

The summit aimed to encourage greater dialogue among stakeholders on the challenges and prospects of climate-resilient agriculture in India. It also showcased innovations and successful models from across the country, build alignment with the Government of India's progressive agricultural policies, and promote collaboration among public, private, and community-based stakeholders. Through the Sustainability Awards, the summit recognised and celebrated best practices that are contributing to the transformation of Indian agriculture.

Speaking on the need for such a platform, Dr Navneet Anand, Executive Director of Sustainability Matters, said that the increasing impact of global warming and climate change on agriculture can no longer be overlooked. He noted that Indian agriculture faces several pressing challenges today, and the first step towards addressing them is to identify and acknowledge them. For this, meaningful dialogue among all stakeholders is essential. The summit provides a robust platform for scientists, farmers, policymakers, corporates, and others to come together for such an exchange. As reflected in its theme, 'Krishi 2047: Climate-Ready Farming, Future-Ready Bharat', the summit aligned with the national aspiration of building a developed India by 2047.

Dr Anand further emphasised that many individuals and organisations are already working in commendable ways to overcome these challenges at their own level. Bringing such work into the spotlight and positioning these changemakers as role models is crucial. The awards presented across 33 categories are designed to honour those who are giving Indian agriculture a new direction. Their recognition will serve as an inspiration for others in the field.

Following the success of the first National Sustainable Agriculture Summit and Awards held in 2024, and the regional policy dialogues conducted in Bhopal, Chandigarh, and Nagpur, the second edition in New Delhi deepen the conversation around emerging agricultural challenges and explore practical solutions. ■

IMMA B2G ROUNDTABLE PUSHES FOR UNIFIED LICENSING, BIO-STIMULANT REFORM, AND EXPORT LIBERALIZATION

Industry stakes claim to policy reform at high-level roundtable in Delhi

In a high-impact policy engagement held at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, the Indian Micro-Fertilizers Manufacturers Association (IMMA) hosted its Business-to-Government (B2G) Roundtable Conference under the theme "Innovate, Regulate, Elevate: Shaping India's Fertilizer Future." The event brought together leading policymakers, scientists, regulators, and industry voices to chart a reform-oriented roadmap for India's non-subsidized fertilizer sector.

Dr. Rahul Mirchandani, President – IMMA, opened the session stating, "This roundtable reflects our collective resolve to shape a forward-looking fertilizer ecosystem—one that enables innovation, protects farmer trust, and aligns with sustainability imperatives." Sameer Pathare, Vice President – IMMA, emphasized that "each of the six points roundtable meeting agenda represents a live issue affecting our members. Today, we took a decisive step toward collaborative problem-solving."

One of the key areas of discussion was the urgent need to update state-notified fertilizer grades. Experts advocated for soil-specific formulations based on open-source soil health data. Dr A K Nayak, DDG – Natural Resource Management, ICAR, noted, "Sustainable and optimal soil health management requires updated nutrient formulations." He further added that inclusion in the FCO Schedule must be backed by efficacy data instead of relying solely on truthful labelling.

IMMA's industry-led initiative to combat counterfeiting also earned praise as a model of self-regulation. Dr. Shyam Babu, Director – CFQC&TI, Faridabad, assured support in co-developing qualitative testing kits for on-site verification. Dr. Debashis Mandal, Head – Soil Science, ICAR-Pusa, reinforced that this collaboration would significantly boost trust among farmers and Agri-dealers.

The roundtable strongly called for a unified digital licensing mechanism under the "One Nation, One Licence" framework. Dr. Mirchandani proposed a centralized repository to eliminate repetitive document submissions and enhance transparency. Major associations including SFIA, FAI, BASAI, and BIPA supported this vision and agreed to jointly develop a white paper to push the reform agenda.

Bio-stimulant regulation, especially post-enforcement of the June 16 norms, emerged as another critical concern. With transitional gaps evident, stakeholders urged immediate measures. Dr. Shyam Babu acknowledged the challenge and noted ongoing training of labs and chemists to narrow the readiness gap. Meanwhile, the industry recommended allowing sale of pre-June 16 stock until expiry and provisional approval of NABL-accredited labs until state labs are fully ready.

The decriminalization of non-subsidized fertilizer violations was also deliberated in depth. Former Law Officer H P Singh remarked, "Subsidy status shouldn't be the criterion for criminalization. It's time to define minor versus major violations and introduce compounding provisions." Officials from concerned ministries were receptive and indicated readiness for inter-ministerial consultations to incorporate IMMA's legal proposals under the Essential Commodities Act (ECA).

IMMA proposed that non-subsidized fertilizers should be removed from the Essential Commodities Act (ECA), as there is no longer any shortage of fertilizers or food in the country. The ECA has served its purpose, and its punitive provisions now act as a deterrent for new players in the industry. While subsidized fertilizers may continue under the Act due to government support, non-subsidized products should be governed by market-driven regulations. Dr Rahul Mirchandani also advocated for a "One Nation, One Licence" system through a unified digital platform, where all state-level licensing processes can be completed in one place for ease of doing business.

On export policy, IMMA made a compelling case for removing non-subsidized fertilizers from the restricted list. "India has the technology, quality, and cost advantage to be the fertilizer factory of the world," said Dr Mirchandani. He expressed concerns that the current export permit system may be limiting the potential of the 'Make in India' initiative. He advocated for broader global access to Indian-manufactured fertilizers, suggesting that such access should not be contingent upon subsidies or raw material linkages.

Summing up the session, Vaibhav Kashikar, Past President – IMMA, stated, "This roundtable reaffirmed our belief in policy through partnership. IMMA will collate today's inputs into actionable proposals and follow through with all departments concerned."

Key Action Points Identified:

- Immediate white paper development for digital licensing reform
- Submission of anti-counterfeiting toolkit proposal to CFQC&TI
- Joint memo on FCO amendment and bio stimulant testing roadmap
- Draft legal note on decriminalization via compounding provisions under ECA

The roundtable concluded with renewed momentum toward enabling innovation, simplifying compliance, and positioning India as a global leader in non-subsidized fertilizers. ■

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...Continued from P1

STANDING LIKE A WALL TO . . .

Minister, in his address, also called for the urgent need to produce fertilisers domestically to empower farmers and protect national food security.

Reducing import dependence ensures that the country's agricultural sector thrives independently, safeguarding farmers' welfare and strengthening India's economic sovereignty, he said.

Modi's appeal comes at a time when India has been importing record quantities of Urea, Di-Ammonia Phosphate (DAP) and some other raw materials to provide critical input to farmers.

The appeal also comes amid a severe shortage of fertilisers across India in the critical kharif sowing season.

The shortage has happened due to low imports of DAP and also erratic supplies of Urea. Several state ministers demanded additional Urea supplies in a meeting with Chouhan.

The minister asked states to take strict action against hoarders and black marketers, adding that the Centre was already sending enough supplies.

"The government has reaffirmed its commitment to work in close coordination with industry stakeholders, research institutions, and state governments to bolster domestic capacity, promote sustainable farming practices, and reduce import dependency," the Fertiliser Ministry said in a statement to Business Standard.

DAP and Urea are two of the most consumed fertilisers in India, accounting for more than 75% of the total consumption, per government data. Of this, around 18 million tonnes is imported while the rest is domestically produced.

A call for self-sufficiency in fertiliser production could shed some of the dependency on imports which has become highly volatile since the last few years due to geo-political reasons. ■

Trump tariffs can be India's inflection point in agriculture to break away from short-termism

FREE FARMING, NOT FREEBIES

> We need a strategic vision of how world and national economies may evolve in the next 25 years, what skills are needed, changing nutritional demand, ageing and climate change.

– Ajay Vir Jakhar
Chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj

In the 1946 novel, Zorba the Greek, Nikos Kazantzakis writes: Look, one day I had gone to a little village. An old grandfather of ninety was busy planting an almond tree. 'What, grandfather!" I exclaimed. Planting an almond tree?" And he, bent as he was, turned around and said: 'My son, I carry on as if I should never die. I replied: And I carry on as if I was going to die any minute."

Kazantzakis' anecdote perhaps best explains the differences in conceptualizing policies by those advocating them for primary producers and those being implemented by India's establishment. India's agricultural policies echo the 'lie for the moment' mindset, as if there's no tomorrow, farmers, too, taught by a defunct agricultural research system and goaded by GoI policies, are knowingly farming without a care for future generations. This short-termism probably takes its cue from elected representatives whose only objective in life seems to be to get re-elected.

India requires a strategic vision of how the world and national economies might evolve over the next 25 years, what skills may be needed, how technologies will disrupt the work-space, changing demand for nutrition, and, finally, how to deal with challenges of ageing and climate change. It is only against such a vision that one can judge whether today's activities make sense.

Keeping the current trend, in every scenario, agricultural production will fall way short of the country's nutritional demand. But the establishment's policies imply that India is nutritionally secure and climate change won't impact production. Without systems thinking, India isn't even ready to identify risks, let alone mitigate them and explore opportunities.

India not having a real agricultural policy speaks volumes. National Cooperative Policy 2025 was finally released, 23 years after National Policy on Cooperatives was formulated in 2002. As White House political adviser in the 1940s David Niles explained, 'It's not about getting the forecast right - it's about having a series of plays ready, so when the unexpected happens, you're not frozen. Scenario planning is not only about predicting the future, it's also about training for it, being prepared to shift course. Now, without an India US trade deal, for instance, we are in deep, untested, muddy waters.

Systems thinking is much more common in areas like military strategy, engineering and judiciary. It is glaringly missing in agricultural policy formulation, and more so in agricultural economics.

Making one thing better tends to make other things worse. Increasing fertiliser application for productivity destroys soil biome. App lying pesticides to kill in sects kills other life forms, too. Suppressing prices for consumers decimates farmer livelihoods. Giving free electricity causes aquifers to dry up. Just as open-ended MSP paddy procurement has ruined Punjab, free wheat and rice to 2/3 of the Indian population has changed diets and destroyed biodiversity.

Similarly, in the India-US trade negotiations, shielding Indian farmers from cheap US farm produce adversely impacts India's services and industrial goods exports, sends stock markets into a tailspin, and inhibits private sectors fundraising as the US ramps up tariffs on India exports.

Take Israel, like India, also founded in post-WW2 scarcity: Israel spends more than 6% of its GDP on R&D. This is more than 2x the global average, Half of that funding comes from the private sector: Today, Israel is a developed country. India, in contrast, invests less than 1% and languishes as a developing nation.

Both Planning Commission and its watered-down successor NITI Aayog failed to convince their political bosses to increase R&D funding. Neither do farmer union leaders seek resources for agricultural R&D, funding for which has been shrinking as percentage of GDP annually this century.

For Indian agriculture, outcomes have been plagued by decades of political indecisiveness, whether it's the pending seed Bill, pesticides Bill or stalled agriculture market reforms. This compels states like Punjab, Haryana and Telangana to enact their own draconian and ineffective agricultural input regulations. Supreme Court's intrusion into scientific matters further complicates the field.

Uncertainty on regulations has made the private sector reluctant to invest in agricultural R&D. Lack of investments has driven lags in India's crop yields, which makes its agricultural produce uncompetitive and impacts its trade negotiations.

Take soybean. India's best yields are about half of what's available for non-GM varieties worldwide and 3x less than that of GM soybean. Imagine if India were to achieve comparable yields in just one crop. It could ease the pain of pulses and edible oil imports. No one knows why it's not happening.

Because of unresolved regulatory issues, Indian farmers will not be able to tap the potential of the recent India-Britain trade deal. Our high-value farm produce will keep failing safety tests at British ports of entry: Same holds true if we were to eventually sign an India-US trade deal. Irrespective of its fine print, it won't lead to more or diverse Indian farm produce ex-ports. Later, experts will term such issues as 'non-tariff barriers'.

Indian bureaucracy lauds itself by making policies that seem sensible in isolation, but which interact in strange ways to restra in India as a lower middle-income nation. Had this reductionist approach of making policy in silos been re placed by a systems approach that ex-amines interconnectedness within complex networks, these issues could mitigated, if not avoided.

Trump tariffs have rattled the Indian establishment. One can only fervently hope that this can act as an inflection point in the agricultural space, where it breaks away from ideological inhibitions and complacency, from 'popularism' to 'deliverism', and finally towards improving governance and reforms. ■

Source: Times of India

GOVT POLICY MUST REWARD SUSTAINABILITY FOR INDIA'S SMALL FARMERS: SYNGENTA

Smallholder farmers account for 80% of the agricultural sector.

> With agriculture contributing 25% of global greenhouse gas emissions, but receiving only 5% of climate transition funding and subsidies rewarding climate-smart practices are critical to drive change, said Syngenta Group Chief Sustainability Officer Petra Laux.

Government policies must incentivise sustainable farming to support India's smallholder farmers, as they face intensifying climate challenges like erratic monsoons, droughts, and floods, according to Swiss crop protection firm Syngenta Group Chief Sustainability Officer Petra Laux.

In an interview with PTI, she said uncertain crop prices discourage smallholders from using sustainable methods. The lack of premiums for climate-smart crops, unlike niche organic markets, limits progress.

Globally, consumer reluctance to pay more hinders adoption, and scaling emission reduction projects, like Syngenta's methane-focused initiative near Delhi for export markets, face challenges.

"There's no premium for sustainably grown crops or reduced emissions. It's global, and one reason for this is that the consumer in the supermarket doesn't want to pay more," she said.

India's young and digitally skilled farmers are poised to adopt sustainable practices, but policy must reward them. The government policies must subsidise the "more responsible farmers", the executive noted.

Europe's conditional subsidies and Denmark's farm emission taxes offer models. However, "none of them have given any subsidies focusing on smart agriculture, not at scale".

"It's something we have to discuss at COP30 in Brazil this year," she said, adding that there are commitments from traders like Pepsi and LDC to source regeneratively grown crops, though financing remains limited.

"Policy linking sustainability to farm resilience is key for future soil health," the executive asserted.

Syngenta Foundation India connects over 3 million farmers to its digital platform, offering price transparency, market access, and agronomic advice to boost incomes.

For smallholders managing 1-2 hectares, adopting sustainable practices is risky due to potential income loss. Syngenta provides microfinancing support and technologies like high-yield seeds and biostimulants to enhance resilience against climate stressors, such as drought and heat.

"Our digital platform stabilises incomes, but policy support is needed to scale sustainable practices," Laux said.

Biostimulants and natural-origin products that bolster crop resilience to abiotic stresses are key to Syngenta's sustainability strategy. They improve nutrient uptake, cutting fertiliser overuse, a major emissions driver, while stabilising yields.

Farmer awareness is growing, with retail inquiries rising, though adoption remains early-stage amid an uncertain regulatory environment for biostimulants in India, she said.

"Biostimulants are vital for climate adaptation and soil health, increasing carbon sequestration," the executive noted.

Syngenta champions regenerative practices like no-till, crop rotation, cover crops, and precision inputs, supported by specialised herbicides.

Its portfolio includes seeds reducing methane emissions from livestock via altered corn starch and herbicides, enabling alternate wet-dry rice farming to lower emissions. Biostimulants complement these, with biologicals as the fastest-growing segment.

"All technologies are crucial for sustainability," Laux said, adding that "regenerative practices ensure long-term soil health and farm resilience". ■

GOA TO ROLL OUT NEW SALT-TOLERANT PADDY VARIETY FOR 2026 KHARIF SEASON

Goa's latest paddy seed variety, which offers improved resilience against salinity, waterlogging, and crop lodging, is likely to be released for large-scale cultivation in the Kharif season 2026, state Agriculture Minister Ravi Naik has said.

In a written reply in the legislative assembly, Naik said that the new variety is currently in its second year of on-farm trials and has already shown promising results in demonstration plots under the Minikit Programme.

He was responding to a question by independent MLA Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco.

According to the data furnished by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Goa Dhan-5 was developed to build on the performance of earlier salt-tolerant varieties Goa Dhan-1 and Dhan-2 released in 2017, and Dhan-3 and Dhan-4 released in 2019, the minister said.

Naik said that while the first four Dhan varieties are tolerant to saline conditions, Goa Dhan-5 stands out for its added resistance to waterlogging and complete or partial submergence for 10 to 15 days, making it suitable for the state's flood-prone and coastal agricultural zones.

"It also has a strong culm, which improves resistance to lodging a common issue that affects plant stability and yield during heavy rains and wind," he stated.

The minister further said that the trial results indicate Goa Dhan-5 yields around six tonnes per hectare under normal conditions and four to four and half tonnes under saline conditions.

"More than 40 farmers in Amona, Chorao, Neura, Shiroda, and Cumbarzua villages in both North and South Goa are cultivating the variety as part of the ongoing demonstration phase," he said.

The seed variety is expected to be formally proposed for release to the State Variety Release Committee (SVRC) after reviewing its performance during the current Kharif season.

If cleared, seeds will be made available to farmers in time for the next planting cycle, he added. ■

CHHATTISGARH'S FARMERS AND EXPORTERS SET TO TAP GLOBAL MARKETS DIRECTLY

Boost for agri-exports as CM Vishnu Deo Sai's efforts bear fruit; state to emerge as an export hub

In a major milestone for Chhattisgarh's agriculture sector, the state is set to get a regional office of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) in Raipur. The development follows the proactive efforts of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and the state's Department of Industries, with the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry approving the proposal.

With this regional office, farmers, producers, and exporters in Chhattisgarh will now have access to a wide range of export-related services under one roof. No longer will they have to depend on offices in other states for training, certification, packaging, standardisation, or export-related procedures.

Global-quality services now at local level

The APEDA office in Raipur will streamline procedures such as phytosanitary certification, quality certification, lab testing, and export documentation—saving time and reducing costs for stakeholders.

Branding boost and global visibility for Chhattisgarh products

The regional office will ease direct exports of fruits, vegetables, rice, GI-tagged products, millets, and other agri commodities to international markets. This will ensure better prices for producers, new market access for traders, and global recognition for the state's diverse agri-produce.

Doubling farmer income through knowledge and better prices

With access to global markets, Chhattisgarh's farmers will command higher returns for their produce. They will also receive training and insights into modern techniques, quality control, advanced packaging, and global marketing—right at the local level.

Push for export infrastructure

Apart from certification and brand promotion, APEDA also supports infrastructure creation and maintenance. This includes food processing units, cold storages, and pack houses—giving a major boost to the state's agri-business ecosystem.

Access to special schemes and subsidies

Chhattisgarh's farmers, startups, and MSMEs will now benefit more easily from APEDA's export promotion schemes, skill development programmes, and subsidy initiatives.

Expressing his happiness over the landmark move, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said this new APEDA office would serve as a powerful bridge between Chhattisgarh's agri producers and the global market. He called it a decisive step not just in boosting agri-exports, but in driving economic prosperity for the state.

"This achievement will make Chhattisgarh a leading state in the 'Vocal for Local to Global' campaign and open new doors for the export of our rich and diverse agri-products," the Chief Minister added.

■

BOOSTING THE FARM PRODUCTIVITY

According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) July 2023 - June 2024, conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), 46.1% of the workforce in India is employed in the agriculture sector. Further, as per the National Accounts Statistics 2025, this sector contributed approximately 17.8% of the country's GDP for FY 2023-24. The Government of India has undertaken several initiatives aimed at enhancing farm productivity.

The details of select major schemes pertaining to enhancement in agricultural productivity:

The National Food Security and Nutrition Mission (NFSNM) is implemented in 28 States and 2 Union Territories (UTs) viz. Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The objective of NFSNM is to increase production of foodgrains through area expansion and productivity enhancement. Under this Scheme, the incentives are provided to the farmers, through the States/UTs, on crop production and protection technologies, cropping system- based demonstrations, distribution of certified seeds of newly released varieties/hybrids, integrated nutrient and pest management techniques, improved farm implements/tools/resource conservation machineries, water saving devices, capacity building of farmers through trainings during cropping season, etc.

The Ministry advises the States and seed producing agencies from time to time to place the breeder seeds indents of newly released High Yielding Varieties (HYVs), stress-tolerant varieties (drought, flood and salinity) including stress tolerant/ climate-resilient /smart varieties (to tackle the challenges of climate changes in a more effective way) of different crops developed by ICAR Institutes / State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) etc. for further multiplication into foundation and certified seeds, so as to make available to the farmers, the required seeds of these crops varieties to enhance farm production, productivity and also to help farmers' profitability in the country.

The Government of India is promoting mechanization with the specific aim of increasing the reach of farm mechanization to small and marginal farmers and to the regions where availability of farm power is low. It also aims at promoting 'Custom Hiring Centers' to offset the adverse economies of scale arising due to small land holding and high cost of individual ownership. In this regard, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme 'Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization' (SMAM) is being implemented through the State Governments. Under SMAM, financial assistance is being provided for purchase of agricultural machinery and equipments, including tractors, to the farmers on individual ownership-basis and for establishment of Custom Hiring Centre (CHC)/High Tech Hub/Farm Machinery Bank (FMB).

The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare is also implementing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) from 2015-16 onwards. PDMC focuses on enhancing water-use efficiency at farm-level through Micro Irrigation viz. Drip and Sprinkler Irrigation Systems. The Micro Irrigation helps in saving water as well as reduced fertilizer usage (through fertigation), labour expenses, other input costs and thereby, creating overall income enhancement of farmers. Further, NITI Aayog conducted an evaluation study on PDMC scheme during the year 2021, which revealed that productivity increased in the range of 9% to 100% for various crops in different States through adoption of micro irrigation.

This information was given by Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Ramnath Thakur in a written reply in Lok Sabha.

■

AGRITECH INDIA

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HARYANA'S POTATO SEED HUB VISION: DR. ARJUN SINGH SAINI ON CLIMATE-SMART POTATOES & GLOBAL LINKAGES

In an exclusive interview with Potato News, Dr. Arjun Singh Saini, Project Director of SHPP–JICA Haryana, sheds light on the state's transformative horticulture initiatives. From the landmark Rs.2,700 crore JICA-funded project to Haryana's vision of becoming India's Potato Seed Hub, Dr. Saini discussed innovations in climate-smart varieties, advanced seed production, cold chain infrastructure, and global market linkages — all aimed at boosting farmer prosperity and positioning Haryana as a leader in sustainable potato cultivation and exports.

In the broader context, what do you believe are the most significant achievements of the Haryana Government in strengthening agricultural infrastructure and farmer welfare in recent years?

In recent years, the Haryana Government has made notable strides in enhancing agricultural infrastructure and farmer welfare. The approval of the JICA-funded horticulture project, valued at Rs. 2,700 crore, stands out as a landmark initiative. Over the next nine years, this project will facilitate the establishment of 400 packhouses, 400 crop clusters, and robust distribution, retail, and e-commerce networks across Haryana, making it one of India's largest horticulture ventures. Such infrastructure development is poised to advance sustainable agri-horticulture models, streamline supply chains, and directly improve farmer prosperity. Additionally, Haryana's vision is to develop as a Potato Seed Hub for both domestic use and export, building on the state's contribution of 1.77% to national production with the 3rd highest productivity rate in India. Potato, the 4th most important food crop globally, holds strategic importance for the region.

Haryana is among India's top potato-producing states. How is SHPP–JICA contributing to sustainable potato cultivation in the region?

The SHPP–JICA (Sub-Tropical Horticulture Promotion Project – Japan International Cooperation Agency) initiative is actively contributing to sustainable potato cultivation in Haryana through international collaboration. Early this year, a four-year MoU was signed with the International Potato Centre (CIP), Peru, to introduce climate-smart potato varieties, advanced agronomic practices, and scaled-up quality seed production. These measures are tailored to strengthen the potato value chain, ensuring long-term sustainability and direct benefits for farmers in the region. To further address seed potato shortages and quality, the Haryana Potato Policy-2022 promotes seed potato production in the State and the establishment of a specialized Potato Technology Centre. This centre will produce G-0, G-1, and G-2 generations as well as breeder seeds, aiming for self-reliance and leadership in quality seed production and distribution. Seed potato production yields higher income than table potatoes. Higher profitability in seed potato generations motivates farmers to adopt this practice.

What key challenges do potato farmers in Haryana face today and how is your project addressing them?

Potato farmers in Haryana face key challenges such as post-harvest losses and limited access to efficient supply chains. The ongoing projects address these issues by focusing on infrastructure development—specifically, the establishment of packhouses, crop clusters, and cold storages—under the JICA-funded scheme. By improving logistics and storage, the project helps mitigate losses and enhances farmers' market opportunities. Haryana's seed potato policy further strengthens this by adopting certification nomenclature G-0 to G-4, legalizing certification from G-0 to G-3 and following international standards to protect farmers and ensure the production of high-quality seeds. The aphid-free winter conditions in Haryana make it an ideal region for seed potato production, attracting private sector engagement and improving farmer incomes significantly compared to table potatoes.

Can you shed light on any recent technological or agronomic innovations introduced under SHPP–JICA?

SHPP-JICA is a bigger project, and we are targeting 15 horticulture commodities under the project. But I am giving you reply with focus on potato. Recent technological and agronomic innovations under SHPP–JICA include the introduction of climate-smart potato varieties and advanced cultivation practices, achieved through collaboration with CIP, Peru. These innovations are complemented by efforts to upscale quality seed production and adopt modern agronomic methods, thereby fostering resilience and productivity among Haryana's potato farmers. Technical support is provided through Village of Excellence programs and collaboration with research institutes such as CPRI, facilitating technology transfer and quality seed production. Market development initiatives, including branding, exhibitions, buyer-seller meets, and logo promotion, are underway to strengthen local and international market presence for Haryana's potatoes. The state's strategic objectives emphasize capacity building, youth engagement, and enhanced market linkages to boost productivity and farmer welfare.

Post-harvest losses in potatoes are significant. What steps is the project taking to improve storage and cold chain infrastructure?

To tackle significant post-harvest losses in potatoes, the project has prioritized storage and cold chain infrastructure. A key development is the MoU signed with the Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE) on July 25, 2025, aimed at promoting energy-efficient cold storages in Haryana. Seed potato production in Haryana leverages technical processes such as tissue culture technology, involving microplant propagation, hardening, mini tuber production, and specialized storage. Infrastructure development includes the creation of microplant production facilities and insect net houses, supported by targeted financial outlays. These enhancements ensure better preservation of produce, reduce losses, and provide farmers with more stable market access. Certified seed potato production is overseen by a dedicated Potato Certification Committee, ensuring quality and reliability.

Are there any plans to boost potato exports from Haryana, and how are the projects facilitating global market linkages for farmers?

Yes, there are ongoing plans to boost potato exports from Haryana. The combination of improved infrastructure—such as packhouses and cold chains—and partnerships with international organizations like CIP, Peru, are instrumental in facilitating global market linkages for farmers. By strengthening the value chain and adopting internationally recognized practices, these projects are positioning Haryana's farmers to access and compete in export markets more effectively. The state has also seen recent private sector interest, with 11 tie-ups signed between potato growers and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) for seed potato production. Financial incentives and strategic technical support programs are expected to increase farmer income, raise productivity, introduce improved varieties, and enhance employment generation—anchoring Haryana as a leader in quality seed potato production and export. ■

KENYA TURNS TO INDIA FOR RICE IMPORTS AS FARMERS DECRY UNSOLD HARVESTS

– Tony Malesi

Farmers accuse government of exaggerating shortages to benefit connected importers, warning that duty-free rice will depress prices.

- **Kenya authorises duty-free import of 500,000 tonnes of rice, mainly from India and Pakistan.**
- **Government says move is to stabilise prices and meet rising demand projected at 1.5 million tonnes in 2025.**
- **Local farmers protest, citing unsold harvests and alleging import licences benefit politically connected cartels.**
- **Petitions filed in court argue imports are unconstitutional and ignore local stocks.**
- **Agriculture ministry insists imports are essential to avoid price surges and protect food security.**

Kenya has announced plans to import half a million tonnes of rice duty-free, mostly from India and Pakistan, to address what it calls an imminent shortage. But the decision has sparked outrage among local farmers, who insist they are already sitting on unsold stocks from recent good harvests and warn that cheap imports will devastate their livelihoods.

In a gazette notice dated July 28, 2025, National Treasury Cabinet Secretary John Mbadi authorised the duty-free importation of 500,000 metric tonnes of Grade 1 milled white rice by December 31, 2025. The move, recommended by the Ministry of Agriculture, is intended to ease prices and guarantee food security in a country where demand is projected to reach 1.5 million tonnes this year. Rice, alongside wheat, is Kenya's second most important staple food after maize.

Kenya currently produces only around 260,000 tonnes annually – about 20% of its needs – with the balance imported, mainly from India and Pakistan. Consumption is rising rapidly, with per capita intake expected to hit 29 kilogrammes in 2025. With a population of 55 million, the government estimates the monthly requirement at 125,000 tonnes.

Farmers fear collapse in prices

Despite the deficit, rice farmers in Kenya's main growing regions have reacted angrily. They argue that the government's estimate of shortages is inflated and that the 500,000-tonne import quota far exceeds what is necessary. Many point to unsold paddy rice stored in granaries and silos, claiming that the imports will force down farmgate prices.

"With such a huge amount of rice being imported when we have had relatively good harvests, smallholder farmers will be left with depressed prices and unsold stocks," said James Maina, a farmer interviewed by local media. "Only well-connected cartels who get these duty-free licences will benefit, just as they have with maize and wheat."

Some farmers have already taken the matter to court. One petitioner, Alex Musyoki, argues that the government's justification for the imports is misleading and unconstitutional. In his filing, he claims that the decision ignored available local stocks and was made without adequate public consultation. He estimates that farmers already lose up to 40% of their harvest post-harvest, losses that would worsen if the market is flooded with imports.

"Paddy rice from multiple harvests in recent harvests remains unsold in granaries and private silos. Allowing importation of such a huge haul will destabilise prices for the commodity and severely hurt thousands of hardworking farmers and their dependents across rice-producing regions in Kenya," Musyoki said.

Government insists imports are essential

Agriculture and Livestock Development Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe has defended the decision, warning that blocking imports would send prices soaring and deepen the cost-of-living crisis. He claimed that rice demand for institutions such as schools, the police, the army and social protection programmes far outstrips what farmers can supply.

"We have always imported rice – an average of 700,000 tonnes annually over the last three years," Kagwe said. "Local production only accounts for 20% of demand. Plans are already in place to protect farmers, with the Kenya National Trading Corporation signing contracts with cooperatives to purchase local stocks for government supply."

Kagwe insisted the government does not intend to undermine local production, but said food security required a balance between imports and domestic output.

Experts warn of 'artificial shortage'

Critics, however, say the shortage narrative is being manipulated to benefit politically connected importers. Public policy expert Anthony Mwangi and former chief executive of Kenya Association of Manufacturers argues that unlike maize and wheat, rice imports face few restrictions, leaving farmers vulnerable to market flooding.

"This double standard exposes rice farmers," Mwangi said. "Duty-free import licences are often awarded to unscrupulous traders who profit from tax waivers, while genuine farmers struggle with outdated milling equipment, poor storage and lack of investment."

Mwangi urged the government to invest in long-term measures such as modern milling facilities, better farmer cooperatives and the distribution of new high-yielding and drought-resistant rice varieties. "Imports may offer a quick fix, but they are unsustainable. Boosting local production is the only way to cut the deficit," he said.

Kenya's reliance on imports to cover its rice deficit has persisted for years, with climate-related shocks compounding the problem. While the government frames the current import plan as a temporary measure to ensure affordable supplies, farmers insist that flooding the market with duty-free rice risks discouraging local production altogether. ■

BALANCING GROWTH AND AFFORDABILITY DAHD'S INTERVENTIONS IN INDIA'S DAIRY SECTOR

With over 239 million tonnes of milk produced in 2023-24, India leads the world while strengthning cooperative and private dairy networks.

The Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD), Government of India does not regulate the procurement and sale prices of milk. These are determined by cooperative and private dairies based on factors such as cost of production, stocks of dairy commodities (e.g., white butter, skimmed milk powder), and prevailing domestic and international market conditions. However, DAHD regularly monitors the milk situation in coordination with State Milk Federations and other stakeholders. There is a moderate increase in milk prices as reflected in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for milk. The CPI of milk since 2019 in the month of July is tabulated below:

Month and Year	INDEX	Annual rate of inflation %
July-2019	143.90	0.98
July-2020	153.50	6.67
July-2021	157.50	2.61
July-2022	166.70	5.84
July-2023	180.50	8.28
July-2024	186.00	3.05
July-2025	191.10	2.74

DAHD, GoI has not received any such representation/ report to indicate that increase in prices of packed and unpacked milk and dairy products affected the affordability of nutrients for children.

Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD), Government of India is implementing the following schemes across the country to complement and supplement the efforts of State Governments for development of milk production and milk processing infrastructure:

1. **Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM):** RGM is implemented for development and conservation of indigenous breeds, genetic upgradation of bovine population and enhancement of milk production and productivity of bovines.

2. **National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD):** NPDD is implemented with following 2 components:
   i. Component ''A'' of NPDD focuses on creating/strengthening of infrastructure for quality milk testing equipment as well as primary chilling facilities for State Cooperative Dairy Federations/ District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union/ Self Help Groups (SHGs)/ Milk Producer Companies/ Farmer Producer Organizations.
   ii. Component ''B'' of the NPDD scheme "Dairying through Cooperatives" Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) assisted, aims to increase sale of milk and dairy products by increasing farmer's access to organized market, upgrading dairy processing facilities and marketing infrastructure and enhancing the capacity of producer owned institutions.

3. **Supporting Dairy Cooperatives & Farmer Producer Organisations engaged in dairy activities (SDCFPO):** To assist the State Dairy Cooperative Federations by providing interest subvention (regular 2% and additional 2% on prompt repayment) with respect to soft working capital loan to tide over the crisis on account severely adverse market conditions or natural calamities.

4. **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF):** AHIDF provides interest subvention at the rate 3% per annum for creation/ strengthening of livestock product processing and diversification infrastructure thereby providing greater access for unorganized producer members to organized market.

5. **National Livestock Mission (NLM):** To bring sharp focus on entrepreneurship development and breed improvement in poultry, sheep, goat, piggery and fodder by providing the incentivization to the individual, FPOs, SHGs, Section 8 companies (for entrepreneurship development) and also to the State Government for breed improvement infrastructure

6. **Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP):** to provide for prophylactic vaccination against animal diseases, capacity building of veterinary services, disease surveillance, and strengthening veterinary infrastructure. Also, a new component of Pashu Aushadhi is added under the scheme to ensure availability of affordable generic veterinary medicine across the country through Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samriddhi Kendras (PM-KSK) and Cooperative Societies. This will create an ecosystem for Generic Medicine which will be affordable and of good quality.

These schemes are helping in improving milk productivity of bovines, expanding network of dairy cooperatives, strengthening of dairy infrastructure, working capital requirement, enhancing availability of feed and fodder and providing animal health services. These interventions help to reduce the cost of milk production to enhance income of milk producer from dairy farming and also help to stabilize milk prices.

India ranks number one in milk production globally. During the year 2023-24, 239.3 Million Metric tonnes of milk is produced in the country which is more than 25% of the total world milk production. Milk production in country has increased by 63.56 % during the past 10 years from 146.3 million tonnes in 2014-15 to 239.30 million metric tonnes in 2023-24. Milk production in the country is growing at the annual growth rate of 5.7 % during the past 10 years and whereas, world milk production is growing at 2% per annum. Per capita availability of milk in the country is more than 471 gm/ person/ day during the year 2023-24 against the per capita availability of 322 gram/ person/ day in the world. The milk production in the country is by and large sufficient to meet the demand. ■

AGRICULTURE MINISTER UNVEILS VISIONS FOR MAIZE REVOLUTION AT 11TH INDIA MAIZE SUMMIT

Maize Cultuvation has expanded to 540,000 ha across 24 districts in Uttar Pradesh: Surya Pratap Shahi, Agriculture Minister, Government of Uttar Pradesh

The 11th edition of the India Maize Summit, organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in association with Indian Institute of Maize Research (IIMR), was inaugurated by Hon'ble Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare & Rural Development, Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

In his keynote address, Chouhan emphasized that "Farmers' sewa is our mool mantra," reaffirming the government's commitment to farmer-centric policies. He outlined a multi-pronged strategy to boost maize production, and increase farmer incomes, while ensuring environmental sustainability for future generations.

Speaking at the summit, the minister outlined an ambitious roadmap to transform India's maize sector, emphasising that production can be boosted through better research, farmer education, and improved agricultural practices.

India's maize production has grown from 10 Mn MT in the 1990s to 42.3 Mn MT in recent years, with a projected target of 86 Mn MT by 2047. However, productivity remains at 3.7 MT/Ha—below global standards. States like Bihar and West Bengal are leading in productivity.

Under the 'Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan' (lab to land campaign), the government deployed approximately 11,000 agricultural scientists and officials to 7000-8000 villages, bridging the gap between laboratory research and field application. "We decided that scientists will go to farmers' fields," Chouhan explained.

Later during the day, Uttar Pradesh Minister for Agriculture, Agricultural Education & Research, Surya Pratap Shahi, highlighted the state's transformative maize expansion under the Uttar Pradesh Accelerated Maize Development Program, a strategic five-year initiative launched by the UP government. The program targets maize as a key diversification crop with dedicated budget allocation, achieving remarkable results this season with cultivation expanding to 5,40,000 hectares across 24 districts, verified through satellite surveys rather than manual estimates.

The state's productivity gains are impressive, with current yields reaching 34 quintals per hectare and expectations of exceeding 40 quintals this season. Approximately 15 companies are now engaged in maize processing across Uttar Pradesh, while the government explores value-added opportunities, including the production of fibre and biodegradable alternatives to plastic. The minister emphasised the government's commitment to supporting farmers through minimum support price procurement and addressing quality seed availability challenges, positioning Uttar Pradesh as a significant player in India's maize sector transformation.

On the occasion, Subroto Geed, Co-Chairman of FICCI's Committee on Agriculture and President - South Asia at Corteva Agriscience said Maize is no longer just a crop — it is a national imperative. To unlock its full potential across food security, livestock feed, and biofuel, we must boost productivity per hectare. This demands a strategic push toward cutting-edge technologies, resilient seed systems, and digital agriculture. A collaborative ecosystem — where farmers, government, industry, and researchers work in sync, is key. By equipping farmers with the right tools and access, we can drive a self-sufficient, climate-smart, and globally competitive maize economy.

Dr H S Jat, Director of ICAR-Indian Institute of Maize Research, outlined ambitious productivity goals, stating that maize production must grow at 8-9% annually to achieve 65-70 million tonnes by 2030, supporting India's ethanol blending target of E30. He highlighted that whilst ethanol currently consumes 18-20% of maize production, the sector requires improved starch content in hybrids to enhance ethanol recovery from the current 38% to 42%. The institute is developing high-yielding varieties capable of 10-11 tonnes per hectare in rabi-spring seasons and 7-8 tonnes in kharif, with enhanced fermentable content of 64-65%. He emphasized that the site specification mechanization is required to achieve the desired goals from seed to seed.

Sunjay Vuppuluri, National Head of Food & Agribusiness Strategic Advisory & Research at YES BANK, presented market analysis showing maize as India's fastest-growing cereal crop. Over the past decade, acreage expanded by 31% to 12 million hectares, while production surged 75% to exceed 40 million tonnes. However, a critical demand-supply gap is emerging, with consumption growing at an annual rate of 6.7% compared to production growth of 5.8%. Poultry feed remains the most significant consumer at 51%, followed by ethanol at 18%, highlighting the sector's strategic importance for food and energy security.

The Minister also felicitated the progressive farmers for their exceptional contribution towards maize cultivation. ■

MINISTER SHIVRAJ SINGH CHAUHAN ORDERS LARGE-SCALE RAIDS AND FIELD SAMPLING TO CURB SPURIOUS FARM INPUTS

Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development, Shivraj Singh Chauhan, has taken a tough stance against the sale of spurious fertilizers, seeds, and pesticides in the country. Chairing a high-level meeting with senior officials of the Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) at Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi, the Minister directed strict and immediate action against those involved in the sale of fake agricultural inputs.

Chauhan emphasized that crop losses due to spurious products must be treated with utmost seriousness by officials to prevent financial and livelihood damage to farmers. He instructed officials to conduct large-scale raids, collect samples from fields, and take decisive measures against violators.

The Minister expressed deep concern over rising complaints from multiple districts where farmers reported that pesticides and fertilizers being applied in fields showed no impact. Sharing his recent field visit, Chauhan said he personally witnessed soybean crops completely destroyed due to substandard pesticides. Hundreds of farmers had gathered at the site and raised grievances. "Those selling such low-quality or counterfeit products must not be spared. The harshest possible action should be taken against them," he stressed.

Chauhan described spurious fertilizers, seeds, and pesticides as a "curse for farmers" and assured that those exploiting farmers will face strong punitive measures, including sealing of factories and shops found guilty of malpractice. He further directed agriculture officials to work in coordination with state governments, conduct surprise inspections on a large scale, and ensure failed product samples lead to immediate legal action.

Reiterating his commitment to farmers' welfare, Chauhan said, "If something wrong is happening, it is our duty to act firmly in the interest of farmers. Farmers' grievances must be addressed promptly, and I will personally review the status of complaints." He also instructed officials to increase farmer awareness campaigns to prevent them from falling victim to spurious products.

The Minister said that awareness efforts will also be strengthened under the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan to protect farmers from losses. In addition, Chauhan directed teams to verify the actual benefits of government subsidies provided for polyhouses, greenhouses, and mechanization. He stressed that subsidies must reach genuine farmers in a timely manner and be regularly monitored for effective implementation. ■

FARMERS FROM ACROSS INDIA THANK PRIME MINISTER MODI FOR HIS BOLD DECISION IN TRADE AGREEMENTS DESPITE FOREIGN PRESSURE

Farmers describe Prime Minister Narendra Modi's and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's leadership as unparalleled.

Leaders of all major farmers' organisations said they wholeheartedly welcome and fully support the Prime Minister's far-sighted, farmer-friendly stance.

A large gathering of farmer organisation leaders and cultivators from across the country met Union Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, and Rural Development, Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at Subrahmanyam Hall, Pusa Campus, New Delhi, to express gratitude and support for the central government's decisive action to protect farmers' interests. The meeting was also attended by Union Minister of State for Agriculture Bhagirath Choudhary, Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi, ICAR Director General Dr. M.L. Jat, and representatives from various states.

On this occasion, several representatives of farmer organisations spoke in unison while expressing their gratitude towards the Prime Minister for this farmer-friendly historic decision.

Bharatiya Kisan Sangh representatives Harpaal Singh Dagar, Dharmendra Malik, Dharmendra Choudhary, Virendra Lohan, Kirpa Singh Natthuwala, Kuldeep Singh Bajidpur, Baba Rajendra Singh Malik, Tarunesh Sharma, K P Singh Thainua, Acharya Ramgopal Walia, Vinod Anand, Rajkumar Balyan, Ashok Balyan, Vipichandra R Patel, Rampal Jat, Krishnaveer Choudhary, Bhupendra Singh Mann, and K. Sai Reddy thanked the Prime Minister for his bold steps.

Dharmendra Choudhary, National President of the Indian Farmer Chaudhary Charan Singh Organisation, said: "Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made an unwavering statement in the interest of farmers, livestock rearers, and fishermen. India will not compromise their interests at any cost. This announcement not only brings relief to millions of food providers but also strengthens the self-reliance of agriculture and rural India. We wholeheartedly welcome and support this far-sighted and farmer-friendly vision, which will inspire future generations."

Virendra Lohan of the Chhattisgarh Youth Progressive Farmers' Association said: "The courageous decision not to allow American companies into our agriculture and dairy sectors is echoing in every field, village, and cowshed. You have shown that the Indian farmer is not just a food provider but the very soul of this nation, a soul no foreign power can ever control. You have assured us that as long as the current leadership is in Delhi, no force can enslave India's farmers. I also thank Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan for his action against fake fertilisers, seeds, and pesticides."

Dharmendra Malik said: "We thank the Prime Minister and the Agriculture Minister and appeal to you to stand firm on your stance and not change our policies on free trade. We will always stand by you."

Kirpa Singh Natthuwala said: "We were very worried about American pressure on the agreement. If it had gone through, farmers would have been ruined. But the PM and Agriculture Minister took a tough decision in the farmers' interests. This has filled farmers in Punjab and across the nation with pride. I tell all citizens, farmers, and traders—whatever America says, it will not harm us. Agriculture Minister, congratulations, the farmers of the nation stand with you."

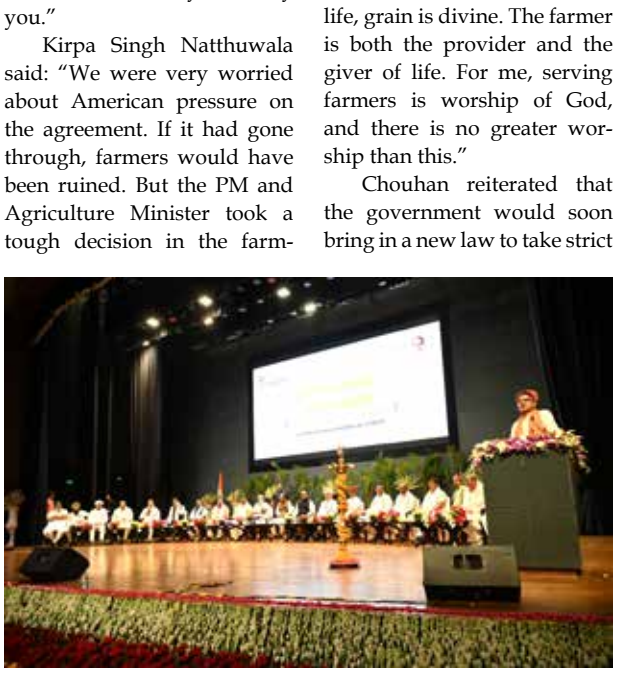
Kuldeep Singh Bajidpur from Punjab praised the PM and Agriculture Minister, saying that the government is taking many steps for farmers' welfare, which are changing their lives. He expressed hope that stronger steps would follow, so farmers would not have to look towards countries like the US.

In his address, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the gathering represented a miniature India. "I salute you—my farmer brothers here—who work day and night to feed not just India but the world. Grain is life, grain is divine. The farmer is both the provider and the giver of life. For me, serving farmers is worship of God, and there is no greater worship than this."

Chouhan reiterated that the government would soon bring in a new law to take strict action against those producing fake fertilisers and chemicals. He said various schemes for farmers' welfare are being advanced on priority. In a successful story, under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, digital payment of insurance amounts was made to farmers from Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan.

Highlighting the PM's 'Nation First' resolve, Chouhan said the cancellation of the Indus Waters Treaty after the dastardly Pahalgam terror attack was a historic decision, for which the whole nation is grateful to the Prime Minister.

The Union Agriculture Minister emphasised that the PM has always taken strong, bold, nation-centric decisions, for which the country will forever remain indebted. ■



UP: AGRA SET TO BECOME GLOBAL HUB FOR TUBER CROP INNOVATIONS WITH CM YOGI'S INTERNATIONAL POTATO CENTRE PLANS

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision to make Uttar Pradesh a global agricultural innovation hub is becoming a reality. A major step in this direction was taken when the establishment of the South Asia Regional Centre (CSARC) of the International Potato Centre (CIP) was cleared, focusing on world-class research on tuber crops like potatoes and sweet potatoes. The move will also serve to bolster agricultural innovations in the state and make Agra a global centre for tuber crop advancements.

A delegation from CIP, led by its Director General Dr. Simon Heck, met with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to discuss the progress of the project. The delegation included CIP's Country Manager Neeraj Sharma, Senior Advisor Raman Abrol, and South Asia Head of IRRI (International Rice Research Institute) Sudhanshu Singh. The meeting was an important milestone, as it set the stage for the construction of the CSARC in Siganva village, Agra.

During the meeting, CM Yogi suggested that until the construction of the center is completed, farmers could be trained through existing agricultural science centers in the state using CIP's advanced techniques. He also recommended that research on other tuber crops, in addition to potatoes, should be prioritized to improve production and open new export opportunities.

The proposed CSARC will play a pivotal role in increasing farmers' incomes, enhancing the processing industry, and contributing to Uttar Pradesh's position as an international agricultural hub. CM Yogi highlighted that Uttar Pradesh is the largest potato-producing state in India, contributing 35% of the country's total potato output. The state produces 244 lakh metric tons of potatoes annually across 6.96 lakh hectares, with Agra alone cultivating potatoes across 76,000 hectares.

Despite such vast production, there has been a shortage of quality seeds and processing varieties—issues that the CSARC aims to address.

In June 2025, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved an allocation of Rs.111.50 crore for the establishment of this center. The CSARC will focus on seed innovation, apical rooted cutting, germplasm conservation, and value chain expansion, setting a global model for research and development. The center will collaborate with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), state agricultural universities, and private enterprises to provide world-class technologies and training to farmers.

Established in Peru in 1971, the CIP has been conducting agricultural research in over 20 countries for decades. With 50 years of experience in India, CIP has made significant contributions to the development of climate-resilient varieties, pest management, and nutritious crops. The CSARC's establishment in Uttar Pradesh will strengthen the state's central role in global seed and processing networks.

On July 28, 2025, the Government of India and CIP signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) regarding the new centre. Dr. Simon Heck expressed gratitude to CM Yogi for his support and emphasized that the CSARC would not only boost farmers' incomes but also turn Uttar Pradesh into the potato innovation hub of South Asia. ■

ICAR-CPRI LAUNCHES KUFRI CHIP BHARAT-1: INDIA'S NEW HIGH-YIELD POTATO VARIETY FOR CHIP PROCESSING

A significant step forward for India's agricultural sector and food processing industry was marked by the recent release of Kufri Chip Bharat-1, a new potato processing variety. This important innovation was unveiled by Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the Hon'ble Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development, on the occasion of ICAR Foundation Day in New Delhi.

The event was attended by other key dignitaries, including Bhagirath Choudhary, Union Minister of State for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Dr. Mangi Lal Jat, Secretary (DARE) & Director General (ICAR), and Dr. Brajesh Singh, Director, ICAR-CPRI Shimla.

Potatoes hold a crucial position in global food security, being the world's third most important food crop, after rice and wheat. India is a major player in potato production, ranking as the second largest producer globally after China, cultivating approximately 60 million tonnes from an area of 2.2 million hectares, with an average productivity of 24 tonnes per hectare.

The ICAR-Central Potato Research Institute (CPRI) in Shimla has been instrumental in this success, with its developed potato varieties accounting for over 94% of the country's total potato cultivation area. These varieties have also gained popularity beyond India's borders. ■

AGRITECH PLATFORM MARKET IS PROJECTED TO SURPASS $41.6 BILLION BY 2032

The Agritech Platform Market is set to grow from its current market value of more than $13.1 Billion to over $41.6 Billion by 2034; as reported in the latest study by Global Market Insights, Inc.

The increasing funding and development in the agricultural sector

With advancements in technology and growing awareness of sustainability, agriculture is undergoing a transformation. For instance, in March 2024, Elevate Foods, an agritech company headquartered in Singapore and Mumbai, secured $525,000 in its seed funding round. Wavemaker Impact (WMi), a climate-focused investor based in Singapore, spearheaded the funding.

Agritech platforms leverage innovations, such as IoT, AI, and data analytics, to optimize farming practices, improve crop yields, and enhance resource efficiency. Moreover, rising concerns about food security and environmental sustainability drive the adoption of agritech solutions. These platforms offer farmers real-time insights, access to market information, and tools for precision agriculture. As a result, the Agritech Platform Market is witnessing significant growth, driven by the rising investment and innovation in the agricultural industry.

The overall Agritech Platform Industry is classified based on the component, application, and region.

The services segment will undergo rigorous development from 2024 to 2032. These components encompass a wide range of offerings, including data analytics, precision agriculture tools, supply chain management solutions, and market intelligence platforms. Farmers and agricultural stakeholders rely on these services to optimize crop management, improve productivity, and make informed decisions. Additionally, agritech platforms facilitate access to financial services, advisory support, and training programs, further enhancing their value proposition. As the agriculture industry continues to embrace digitalization and technology-driven solutions, the demand for service components within the Agritech Platform Market remains strong, driving innovation and growth in the sector.

Agritech platform market share from the livestock monitoring segment will register a commendable expansion from 2024 to 2032. These innovative technologies utilize sensors, IoT devices, and data analytics to track livestock health, behavior, and productivity. Farmers and ranchers rely on these platforms to remotely monitor animal welfare, detect health issues early, and optimize feeding and breeding practices. Livestock monitoring solutions also enhance operational efficiency, reduce labor costs, and minimize environmental impact. As the demand for sustainable and efficient livestock management practices grows, so does the need for advanced monitoring solutions in the Agritech Platform Market. These technologies play a crucial role in ensuring the well-being and productivity of livestock while driving innovation in the agricultural industry.

Asia Pacific agritech platform industry will showcase a commendable CAGR from 2024 to 2032. With a significant portion of the global agricultural sector in Asia-Pacific countries, there is a growing need for innovative solutions to address challenges such as land scarcity, water shortages, and labor inefficiencies. Agritech platforms offer farmers in the region access to advanced technologies such as precision agriculture, IoT-enabled farming equipment, and data analytics tools, enabling them to improve productivity and sustainability.

Additionally, government initiatives promoting digitalization in agriculture further drive the adoption of agritech solutions in the Asia-Pacific region, making it a key market for growth and innovation in the Agritech Platform Market. For instance, in August 2023, Arya.ag, an agritech platform, revealed a strategic collaboration with The Soybean Processors Association of India (SOPA) aimed at improving and optimizing crop monitoring for soybeans across 51 districts. ■

DIGITAL PUBLIC GOODS FOR DIGITAL AGRICULTURE AND INNOVATION
KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM LLDC3

At the recent Third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3), a dedicated side event offered a timely opportunity to reflect on how Digital Public Goods (DPGs) are unlocking transformation in agri-food systems, particularly in countries facing structural constraints such as limited connectivity, exposure to climate shocks, and reduced access to global markets.

Organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the event brought together high-level representatives from member states and partner organizations to exchange insights on how inclusive, open digital ecosystems can help bridge digital divides and support sustainable rural development.

In her opening remarks, Xiangjun Yao, Director of FAO's Office of Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries (OSL), emphasized the importance of digital agriculture in advancing FAO's mandate:

"Among our key Programme Priority Areas is 'Digital Agriculture,' which strengthens FAO's role in championing digital technologies for agrifood systems transformation. Digital agriculture enables farmers and policymakers to access real-time, actionable information, improve access to markets, credit, and insurance, adopt climate-smart practices, and enhance digitalization."

Government ministers and technical experts shared national and sectoral perspectives on how DPGs can be integrated into strategies for agrifood systems transformation:

- H.E. Charyyar Chetiyev, Minister of Agriculture, Turkmenistan, outlined how the country is leveraging open-source platforms and data tools to tackle challenges common to rural landlocked areas, including limited market access, infrastructure gaps, and climate vulnerability.
- H.E. Ibrokhim Abdurakhmonov, Minister for Agriculture, Uzbekistan, presented national strategies to integrate DPGs into climate-smart and data-driven agriculture, ensuring solutions are tailored to diverse agro-ecological zones and accessible to all.
- Deodat Maharaj, Managing Director of the UN Technology Bank, stressed the importance of strategic partnerships and financing to scale certified DPGs and create interoperable digital ecosystems that support inclusive digital trade.
- Omar Peñarubia, FAO Fishery Officer, emphasized how open data platforms and AI-enabled monitoring can improve traceability, decision-making and sustainability in fisheries, particularly in inland and aquaculture systems in LLDCs.

The discussion highlighted concrete ways in which DPGs are being applied across regions:

- Real-time data access is enabling farmers to receive weather alerts, market prices, and agronomic advice, improving decision-making at the farm level.
- Open platforms such as WaPOR, Open Foris, and the Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform are powering evidence-based policymaking and land management.
- Mobile and cloud-based services are expanding access to innovation for smallholders, women and youth, bridging rural–urban divides.
- Locally adapted solutions are being piloted through initiatives such as the Digital Villages Initiative and the Global Digital Agriculture Innovation Hubs, ensuring that innovation is context-specific and scalable.

The session reaffirmed that digital transformation is not about technology alone, but about fostering inclusion, resilience and collaboration in the face of persistent global challenges.

Join the e-Agriculture Community of Practice – an open forum for all those interested in sharing knowledge, co-creating solutions and scaling impactful digital innovation across agrifood systems. ■

NATIONAL POLICY TO PROMOTE GLOBALLY IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE SYSTEMS (GIAHS) SITES IN INDIA

As informed by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), India currently hosts three Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS): the Koraput region in Odisha, the Kuttanad farming system in Kerala, and the Saffron Heritage of Kashmir. The Koraput region is renowned for its subsistence paddy cultivation, predominantly on highland slopes, and is home to a vast diversity of paddy landraces and farmer-developed varieties. It also harbors rich genetic resources of medicinal plants, deeply interwoven with the indigenous tribal communities and their traditional knowledge systems. The Kuttanad system in Kerala stands out as a unique below-sea-level farming landscape, comprising wetlands for paddy cultivation and fish catching, garden lands for coconut and food crops, and inland water bodies for fishing and shell collection. Meanwhile, the Saffron Park of Kashmir represents a rich agro-pastoral system characterized by traditional saffron cultivation, intercropping, and the use of organic farming practices, all of which contribute to maintaining local biodiversity and soil health. GIAHS is an FAO programme. Schemes and policies of Government of India support these sites. As reported by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, for economic revival of saffron cultivation in Jammu and Kashmir has been supported under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).

Government of Odisha reported that proactive steps have been taken on conserving its biodiversity, preserving landraces of different crops and branding in Koraput. The programme also incorporates community seed banks and organic farming methods, focussing on revival of neglected crops and forgotten foods.

As reported by the Government of Kerala, two works for the development of infrastructure in the paddy sector in the Kuttanad region are included under the current year's RKVY-DPR projects. These include: (i) 'Haritam Haripad'—infrastructural development works of various Padasekharams in Alappuzha District. (ii) Assistance to Research on 'Ecological Utilization of Water Hyacinth (Eichhornia crassipes) in Kuttanad'.

This information was given by Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Ramnath Thakur in a written reply in Lok Sabha.

INDIA UPPED DAIRY PRODUCTS EXPORTS BY 80 PC IN FY25 BUSINESS

— Sangeetha G

While dairy imports from the US remains a major stalemate in a trade deal with the US, India, the largest producer of milk, has been growing its dairy exports, and it saw 80% growth in FY25.

India is the world's top milk producer with a 24% share of global production. However, its contribution to the global dairy trade remains low at 0.25% due to high domestic consumption.

India has embarked on its journey to becoming a significant exporter in the global dairy market. In FY25, India exported 113,350.4 metric tonnes of dairy products worth $492.9 million, up 77.9% in volume and 80.6% in value.

Butter and clarified butter showed 142% growth in exports to 67,565 tonnes against 27,837 tonnes in the previous year. Milk and cream also have been moving up, though at a slower pace than butter and ghee. However, milk powder exports at 9,700 tonnes are considerably down compared to FY22 levels of 49,654 tonnes, finds India Ratings and Research.

Products such as fermented milk also rose in exports. Major export destinations for Indian milk products include the United Arab Emirates, Bangladesh, United States of America, Saudi Arabia, and Bhutan.

Major importers of milk products are Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, Mother Dairy, The Punjab State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation, Bihar State Milk Co-operative Federation, and Britannia.

Ind-Ra projects India's milk output to grow 5% y-o-y in the near to medium term. From 251 million tonnes in FY25, production can go up to 263 million tonnes in FY26 and 277 million tonnes in FY27. Milk production stood at 198 million tonnes in FY20. India's per capita milk availability will grow by 4% and touch 530 grams per day by FY27.

About the Author

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