

National Conference on Building Sustainable Agricultural Startups concluded at ICAR-NAARM

November 14, 2024

ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Management (NAARM), in collaboration with Association for Innovation Development of Agriculture in India (a-IDEA), organized a two-day National Conference on "Building Sustainable Agricultural Start-ups in India," held on November 12-13, 2024, was concluded. Dr. S. Senthil Vinayagam, CEO, a-IDEA & Organizing Secretary of the conference initially welcomed the gathering and gave an overview about the conference and its objectives and thanked the major sponsors for this conference viz., NABARD (Diamond Sponsor), SBI (Platinum Sponsor) and ITCMAARS (Platinum Sponsor).

Dr. Himanshu Pathak, Secretary (DARE) & Director General (ICAR), New Delhi, delivered the keynote address through online, emphasized the importance of startups creating region-specific solutions to meet the diverse needs of end stakeholders. He also underscored the necessity for a clear roadmap to effectively address these requirements.

Dr. M. Prabhakar Rao, Chairman of Nuziveedu Seeds Ltd, Hyderabad, and Chief Guest at the inaugural session, highlighted that "Start-ups should prioritize affordable, innovative, and need-based solutions." Meanwhile, during the Chief Guest of valedictory session, Shri S. Sivakumar, Group Head – Agri & IT Business at ITC Limited, Hyderabad, emphasized the crucial role of innovative digital solutions in addressing fundamental challenges in agriculture and related sciences.

Dr. Ch. Srinivasa Rao, Director, ICAR-NAARM and President, a-IDEA, emphasized in his presidential address the importance of creating tailored solutions to achieve sustainable food security. He noted that there is an urgent need to establish an agri start-up platform, build a robust network of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and initiate a strong digital platform through a-IDEA by setting an example for other Technology Business Incubators.

Dr. Seema Jaggi, Assistant Director General (HRD), ICAR, New Delhi, Guest of Honour, highlighted the importance, relevance, and timeliness of the conference theme and stressed the need to focus on skill enhancement, capacity building, value-added courses, and competency-based training to achieve sustainability.

The event seen five panel discussions with eminent personalities on important thematic areas within agricultural start-up ecosystem. Also seen parallelly the networking session arranged for participating start-ups to pitch before FPOs to showcase their products/ technologies/ services. Further, more than seventy-three startups displayed their technologies / products in stalls to the visitors.

A policy paper on "Agriculture Sector Contributions in Achieving Net Zero Emission by 2070" and a-IDEA Newsletter was also released by the dignitaries during the conference.

During the deliberation, Dr. S. B. Barbuddhe, Director, ICAR-NMRI; Dr. R. Meenakshi Sundaram Director, ICAR-IIRR; Dr. Tara Sathyavathi, Director, ICAR- IIMR; Dr. Sheshu Madhav, Director, NIRCA; Dr. V. Padmaraju, Former VC, ANGRAU; Dr. G.Venkateshwarlu, Former JD; Dr. V.Rama Subramaniam, Actg. JD, ICAR-NAARM; Dr. Praveen Mallik, CEO, AgrInnovate; Dr. Satish, ED, Nuziveedu Seeds Ltd.; Sh. Asha Kiran, Progressive Farmer & RAC Member; officials of APEDA

were also present during the two days conference. Awards were given for Best Paper and Poster Presentation, Best stall/ Exhibitor and Sponsor awards were distributed during the conference.

A total of more than 1000 participants from 13 states, 45 FPOs, ABI's of 6 ICAR Institutes, 3 nationalised banks viz., SBI, BOB & UBI, participants from IIT Madras under RuTAG 2.0, ICAR-CTCRI, ICAR-IIOR, ICAR-IIMR, ICAR-CSWRI, ICAR-NMRI, 421 students, 225 farmers and 100+FPOs / farmers, agriculture experts, government officials, bankers, academicians, heads and scientists of ICAR-NAARM, ICAR officials, students, investors, start-ups, industries, incubators, delegates, farmers from adopted villages and other influential players within the start-up ecosystem participated in the two-day conference. The programme was ended with the vote of thanks to the dignitaries by Dr. Vijay Avinashilingam, N.A., Organizing secretary of the conference.

