



Seed Connect

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A monthly newsletter of Federation of Seed Industry of India

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Crop Health Management - An Indian Story, a book released by South Asia Biotechnology Centre (SABC) - a not-for-profit organization, presents a current scenario and prospects about crop health management in India. It covers various aspects of farming practices such as integrated pest management (IPM), Indian pesticide industry, biocontrol, organic farming, and other issues.

The book aims to accelerate sustainable agriculture and food production in India. Its objective is to create awareness of the challenges that Indian agriculture is facing especially in respect to abiotic and biotic stresses that crops are subjected to. Propagating awareness for Integrated pest and nutrient management that includes responsible use of agrochemicals, biopesticides, agronomic, biological, biotechnological, preventive, and legal approaches. Preventing misuse of pesticides and encouraging their responsible use, demystifying notions of pesticides association with safety and environment. Challenges and opportunities in agrochemical sector in India and Pesticide Management Bill 2020 and its need for a balanced regulatory framework to encourage IPM based crop health management.

The book launch was attended by Hon'ble Union Minister for Road, Transport and Highways and Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Shri Nitin Gadkari and Hon'ble Shri Kamal Patel, Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of Madhya Pradesh. Shri Nitin Gadkari said that there is a need for developing disease free planting material through biotechnological approaches including tissue culture. As this approach becomes more common, we might be able to produce disease-free planting material on cost effective basis for many crops.

The foreword from Dr T Mohapatra, Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Secretary Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare highlighted that agricultural science in the event of increasing population aims at increasing food production. As agriculture becomes increasingly intensive, farmers are faced with the burden of generating higher yields while balancing the financial and environmental stresses. The products of scientific endeavours, such as fertilizers and pesticides, help cost-effectively improve production. However, at the same time, sustainable

agriculture needs to manage environmental costs, such as minimizing pollution, habitat loss, supporting landscape, and protecting wildlife.

We believe that the book will serve as a guide book for the stakeholders and help farmers on adopting sustainable agriculture as a norm. We have also covered the news around several important developments on agriculture across India, globally and in the area of research. We hope you find it a good read!



Shivendra Bajaj
Executive Director
Federation of Seed Industry of India

News from India

[India's economy stable, all sectors looking up, says PM Modi](#)

(The Hindu)

Pitching India's resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic as a signal of its inherent strengths, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said India's economy has been stable and all sectors are now looking up, as he invited global money managers looking for "returns with reliability" to invest in the country. "Today, each sector in India is looking up — manufacturing, infrastructure, technology, agriculture, finance, and even social sectors like health and education... India is the place to be if you want returns with reliability, demand with democracy, stability with sustainability, and growth with a green approach," the PM said.

[Israel Agro-Tech To Help India Double Farmers' Income by 2022: Envoy](#)

(NDTV)

Israel - India's strategic partner, especially in agriculture - will play a key role in helping realise Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to double farmers' income by 2022, said the country's Ambassador to India Dr Ron Malka. "The Indo-Israel centres of excellence for agriculture - where Israeli agricultural technology is used extensively to improve production - would play a vital role in achieving greater income for farmers," said Dr Malka after laying the foundation of 'Indo-Israeli Centre of Excellence for Vegetables Protected Cultivation' in Guwahati in presence of Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal. The ₹ 10.33-crore project is expected to bolster agricultural activities in Assam by giving state farmers exposure to latest Israeli technology that will help them maximize their production and income.

[Govt. allows ICRISAT to use drones for agricultural research](#)

(The Hindu)

The Government of India has allowed Hyderabad-based International Crops Research Institute (ICRISAT) to use drones for agricultural research activities. Granting the institute a "conditional" exemption from some of the rules applicable for deployment of drones, the Civil Aviation Ministry said

the institute can gather data for agricultural research activities within the ICRISAT research field using remotely piloted aircraft systems or drones. The exemption is valid for six months from the date of issuance of permission or until the full operationalisation of Digital Sky Platform (Phase-1), whichever is earlier, the release said, adding that the exemption will be valid only if all conditions and limitations are strictly adhered to.

[Agriculture reforms will connect farmers directly to market, send middlemen out of system: PM](#)

(The Times of India)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the agriculture reforms introduced by the government will connect farmers directly to the market and send “send middlemen out of the system”. “The agriculture reforms will give direct benefits to farmers. They will be directly connected to the market and the middleman will be out of the system.

[Bountiful monsoon rains set to boost India’s agriculture growth](#)

(The Print)

India’s farm sector growth will likely be the highest in three years as better-than-normal rain helped farmers to boost output of crops, including rice, sugar cane and soybeans. Agriculture growth in the year that began in April will surpass the 4% level achieved in 2019-20, said Atul Chaturvedi, president of the Solvent Extractors’ Association of India. That would be the highest since 2017-18 when the sector grew by 5.9%, according to government data.

[Rajasthan assembly passes 3 farm bills](#)

(Hindustan Times)

The Rajasthan assembly passed three bills by a voice vote after an eight-hour debate to counter new farms laws cleared by Parliament, following in the footsteps of the Congress-ruled Punjab and Chhattisgarh. The bills fail to assure the minimum support price (MSP) for major crops sold at agriculture produce mandis or bought by private players, contrary to Punjab’s bills. The MSP assurance was provided for contract farming. That too for just seven crops. However, like Punjab, Rajasthan provides for three to seven years of imprisonment for harassing farmers.

[‘India startups seek high-tech solutions to colossal food waste](#)

(The Times of India)

Startups and venture capital are pouring into what might seem an unlikely place: India’s vast, outdated agriculture industry. Seizing on controversial new deregulation, entrepreneurs are selling farmers apps to connect them to big buyers nationwide and using artificial intelligence (AI) to improve the rickety supply chains that lose one-fourth of India’s produce to wastage.

[‘Trust factor a big plus for India in export of farm machinery’](#)

(The Hindu)

Indian firms exporting farm machinery are getting more orders from Europe as Italy and some East European countries known for their farm equipment industry are affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, said Rakesh Shah of Kolkata-based Nipha Exports Private, leading exporter of farm equipment. Though Thailand and Brazil are major competitors in farm machinery exports front, Indian firms are trusted by European countries. Similarly, OEM products from India have good market in Europe, Shah said. EEPIC India’s Chairman Mahesh Desai said that India has been a net exporter in the farm machinery sector for several years. “India is a world leader in exporting solar irrigation pumps. India being largely an agrarian economy, mechanisation has a significant potential,” Desai said. But India still has a very small pie of global farmer equipment export market. India’s export of agricultural machinery during 2019-20 was \$1,024.58 million with a positive trade balance of \$708.3 million, said Minister of Statement of Agriculture, Parshottam Rupala.

[CCI chief assures Agriculture Minister of buying all cotton produce, MSP for ryots](#)

(The New Indian Express)

Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) Chairman Pradeep Kumar Agarwal assured Agriculture Minister Singireddy Niranjan Reddy that the CCI would purchase the entire cotton produced in Telangana by paying Minimum Support Price (MSP) of `5,825 per quintal. The CCI Chairman gave the assurance

when the Minister met him in Mumbai during his four-day visit to Maharashtra. During the meeting, Niranjana Reddy requested the CCI Chairman to relax the norms, especially regarding the moisture content, while purchasing the cotton.

[Soon, price info system for farmers](#)

(Hindustan Times)

The Union government will set up a price information and market intelligence system for farm produce to enable price discovery for farmers in accordance with provisions of a set of laws enacted to liberalise agricultural trade. "The government will employ the services of a central government economic organisation to develop this price information and market intelligence system for farmers," a government official said, requesting anonymity.

[Farm fire cases in Punjab highest in four years](#)

(Tribune India)

Despite 8,000 nodal officers being appointed by the government, dedicated call centre teams and over 70,000 more machines for in situ paddy straw management, stubble burning cases are the highest in Punjab as compared to the previous three years. Farm fires continue to contribute to the poor air quality index with the number rising to over 27,000 this year. At 2,799, the stubble burning incidents on Friday were the second highest for a day in the ongoing season. As many as 2,989 cases were recorded on Wednesday. In the Malwa belt, Sangrur, Patiala, Ferozepur, Bathinda, Mansa and Barnala recorded a high number of cases, meaning thereby the air quality index, which was moderate in the state, is now poor in a majority of the districts.

[Cutting-edge technologies needed in agriculture: Vice President](#)

(KNN India)

The Vice President of India M. Venkaiah Naidu called for multipronged efforts to make Indian agriculture sustainable and profitable, while inaugurating the 120th birth anniversary celebrations of Acharya NG Ranga organised by Ranga Trust. The Vice President called for bringing effective synergy between traditional knowledge and state-of-art technology. He said that there was a need to popularize local innovations so that they can be replicated in other areas. Referring to the new wave of technology in agriculture, he said it was more than just the shift to mechanization like the use of tractors. While basic mechanization should further expand to all corners of the country, we should not lose sight of the cutting-edge technologies that are changing the way agriculture is practiced the world over, he added.

[Punjab approves wheat seed subsidy policy](#)

(The Times of India)

Punjab has approved wheat seed subsidy policy-2020-21 to provide certified wheat seed at 50% subsidy to farmers in the rabi season. Under the policy, a total of 1.85 lakh quintals of certified seed, with Rs 18.50 crore worth of subsidy, will directly benefit approximately 2.5 lakh farmers.

[Contract Farming: A Boon or Bane?](#)

(KrishiJagran)

AgriTech companies are coming up steadily with various business models like the margin-based models, subscription-based models, and transaction-based models. The AgriTech players take forward data-led decisions to accurately predict and work towards the supply and demand of inputs, and various other factors, thereby strengthening the path to scalability in the segment. The space is looking towards development of a robust ecosystem, strong technology and investments on research and development, cross-country collaboration for innovation ideas, and a favourable regulatory environment. Today, the Indian AgriTech market potential penetration is steady at 1%. Since there is so much additional potential for investment within the multifold segments of the value chain, there are several different ways in which AgriTech will be able to support the pain points within farming processes, enabling a structural change and sturdiness within the landscape.

[How women from Hazaribagh are sparking a green revolution in the heart of India's coal state](#)

(YourStory)

Men continued to be the decision-makers regarding agriculture. This led PRADAN, a non-profit organisation working towards eradicating endemic poverty in rural India, and an agri company, to initiate a project titled - Empowering women through Financial Inclusion and Direct Seeded Rice (DSR) cultivation in Jharkhand and Bihar. The programme has helped 10 women agripreneurs in Hazaribagh to earn an additional Rs 5,000 – Rs 8,000 per season by centrally raising seedlings of tomato, brinjal, and chilli. Moreover, the programme grooms women farmers to become community service providers and community resource persons, who further offer training in Direct Seed Rice and other sustainable technologies to women and men farmers.

News from Around the World

[Japan to keep tariffs on sensitive farm product imports under RCEP deal](#)

(Japan Times)

The government is set to maintain tariffs on key farm products, including rice and wheat, under a large-scale regional trade deal between Asia-Pacific countries including China. Under the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), Japan will retain tariffs on its five sensitive agricultural product categories — rice, beef and pork, wheat, dairy and sugar — to protect domestic farmers from a potential influx of cheap imports, the draft confirms.

[U.S. Department of Agriculture launches AskUSDA](#)

(WEAU News)

The deadlines continue to be many for farmers, and voting for Farm Service Agency county committees is nearing. Eligible farmers have until Dec. 7 to return to local FSA offices – or have postmarked – ballots that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has mailed to them. County committees have three to 11 members, and the committees provide input into federal agriculture programs. Farmers eligible to vote in the election must be participants or cooperators in an FSA program. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has launched a new AskUSDA contact center in an attempt to streamline public contacts with the department. USDA officials said last week in a press release that people with questions concerning programs have had to navigate many telephone numbers and Web sites, but that the new system should streamline those contacts. The program's telephone number is 833-One-USDA, which operates 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. during weekdays. Information also is available at the ask.usda.gov Web site; that site also will have chat agents available 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Questions also may be e-mailed to askusda@usda.gov.

[China completes farm product quarantine protocols of U.S. trade deal: Global Times](#)

(Reuters)

China's customs authority has completed the quarantine protocols agreed under the Phase one trade deal between China and the United States allowing for the imports of various farm goods. All 37 tasks outlined in the deal have been completed on time, said the report, citing Zhao Zenglian, director of the animal and plant quarantine department under the General Administration of Customs. They include allowing the import of U.S. poultry, barley and pet food.

[Hawaii Can Learn A Lot From Japan About Farming And Food Production](#)

(Civil Beat)

What I have learned is this: We in Hawaii are at a point in our history where we could use some help, and there are all kinds of good ideas out there waiting for us, like nourishing fruits that are ripe and ready and waiting to be harvested. Japan has much to offer us when it comes to agriculture. Its focus on farming and local production is not just a matter of pride — it's ingrained, dating back to their Jomon period, which coincidentally started at the same time as agriculture itself, about 12,000 years ago. Just because we started later does not mean we have to lag behind.

[Bill that could help Black farmers reclaim millions of acres 'a step in the right direction'](#)

(ABC News)

There was a time when Black-owned farms were booming -- before those farmers were stripped of tens of thousands of acres because of racist policies. Today, most rural land in the U.S. is owned by white people. But now, finally, a new piece of legislation could help African Americans reclaim some

of that acreage. The Justice for Black Farmers Act, introduced earlier this month by Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., would allow Black farmers to reclaim up to 160 acres each, at no charge, through a Department of Agriculture system of land grants.

[Australian agricultural overseas trade boom driven by economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s](#)

(ABC)

While the history was grim, a group of trade officials from the Australian Government could see a brighter future with Japan. "It was such a complementary economy to Australia's, and they were industrialising most rapidly by global standards," Professor Anderson said. "They were needing things like iron ore and coal and so they were interested in signing long-term contracts with mining companies in Australia and also accessing our wool because the textile industry was important at that stage in Japan, and accessing food as well. "It was illegal for Australian officials to engage with Japanese officials in the 1950s.

[Study puts focus on farm-related deaths](#)

(Farm Weekly)

ABOUT 78 lives are lost each year on Australian farms, with children accounting for 15 per cent of these deaths. These results from a study called 'Protecting the future: Fatal incidents on Australian farms involving children (2001-2019)' were presented at the recent Farmsafe Virtual Conference by Ag Health Australia farm safety research officer Kerri-Lynn Peachey. With farms unique in that the work and home environments intersect, the purpose of the study was to describe "non-intentional injury deaths" of children 14 years and under in Australia from 2001 to 2019 and the "casual agents" associated with these fatalities.

[Ethical problems may arise with farm robotics, study says](#)

(Farming UK)

Researchers have raised possible ethical and social challenges in using robots in agriculture as the industry becomes increasingly automated. With robotics poised to transform farming, researchers from Australia's Monash University have published the first-ever analysis of possible ethical issues that may rise. The study, published in the journal Precision Agriculture, says that while there has not yet been widespread adoption of agri robots, it is anticipated there will be a gradual emergence of technologies for precision farming. Already farmers are seeing the adoption of GPS-enabled tractors and harvesters, robotic milking stations and dairies, robotic fruit and vegetable pickers, drones for rounding up livestock, among others.

[Australian agriculture's big, global opportunity](#)

(Farm Weekly)

A LOT more can and needs to be done if Australia is to capitalise on the enormous global potential of its agriculture and food processing sectors. Marking National Agriculture Day with an online address to the Rural Press Club of Queensland, Coca-Cola Amatil group managing director Alison Watkins said the COVID pandemic had amplified Australia's importance as a global food supplier. However, the opportunities needed to be seized upon - particularly in Asia - if they were to become a reality, she said. "Clearly we have a well established standing as a clean, green country and as a safe source of supply," Ms Watkins said. "And as countries are increasingly looking to diversify their food chains, we are in a relatively very good place to invest.

[Preparation and farm management techniques before and after a typhoon or monsoon rains](#)

(Manila Bulletin)

Due to the geographical location of the Philippines, we experience extreme weather conditions that on a yearly basis leaves significant impacts on the livelihood of both farming and fishing communities. Every year, the Philippines is hit by an average of 20 typhoons, five of which are destructive, according to the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC). Given this situation, it is always prudent to have careful preparation on the farm before a strong typhoon falls. Here are a few farmers' experiences, as well as the farm management methods that they carry out before and after the occurrence of a typhoon or monsoon rains.

[Employment in agriculture declining, but wages are up](#)

(PhilStar)

Less and less people are venturing into the agriculture sector with its contribution to the country's overall employment also on a decline, but salaries of farmers have recorded a steady increase over the last five years. Based on the latest Agricultural Indicators System of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the total number of persons employed in agriculture declined to 9.7 million in 2019, down three percent from 10 million in 2018. This is already a 14 percent drop from the five-year reference period when 11.3 million people worked in the sector in 2015. Correspondingly, the agriculture sector's contribution to the country's total employment decreased to 23 percent from 24 percent in 2018, 25 percent in 2017, 27 percent in 2016 and 29 percent in 2015.

[Agri Developments targets growth in Philippines](#)

(Asiafruit)

Agri Developments, the private alternative asset company specialising in the agricultural and agribusiness industry, has announced the establishment of their latest R&D initiative within Bayawan City in the Philippines. The R&D initiative aims to accelerate the growth of AGRI Developments' existing mango operations, support its research into other crops and assist the City in attaining its agricultural objectives. The initiative is an integral part of the company's mission and encompasses a nursery for plant propagation and laboratory for research and development.

[Covid-19 Worsens Food Security in South-East Asia](#)

(Future Directions)

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to serious consequences for health, the economy and food security in South-East Asia. For the most part, South-East Asia has largely avoided the uncontrolled infection rates seen in much of the rest of the world, thanks to government action prioritising public health over the demands of the economy. That was especially evident in Vietnam where there have been just over 1,000 Covid-19 cases, despite early contact with the disease. Indonesia and the Philippines, however, have been especially badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, largely due to early mismanagement in both countries.

[Western farm groups back incentives to fight climate change](#)

(Alliance for Science)

Support for voluntary, incentive-based programs that would reward farmers for taking climate-friendly steps like sequestering carbon and using renewable energy appears to be growing on both sides of the Atlantic. With chapters in all 50 states and some six million members nationwide, the American Farm Bureau Federation is the largest farming group in the United States. As recently as 2010, the group was endorsing climate change skepticism and vowing to "aggressively" fight climate legislation. But earlier this month, the Farm Bureau revealed what it called "an unprecedented set of recommendations to guide the development of federal climate policy." The 40-plus recommendations are anchored by incentive-based mechanisms that would pay farmers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester carbon and reduce energy consumption.

[English farmers face losing half their EU-style subsidies by 2024](#)

(Financial Times)

Farmers in England face losing at least half of the subsidies they receive under the EU system by 2024 under post-Brexit transition plans to be unveiled on Monday by the UK government. Ministers plan to cut so-called basic payments, which were the main source of funding under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, by a minimum of 50 per cent in four years' time, according to documents seen by the Financial Times and two people briefed on the matter. Following the UK's exit from the EU in January, the government took over responsibility for most farm subsidies. At present, it pays them out under the same system used by the EU as it works to develop its own schemes to support farmers.

New Research

[Israel and India to open agriculture research institute](#)

(Israel 21c)

Qualified students in India will soon be able to earn a degree from Ben-Gurion University (BGU) of the Negev in dryland agriculture and biotechnology, hydrology and water quality, desert studies, or ecology and conservation. The new initiative is centered on BGU's establishment of a joint agricultural research institute in Chennai, India, in partnership with Aban Offshore, an international Indian company in the offshore drilling and wind energy markets.

[Egypt and South Sudan action group to study agricultural cooperation](#)

(Arab News)

Egypt and South Sudan have agreed to form an action group to study ways for agricultural cooperation to be implemented. The action group will also study bilateral cooperation in the fields of capacity building, technical assistance in research studies, seed production, agricultural extension, agricultural cooperatives, and value chains. Egyptian Minister of Agriculture El-Sayed El-Quseir met his South Sudanese counterpart Josephine Lagu, who is visiting Egypt as part of enhancing bilateral cooperation.

[Food safety lab grants \\$2.9M for new global projects](#)

(Cornell)

The Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Safety, co-located at Cornell and Purdue University, has announced \$2.9 million in grants for research projects to improve food safety and prevent foodborne illness in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya and Senegal. The competitively funded, 3 ½-year projects will focus on identifying knowledge gaps, enhancing local capacity for food safety research, and translating research into improved food-handling policies and practices.

CropLife Asia 'Farmer Forum Webinar' Series Learnings from the Region's Women Farmer Leader

CropLife Asia 'Farmer Forum Webinar' Series
Learnings from the Region's Women Farmer Leaders

Join us via Zoom on Thursday, 26 Nov from 1pm-2pm SGT
Registration link in post



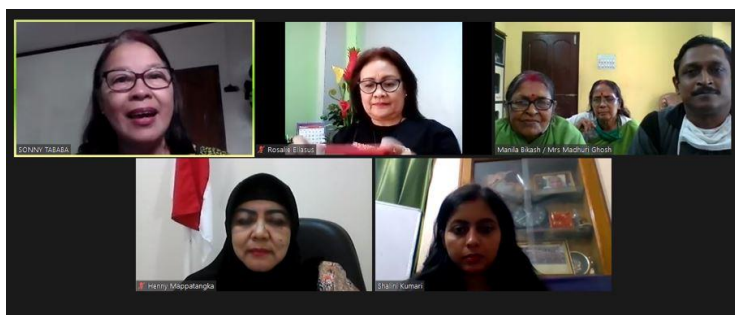
Moderator: Ms Sonny Tababa,
Biotechnology Affairs Director,
CropLife Asia

Ms Henry Mapatangka
Mainsay Fisherman Farmers
Group, Indonesia

Mrs Madhuri Ghosh
Mahila Bikash Cooperative Credit
Society, India

Ms Rosalie Eliasus
Disaster Risk Reduction
Management Officer, Philippines

Ms Shalini Kumari
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