

ICAR and Dr. Reddy's Foundation Sign Historic MoU to Strengthen Agricultural Skills and Rural Livelihoods

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The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Dr. Reddy's Foundation (DRF) signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (ICAR-NAARM) office in Hyderabad. This strategic collaboration aims to enhance agricultural vocational training, strengthen farmer extension services, and build capacity in modern agricultural practices across rural India.



The initiative is being undertaken under the overall guidance of Dr. M.L. Jat, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) & Director General, ICAR. Strategic coordination and institutional convergence for the partnership is being facilitated by Dr. Anil Kumar, Assistant Director General (Coordination), ICAR.

The agreement was formalized in the presence of senior officials from both organizations at ICAR-NAARM, Rajendra Nagar, Hyderabad, marking a significant milestone in public-private partnership for agricultural development and skill enhancement. The MoU documents were formally handed over to each other by Mr. Suman S., Director (Rural Livelihoods), Dr. Reddy's Foundation, and Dr. Rajbir Singh, Deputy Director General (Agricultural Extension), ICAR, in the presence of Director, ICAR-NAARM Hyderabad, Director, ICAR-ATARI Hyderabad, Director, ICAR-ATARI Bengaluru, and senior technical associates from Dr. Reddy's Foundation, Hyderabad.

Strategic Framework of Collaboration

Under this MoU, ICAR and Dr. Reddy's Foundation will collaborate on multiple fronts to create sustainable impact in the agricultural sector through development and delivery of vocational training programs in agriculture and allied sectors. Capacity building of small and marginal farmers will be done using the Lead Farmers Platform (LFP) model of DRF. Joint research initiatives on climate-smart agricultural practices and sustainable farming methods would be scaled by integrating ICAR's technical

expertise with DRF's community-based extension model. This would strengthen Skill development programs aligned with National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) and support youth employability in agriculture and life sciences sectors.

Leveraging Complementary Strengths

ICAR brings nearly ten decades of expertise in agricultural research, extension, knowledge management, capacity building, and policy advocacy. The council will provide technical guidance, curriculum development support, and access to its extensive network of agricultural scientists and researchers across India.

DRF has impacted over 2 million lives through its integrated development programs, with a particular focus on youth, persons with disabilities (PwD), and rural communities. The Foundation's flagship MITRA program has successfully enabled over 80,000 farmers to adopt improved agricultural practices across multiple states, demonstrating the effectiveness of its farmer-to-farmer extension model.

Expected Outcomes

The collaboration will focus on several key intervention areas:

- **Vocational Skill Development:** Building on DRF's recent recognition by the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) as an Awarding Body (Standard), the partnership will develop and deliver industry-aligned agri-skill programs.
- **Soil health to One Health transition:** The partnership will promote biochar-based and soil biologics-led solutions to improve soil health within a One Health framework, while advancing sustainable crop residue management and carbon incentivization for climate-resilient agri-food systems
- **Resilience for disaster risk reduction:** The collaboration will hand-hold farmers to adopt climate-smart, regenerative agriculture through technology-enabled extension, carbon-incentivized-resource-efficient practices, and locally tailored climate-risk mitigation strategies.
- **Agricultural Extension Services & Market Linkages:** The collaboration will scale up the Lead Farmers Platform to bridge last-mile extension gaps while strengthening small and marginal farmers' market linkages, digital and financial literacy, and price realization for their produce

Alignment with National Priorities

This partnership reinforces the national vision of creating inclusive, flexible, and future-ready learning pathways for India's agricultural workforce. The collaboration aligns with key government initiatives including, Skill India Mission and promotion of vocational education; Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) for rural youth; National Agricultural Education Policy for capacity building; Doubling Farmers' Income initiative; Climate-smart agriculture and sustainable development goals. The alignment with the National Credit Framework (NCrF) through NCVET will enable learners to accumulate and transfer credits, supporting both professional growth in agriculture and continued academic advancement.

The programs developed under this MoU will be implemented across multiple states where both organizations have operational presence. Initial focus will be on Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

Quotes from Leadership

Commenting on this partnership, a senior ICAR official stated, "This MoU represents a significant step toward mainstreaming quality skill development in agriculture. By combining ICAR's research and technical capabilities with Dr. Reddy's Foundation's proven community engagement model, we aim to create lasting impact on rural livelihoods and agricultural sustainability."

A representative from Dr. Reddy's Foundation emphasized, "Our experience working with over 80,000 farmers has shown us the critical importance of quality extension services and skill development. This partnership with ICAR will help us scale our impact while ensuring technical rigor and alignment with national frameworks. We are particularly excited about the opportunities this creates for rural youth and marginalized communities, including persons with disabilities."

Implementation Timeline and Monitoring

The MoU is effective from 16th February 2026 and will initially be valid for five years, with provisions for renewal based on mutual agreement and performance evaluation. A joint monitoring committee comprising representatives from both organizations will oversee implementation, track progress against agreed milestones, and ensure quality standards are maintained. The partnership will also leverage existing infrastructure, including ICAR research stations, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), and DRF's network of field centers across rural India, to ensure effective program delivery at the grassroots level.

About Organizations:

ICAR: The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is an autonomous body in India responsible for coordinating, guiding, and managing agricultural research and education, operating under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. Established on July 16, 1929, it is headquartered in New Delhi and operates one of the world's largest national agricultural systems, with 113 institutes and 74 universities. ICAR mandate covers research and education in agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, and animal sciences to ensure food and nutritional security and have played a pivotal role in the Green Revolution and subsequent agricultural developments, enabling massive increases in food grain, milk, and fish production. It Operates under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE). The Union Minister of Agriculture serves as the President of the ICAR Society.

DRF: Dr. Reddy's Foundation (DRF) is the family trust set-up by Dr. Reddy's, working since 1996 to create sustainable impact in education, livelihoods, healthcare, and community development. The Foundation has impacted over 2 million lives with a specific focus on youth, women, persons with disabilities, and rural farming communities. DRF's flagship programs include MITRA (rural livelihoods), Sashakt (girl child education), GROW (vocational training), and PHC (primary healthcare). In December 2025, DRF received recognition from NCVET as an Awarding Body, enabling it to award, assess, and certify learners in approved qualifications.

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