

President Smt. Droupadi Murmu Inaugurates Global Conference on Women in Agri-Food Systems, Spotlighting Women as Drivers of Agricultural Transformation

**Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan Hails Women as 'Narayani,'
Applauds their role in Global Agri-Food Systems**

**41 % of India's Scientists are Women:Shri Shivraj Singh
Chouhan Highlights women Agri-Power**

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In a significant global initiative to recognise and strengthen the transformative role of women in agriculture, the Global Conference on Women in Agri-Food Systems (GCWAS–2026) was inaugurated today by the President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, at the Bharat Ratna C. Subramaniam Hall, ICAR Convention Centre, NASC Complex, New Delhi. Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development graced as the Guest of Honour.



Addressing the gathering as Guest of Honour, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the historic decision to provide 33 percent reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures, along with 50 percent reservation in local bodies in several states, has strengthened women's leadership and participation in governance and development.



Highlighting key government initiatives, he referred to the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihood Mission, under which over 10 crore women have been mobilised through more than 90 lakh Self-Help Groups. He highlighted that around three crore women have already become 'Lakhpati Didis', earning an annual income exceeding ₹1 lakh, while the government aims to empower six crore women economically in the coming years.



Shri Chouhan also underlined the growing participation of women in agricultural research and education. He accentuated that the ICAR–Central Institute for Women in Agriculture, Bhubaneswar, has been working since 1996 to strengthen women's role in agriculture. He further highlighted that the share of

women in the Agricultural Research Service has increased significantly from 7.9 percent in 2006–07 to nearly 41 percent in 2023–24, reflecting the expanding role of women in agricultural science and innovation.



In her address, Smt. Droupadi Murmu emphasised that the future of agriculture will be strengthened by greater participation and leadership of women. She highlighted the importance of sharing inspiring stories of women farmers to raise awareness about their invaluable contributions to agriculture and environmental conservation.



The President stated that several women farmers who have made remarkable contributions to organic farming, seed conservation and community leadership have been honoured with the Padma Shri, including Kamala Devi Rongmei, Maharashtra's 'Seed Mother' Rahibai Soma Popere, Bihar's 'Kisan Chachi' Raj kumari Devi, and Odisha's Kamala Pujari.



Welcoming the United Nations' declaration of 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer, she said the initiative would help address gender inequalities and promote women's leadership in agriculture.

Highlighting government initiatives for women's empowerment, the President stated that 56 percent of the 57 crore bank accounts opened under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana are held by women, while 68 percent of beneficiaries under the Mudra Yojana are women. She also referred to programmes such as the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM), the Namo Drone Didi Scheme, and the mission to create six crore 'Lakhpati Didis', aimed at strengthening women's economic empowerment.

The President emphasised that empowering women farmers and ensuring their access to resources, technology and leadership opportunities will be crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and building a more inclusive and sustainable future.



Dr R. S. Paroda, Chairman, Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), said that the conference marks the beginning of a historic movement to recognise and strengthen the transformative role of women across the agricultural value chain from production and post-production to value addition

and improved market linkages. He emphasised that mere representation is not enough and that women must be empowered to assume leadership roles across the entire agricultural value chain.



In her welcome address, Dr Renu Swarup, Former Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, highlighted that the conference aims to translate dialogue into action by developing strategies and a roadmap to institutionalise gender-responsive initiatives with stronger policy support.



Dr Agnes Kalibata, Founder and Chair, Connect4Impact Advisory Group, Rwanda, remarked that empowering women is not only a matter of fairness and justice but also a strategic investment in economic growth, resilience and global food security.



Dr M. L. Jat, Secretary, DARE and Director General, ICAR, and Dr Trilochan Mohapatra, Chairperson, Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPV&FRA), also graced the dais, while Dr Rajbir Singh, Deputy Director General (Agricultural Extension), ICAR, served as the Co-Chair during the inaugural session.

Several eminent national and international leaders were also present during the programme, including Dr Bram Govaerts, Director General, CIMMYT; Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Chairperson, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation; Dr Shakuntala H. Thilsted, World Food Prize Laureate; Dr Nitya Rao, Director, NISD, Norwich, UK; and Dr Nicoline de Haan, Director, Gender and Youth Accelerator Platform, ILRI, Kenya.

Held during the UN-declared International Year of the Woman Farmer (2026), the conference revolves around the theme “Driving Progress, Attaining New Heights.” The event has brought together over 700 participants, including scientists, policymakers, industry leaders, entrepreneurs, development practitioners, women farmers, start-ups and students from India and abroad, creating a vibrant global platform for dialogue and collaboration.

Over the next three days, the conference will feature high-level technical sessions, policy dialogues and interactive forums focusing on key themes such as gender equality, economic empowerment, technology access, leadership development and inclusive agri-food value chains. Dedicated platforms such as the Women Farmers’ Forum and the Youth Forum will further foster dialogue, collaboration and networking among stakeholders.

An accompanying exhibition showcasing women-centric agricultural technologies and innovations has also been organised, providing a platform for women-led enterprises and start-ups to demonstrate solutions that enhance productivity while reducing drudgery for women farmers.

GCWAS–2026 aims to generate actionable recommendations, document global best practices and outline a strategic roadmap for strengthening gender-responsive policies and programmes, thereby advancing the vision of inclusive, sustainable and resilient agri-food systems worldwide.

The conference witnessed participation from representatives of 18 countries, reflecting its strong global character. The three-day international conference (12–14 March 2026), organised by the Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS) in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), and the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers’ Rights Authority (PPV&FRA), with support from several national and international organisations as co-organisers and knowledge partners, has brought together leading policymakers, scientists, development experts, entrepreneurs, and women farmers from India and across the world to advance dialogue, innovation, and policy action for building gender-inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems.

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