



GCWAS-2026 Concludes with Renewed Global Commitment to Empower Women in Agri-Food Systems

ICAR to Develop National Gender Platform Connecting Over 900 Agricultural Institutions to Empower Women in Agriculture- Dr. M. L. Jat

Posted On: 15 MAR 2026 11:03AM by PIB Delhi

The Global Conference on Women in Agri-Food Systems (GCWAS–2026) concluded on Saturday in New Delhi with a strong call for strengthening women’s leadership, participation, and innovation across agriculture and agri-food systems. The valedictory session marked the culmination of three days of global dialogue focused on advancing gender-responsive policies, inclusive innovations, and sustainable agricultural development. The session was graced by Dr. M. L. Jat, Secretary, DARE and Director General, ICAR, as the Chief Guest.

Other eminent dignitaries present at the valedictory session included Dr. R. S. Paroda, Chairman, TAAS; Dr. Renu Swarup, Former Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Government of India; Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra, Chairman, PPV&FRA; and Dr. Rajbir Singh, Deputy Director General (Agricultural Extension), ICAR.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. M. L. Jat emphasized that the conference marks not the end of discussions but the beginning of renewed action to advance gender-responsive agri-food systems. He highlighted the need to strengthen social science research and develop a robust gender-disaggregated data ecosystem across agri-food value chains to support evidence-based policymaking and address persistent gender gaps.

Announcing a significant initiative, Dr. Jat informed that ICAR is developing a national gender platform that will connect more than 900 institutions, including ICAR institutes, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, and agricultural universities, to strengthen research, extension, and capacity-building initiatives focused on women in agriculture. He noted that empowering women with knowledge, data, and decision-making roles can significantly enhance farm productivity, profitability, and sustainability, and called for stronger inter-institutional collaboration to translate conference deliberations into tangible outcomes.

Dr. Renu Swarup presented the summary of the conference’s major recommendations and announced the adoption of the Delhi Declaration, which calls for establishing a Global Alliance on Women in Agri-Food Systems. The declaration commits stakeholders to champion gender-responsive policies and institutional reforms across agri-food value chains, strengthen enabling environments ensuring women’s access to land, finance, technology, markets, and digital innovation, promote leadership and entrepreneurship among women farmers and agri-business leaders, ensure gender-responsive budgeting and systematic collection

of gender-disaggregated data, establish robust accountability mechanisms including periodic gender audits and transparent progress reporting, and foster global exchange of scalable innovations and successful models of women-led transformation.

Dr. R. S. Paroda emphasized that empowering farm women must move beyond dialogue to decisive action through stronger institutional support, gender-responsive policies, and strategic partnerships that place women farmers at the center of agri-food system transformation. Noting that women contribute nearly 60–70 percent of agricultural labour, he stressed that ensuring women’s access to knowledge, markets, credit, and training is essential for achieving food security, poverty reduction, and sustainable agri-food systems.

Dr. T. Mohapatra highlighted that many women who play a vital role in conserving plant genetic resources and biodiversity often remain unrecognized despite their invaluable contributions to sustainable agriculture. He called for stronger institutional and financial support to identify and empower these grassroots custodians whose efforts are critical for preserving traditional knowledge and biodiversity.

Earlier, delivering the welcome address, Dr. Rajbir Singh emphasized that empowering women farmers is not merely a matter of equity but a strategic imperative for ensuring sustainable agricultural growth, food security, and rural prosperity. He noted that women play a vital role across the entire agri-food value chain and their leadership is essential for building resilient and sustainable food systems. He further stated that the deliberations and recommendations emerging from the conference will help shape future policies, research priorities, and collaborative initiatives to strengthen women’s participation and leadership in agri-food systems at national and global levels.

Technical Sessions

- The conference featured nine thematic technical sessions addressing critical dimensions of women’s empowerment in agri-food systems:
- Technical Session I: Interface with Global Women Trailblazers
- Technical Session II: Driving Progress, Attaining New Heights
- Technical Session III: Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
- Technical Session IV: Emerging and Disruptive Technologies for Gender-Transformative Change
- Technical Session V: Building Women Leadership in the Agri-Food Sector
- Technical Session VI: Empowering Women through Economic Inclusion
- Technical Session VII: Gender Dynamics in Policy and Market Access
- Technical Session VIII: Women Farmers Forum – Breaking the Stereotypes
- Technical Session IX: Youth Forum: Nurturing the Next Generation of Agri-Food Leaders

These sessions collectively focused on strengthening women’s leadership, enhancing access to resources and markets, promoting technology adoption, and fostering youth engagement to build inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems.

Participation of International Experts

GCWAS–2026 witnessed participation from several distinguished international experts and leaders representing global research and development organizations. These included Dr Bram Govaerts, Director General, CIMMYT; Agnes Kalibata, Founder and Chair, Connect4Impact Advisory Group; Shakuntala Haraksingh Thilsted, World Food Prize Laureate, WorldFish; Julie Borlaug, President, Borlaug Foundation; Maureen Miruka, Director, Gender Equity, Youth and Social Inclusion, CIMMYT; Josephine Okot, Vice Chair, IFDC and Managing Director, Victoria Seeds Ltd.; and Nitya Rao, Professor of Gender and Development, University of East Anglia, among others.

A total of 18 countries participated in the conference, reflecting its significance as a truly impactful global platform for dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge exchange on advancing women’s empowerment in agri-food systems.

Key Recommendations

The conference generated several important recommendations aimed at strengthening women's leadership, entrepreneurship, and participation in agri-food systems. Participants emphasized encouraging women to take leadership roles in science, policy, and development, while promoting science-based policies and impact-driven research.

Discussions highlighted the need to integrate agriculture, nutrition, health, and environmental sustainability, including the One Health framework, to support inclusive and resilient development. Delegates underscored the importance of strengthening women's economic empowerment by simplifying regulatory processes in seed value chains, enabling women to transition from custodians to entrepreneurs, and expanding access to credit, growth finance, and markets to scale women-led enterprises.

The conference also called for stronger institutional convergence among government programmes, research institutions, universities, and the private sector to create integrated support systems and improve market access for women farmers and agri-entrepreneurs. Universities were identified as key hubs for innovation, incubation, and entrepreneurship development.

Participants further highlighted the need to mainstream gender equality in policies, ensure women's land rights and access to productive resources, promote women-friendly agricultural technologies, and strengthen gender-responsive extension systems. Bridging the digital divide through localized digital tools and advisory platforms, strengthening climate-resilient agriculture and digital literacy, creating non-farm livelihood opportunities, and embedding gender-responsive impact metrics were also emphasized.

Towards Stronger Global Partnerships

The three-day international conference brought together policymakers, scientists, development partners, entrepreneurs, and women leaders from across the world to deliberate on pathways for empowering women across the agri-food value chain and strengthening their role in building resilient food systems.

GCWAS–2026 served as an important global platform for sharing successful initiatives, research insights, and collaborative approaches to advancing gender-responsive agriculture. The organizers noted that the outcomes of the conference will help strengthen global partnerships, inform policy directions, and accelerate efforts to empower women farmers, scientists, and entrepreneurs.

During the conference, successful women farmers, participants of technical sessions and youth forums, school students, and other contributors in the agricultural sector were felicitated for their achievements and contributions.

The conference concluded with a vote of thanks by Rishi Tyagi, Conference Convener, TAAS, who expressed gratitude to all dignitaries, participants, partners, and organizing teams for making GCWAS–2026 a successful and impactful global event.

The conference was inaugurated on 12th March, 2026 by Smt. Droupadi Murmu, President of India, in the presence of Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development underscoring India's commitment to recognizing and strengthening the pivotal role of women in agriculture and food systems.

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