



36th Annual Conference of Vice Chancellors of Agricultural Universities Commences in New Delhi

Agricultural Education Must Be Measured by Its Impact on Farmers, Not by Degrees Awarded: Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Research Must Move from Laboratories to Fields and Deliver Solutions to Farmers: Shri Chouhan

Prepare Youth Not Just for Jobs, but to Become Entrepreneurs, Innovators and Job Creators: Union Agriculture Minister

Every Conference Must Deliver Clear Resolutions, Action Plans and Measurable Outcomes: Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan

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The 36th Annual Conference of Vice Chancellors of Agricultural Universities was inaugurated today in New Delhi by Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development. Organised on the theme "Reimagining Agricultural Higher Education for ViksitBharat@2047," the two-day Conference, (25–26 August 2026), brings together Vice Chancellors of Agricultural Universities, senior officials of DARE and ICAR, Deputy Directors General, Additional Directors General and senior scientists to deliberate on reforms and priorities for a future-ready agricultural education system.



The inaugural session was also graced by Shri Bhagirath Choudhary and Shri Ram Nath Thakur, Union Ministers of State for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, and Dr M. L. Jat, Secretary, DARE & Director General, ICAR, along with senior officials and dignitaries.



Addressing the Conference, Union Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan emphasised that the success of agricultural education must be measured not by the number of degrees awarded, but by the knowledge and skills created and the tangible change brought to farmers' lives. He called for reimagining agricultural education to make it practical, technology-driven and closely aligned with farmers' needs. He stressed that research must move from laboratories to fields through stronger collaboration among agricultural universities, ICAR, KVKs, FPOs, industry and farmers. He urged universities to set clear goals, develop actionable roadmaps and measure outcomes, so that every conference leads to concrete decisions and contributes to building a modern, resilient and prosperous agricultural sector for Viksit Bharat.



Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shri Bhagirath Choudhary emphasised that a developed India requires a strong and prosperous agriculture sector and empowered farmers. He said India's journey from food scarcity to self-sufficiency reflects the collective contribution of farmers, scientists, teachers and institutions, and the next priority must be to make agriculture technology-driven, innovative and future-ready. He stressed the need to attract youth to agriculture by creating opportunities in modern technologies, research, entrepreneurship and agribusiness, while urging agricultural universities to align education and research with farmers' needs. He expressed confidence that the deliberations of the Vice-Chancellors' Conference would strengthen agricultural education, foster innovation and contribute to building a resilient, sustainable and prosperous agricultural sector in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat.



Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shri Ram Nath Thakur emphasised that strengthening agriculture and empowering farmers are fundamental to achieving the vision of a Viksit Bharat. He highlighted the need to modernise agricultural education, promote innovation and equip youth with the knowledge and skills required to address emerging challenges. He stressed that research and education must remain closely connected to farmers' needs and translate into practical, field-level solutions. He called upon agricultural universities and institutions to foster a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and excellence, with a strong focus on sustainable and technology-driven agriculture. He expressed confidence that collective efforts in education, research and innovation would accelerate agricultural transformation and contribute to enhancing farmers' incomes and livelihoods.



Secretary, DARE & Director General, ICAR Dr M.L. Jat, emphasised that achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat requires a fundamental transformation of agricultural higher education—from traditional models to a future-ready, skill-driven and innovation-led ecosystem. He stressed the need to strengthen industry–academia partnerships, promote demand-driven research, ensure robust accreditation and leverage data-driven decision-making. He highlighted that the seamless integration of education, research and extension is essential to translate scientific knowledge into field-level solutions and tangible benefits for farmers. “The objective of future agricultural education should go beyond awarding degrees to creating skilled, innovative and globally competitive human capital aligned with national priorities and the evolving needs of Indian agriculture,” he added.

The Conference is structured around five sessions covering 14 agenda items, focusing on student-centric reforms, higher education, faculty development, institutional strengthening, quality enhancement, academic reforms, research, innovation and institutional excellence. The deliberations on student-centric reforms and agricultural higher education covered the Action Taken Report of the previous Vice Chancellors’ Conference, admission systems, research fellowships and the state/category-wise 40% restriction in seat allotment.



Discussions also addressed timely ICAR-AIQ counselling and verification, separate Ph.D. counselling for Veterinary Sciences, and UG eligibility for agriculture-qualified and Hindi-medium students to make agricultural education more accessible and inclusive.

The Conference also reviewed measures to align JRF/SRF research with national priorities, strengthen accreditation and quality assurance, and improve financial management, accountability and performance-based funding. Emphasis was placed on stronger industry–academia linkages, apprenticeships and

internships, curriculum revision, and promotion of dual, twinning and joint degree programmes and academic exchange.

Under faculty development and institutional strengthening, the participants deliberated on equivalency of degrees in agriculture and allied sciences, identification of training needs, development of training modules and expert/domain mapping. The proposed induction of Professors of Practice in Agricultural Universities was also discussed to bring professional expertise and practical knowledge into the academic ecosystem.

The Conference further considered the development of a comprehensive agricultural education data ecosystem for evidence-based planning, monitoring and decision-making. Strengthening Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAWE) was highlighted as an important avenue for connecting students with rural realities and supporting rural transformation. Discussions also covered Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment (MELIA) and greater participation of Agricultural Universities in Agriunifest and Agrisports2026 to promote holistic student development.



Deliberations on academic reforms, research, innovation and institutional excellence included common agenda items of the Indian Agricultural Universities Association (IAUA), uniform implementation of the UGC Ph.D. Regulations, 2016, and promotion of Technology Readiness Level (TRL) among State Agricultural Universities to accelerate the translation of research into practical technologies and innovations. The Conference also discussed NIRF rating parameters for Agriculture and Allied sectors and mechanisms for sharing expertise through Professors of Practice.

The discussions collectively underscored the need for Agricultural Universities to evolve into dynamic, technology-enabled and outcome-oriented ecosystems integrating education, research, innovation, industry and rural engagement. Stronger academic partnerships, quality assurance, data-driven governance and research aligned with national priorities were identified as critical to building globally competitive institutions.

Earlier, Dr Yashpal Malik, Deputy Director General (Agricultural Education), ICAR, delivered the welcome and context-setting address. The inaugural session also featured the presentation and discussion on the Action Taken Report of the previous Conference and a review of progress on earlier decisions.

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