1st International Maize Conference 2026 Calls for Higher Productivity, Innovative Breeding and Farmer-Centric Research

Research and extension must translate into higher farm profitability and improved livelihoods: Dr M.L. Jat, Secretary, DARE

Dr. Jat advocates Systems-Science Approach to Bridge Yield Gaps and Strategically Target Maize Across Seasons Without Compromising Oilseeds and Pulses

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The 1st International Maize Conference themed “Maize Revolution for Food, Feed, Fodder, Fuel and Sustainability in the Changing World,” (M4FS) commenced at the JD Convention Centre, Hyderabad today, bringing together scientists, policymakers, agricultural institutions and industry stakeholders to discuss strategies for advancing maize research, productivity and value-chain development.



The conference highlighted high-yielding varieties and hybrids, improved nutritional quality, efficient resource utilisation, mechanisation, robust seed systems and maize’s growing role in food, feed, fodder and energy security.

Addressing the conference Secretary, DARE and DG ICAR Dr. M. L. Jat, congratulated the maize research community on India's maize production reaching approximately 55 million tonnes, accompanied by substantial productivity gains over the past decade. He called for increasing production to 75 million tonnes over the next decade, alongside a further 1.5-fold increase in productivity through technological innovation, improved crop management and efficient resource utilisation.



Emphasising an expansion of the traditional 4F vision—Food, Feed, Fodder and Fuel—to 5F by placing Farmers at the centre, Dr. Jat stressed that research and extension must translate into higher farm profitability and improved livelihoods. He advocated a systems-science approach to bridging yield gaps, particularly those arising from crop management, and strategic targeting of maize across seasons and agroecological zones without compromising other important crops, particularly oilseeds and pulses. He also underscored the need for affordable, quality seed, especially public-sector hybrids, supported by a robust seed system.

Dr. D. K. Yadav, Deputy Director General (Crop Science), ICAR, described maize as a model crop for food, nutritional and energy security. Acknowledging progress in maize research and extension over the past five years, including the development of 329 maize hybrids, he called for strengthening the All India Coordinated Research Project on Maize (AICRP on Maize). He emphasised breeding for higher yields, improved nutritional quality and resistance to biotic and abiotic stresses, alongside input-use efficiency, mechanisation, capacity development and stronger public-sector hybrid seed production. He also highlighted the need for collaboration among research institutions, universities and industry to realise maize's potential as an ethanol feedstock.

Padma Shri Dr. S. Vasal, eminent maize scientist and a World Food Laurete associated with CIMMYT, advocated simple, cost-effective breeding approaches to accelerate the development of improved varieties and hybrids suited to farmers' needs.

Padma Bhushan Dr. R. S. Paroda, former Secretary, DARE, and Director General, ICAR, and Chief Guest, stressed the importance of aligning research priorities with the evolving needs of agriculture and allied sectors. He called for greater use of advanced breeding

techniques, systematic germplasm conservation and utilisation, stronger maize value chains, and effective aflatoxin management to ensure maize safety and quality for food and feed.



Earlier, Dr. H. S. Jat, President, Maize Technologists Association of India (MTAI), welcomed the dignitaries and highlighted maize's strategic importance in India's agricultural transformation. He called for stronger collaboration among research institutions, agricultural universities, policymakers and industry to address emerging challenges.

Several scientific publications were released during the programme, and awards were presented to eminent scientists and researchers in recognition of their contributions to maize research and development.

The conference underscored the importance of collaborative, farmer-centric research to bridge yield gaps, improve seed access, strengthen breeding programmes, enhance nutritional quality and develop sustainable maize value chains. Being held from 2–4 November, 2026 in Hyderabad, the conference provides a platform for national and international experts to shape a roadmap for a productive, profitable and sustainable maize sector in India.

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