Strengthening India’s Community Seed Banks (CSBs): DIVERSIFARM-India Maps 652 CSBs and Releases New Capacity-Building Manual

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India has at least 1,000 community seed banks (CSBs), according to a survey conducted by DIVERSIFARM-India. The project’s digital atlas has already mapped 652 of these community-led institutions, providing an important foundation for understanding, strengthening and supporting India's diverse community seed banks. The outputs were shared at the National Seminar for the Advancement of CSBs held over two days on 17th and 18th November, 2026 at NASC, New Delhi. They include a GIS-based atlas with profiles of CSBs, a policy brief on CSB typologies, a roadmap for CSBs in Odisha, and a new capacity-building manual.

Addressing the event, Ms. May-Elin Stener, Ambassador of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in New Delhi, said that the Embassy welcomed the project’s extensive mapping and support for community seed banks across India. She added that this project is an important component of the partnership between India and Norway.

Dr Regine Andersen, Research Professor, Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI), Norway, also shared several outputs from the three-year collaboration between FNI and MSSRF as the core partners of DIVERSIFARM-India. He said that the digital platform brings together community seed banks working across India and creates awareness about their strengths and collective efforts.

Dr Rengalakshmi R, Executive Director, MSSRF said that CSBs are more than just storehouses. She added that they are a living institution for in-situ conservation that builds farmers' resilience.

DIVERSIFARM-India is a project led by Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI) and the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) that aims to improve food, nutrition, and livelihoods for small farmers by strengthening seed systems through community seed banks.

Six typologies to guide policy, One roadmap to shape the future of CSBs in Odisha

The comprehensive study had identified six CSB typologies based on management structures.Identifying these institutional differences is crucial for targeted and effective policy support.

Another policy brief under the project charts a 10-point roadmap for CSBs in Odisha. It recommends a secretariat under the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, to shape and sustain environments that enable CSBs in the state.

Manual offers practical guide to establishing and sustaining CSBs

A capacity-building manual was also developed based on in-depth case studies conducted in Odisha, the pilot state. Combining technical guidance, organizational approaches and policy relevance, it is a practical guide to establish, manage and sustain CSBs in India.

The manual was released by Dr Trilochan Mohapatra, Chairperson, Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPVFRA) at National Agricultural Science Complex, New Delhi. Noting the PPVFRA's support for CSBs in his inaugural address, he said now that government support is growing, he is sure that the Community Seed Banks would flourish.

Legal and policy landscape

The DIVERSIFARM-India project also examined the legal and policy landscape in India to better understand the bottlenecks and opportunities for CSBs. The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Right Act (PPVFRA) and The National Biodiversity Act were identified for their demonstrated potentialin strengthening CSBs.

Padma Shri Dr P. L. Gautam, Former Chairperson, PPVFRA and NBA said that to further benefit farmers, a need to establish a synergy between the two laws emerged in discussions. He added biodiversity is a common heritage of humankind, reflecting on the founding principle of the laws.

Dr Devendra Kumar Yadava, Director, ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, and DDG (Crop Science), ICAR, highlighted that community gene banks and national gene banks can be strengthened collaboratively. Echoing his recommendation, Padma Shri Dr PL Gautam also underscored committed funding and capacity building as the need of the hour.

For the CSB manual, the digital atlas and the policy brief on CSB typologies, Pleas click https://communityseedbanks.in/

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