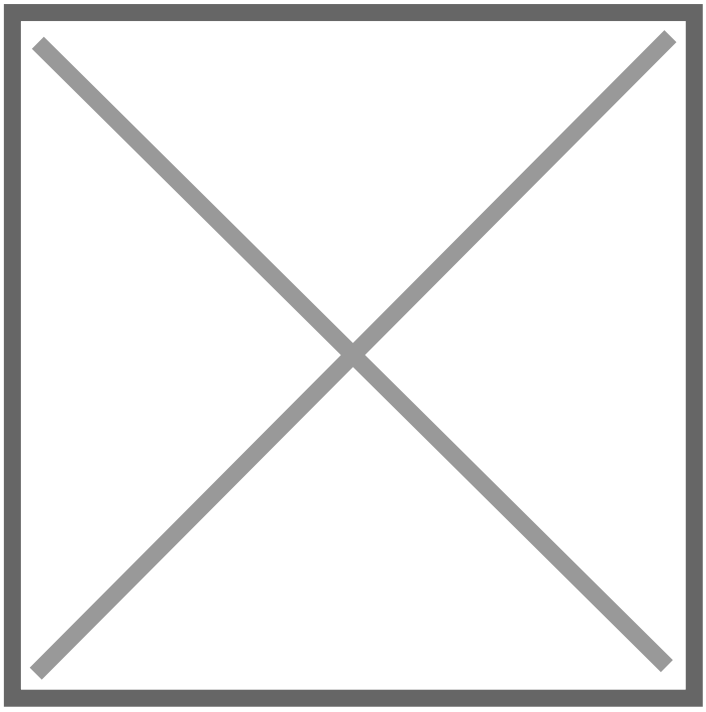
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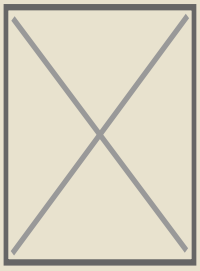
# "India needs an integrated strategy for the agri sector"

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# "India needs an integrated strategy for the agri sector"

**Dr Clive James**, founder, ISAAA



Dr Clive James founded the International Service for the Acquisition in Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) in 1990 with the objective of spreading awareness about biotechnology in agriculture. ISAAA has recently opened a Knowledge Center in India. During his trip to the country, Dr James spoke to BioSpectrum about his views on the crop biotechnology sector.

**How is ISAAA's new venture in India shaping up?**
India is making rapid strides in agri biotechnology. In a bid to promote biotech applications in agriculture, ISAAA has formally launched a knowledge sharing initiative in India. An ISAAA South Asia office, co-hosted by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), is now part of the network of Biotechnology Information Centers located in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The Indian initiative would allow the country to share its experiences in agri biotechnology with the rest of the world. Partnership is the key strategy to cover more ground so that India can benefit from all the technologies that are becoming available to improve the quality of agricultural produce.

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**What will be the focus of the Indian Knowledge Center of ISAAA?**
India's first hand experience could serve as a powerful example for both the developed and developing countries. Apart from this, the Knowledge Centre will be assisting national biotech programs in creating an enabling environment for crop biotech and for sound decision-making. Moreover, ISAAA will also facilitate the flow and exchange of information between all quarters of the world. We will be operating the Knowledge Center from ICRISAT's liaison office in New Delhi.

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**What is the current status of crop biotechnology in Asia? How is ISAAA helping to improve it?**
Agriculture will continue to play a central role as Asia pursues the complementary goals of poverty reduction, sustainable food security, environmental conservation and increasing trade competitiveness. New technologies, including crop biotechnology, will be essential to meet these challenges. The prospects for their utilization are particularly promising, since Asia's high priority development needs and existing biotechnology potential can intersect to make a difference in the lives of its 700 million rural poor.

Specifically for this, ISAAA has a Crop Biotechnology Program going on exclusively for Asia. The overall goal of this program in Asia is to help reduce rural poverty and ensure food security. This is being achieved by developing the necessary national and regional capacities to acquire, develop and safely deploy important crop biotechnology applications and products. These efforts respond to the high-priority needs of the region's countries and focus on delivering benefits to resource-poor and small-scale farmers.

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**What are the challenges ahead of Indian agriculture? How can they be overcome?**
India is somewhat lacking in the food distribution system. Proper attention should be given to this aspect. An improved food distribution system can contribute a lot to food, feed and fiber security. The next challenge for India is to spread correct awareness about biotechnology among the society. And informing the society about agricultural applications of biotechnology will be the core focus of ISAAA's Indian Knowledge Center. The other challenge that I foresee is to convert the said action plans into reality. Government is showing keen interest, industry is moving towards expansion, all we need is to work on them and get them into practice.

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**What strategy can India adopt to increase its agricultural produce? What opportunity does India have in this sector?**
An integrated strategy between conventional and biotechnology/GM approaches to optimize productivity along with population control can bring good changes. In simpler words, a consolidated crop management strategy is an utmost requirement for India. And as I mentioned earlier, a systemized and professional food distribution system can also help a vast country like India to achieve prominence at global platform.

In terms of opportunities, India can increase investment from public sector. Another opportunity lies in the country's well-known great research potential. I think that if these things can be worked out successfully, India can be a leader in Asia.

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**How far are issues like biosafety and technology transfer taken up at ISAAA?**
The ISAAA's Biosafety Initiative is aimed to support governmental commissions, policy makers, scientists and special interest