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Herbalife India unveils Phyto Innovation Accelerator to advance India's plant biotechnology ecosystem

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To support innovation, entrepreneurship and global research collaboration



Herbalife International India, and the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) have launched the Herbalife–IIT Madras Phyto Innovation Accelerator Programme, an industry-academia initiative to translate plant biotechnology research into scalable solutions for health, wellness and sustainable biomanufacturing.

Pralhad Joshi, Union Minister of Education, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, and New & Renewable Energy, inaugurated the programme at the IIT Madras Research Park in the presence of Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director, IIT Madras, and Ajay Khanna, Managing Director, Herbalife India.

Building on the Herbalife–IIT Madras Centre of Excellence on Plant Cell Fermentation Technology (HL-IITM CoE PCFT) established in June 2026, the programme fuses India's traditional botanical wisdom with modern science, deep technology and entrepreneurship. It embodies the national research vision of Jai Anusandhan while advancing sustainable biomanufacturing through the BioE3 policy. Ultimately, it aims to build a nationally recognised innovation ecosystem that transforms plant biotechnology innovations into market-ready technologies while fostering research, innovation and capacity building across health, wellness, nutrition and sustainable biomanufacturing.

The programme will operate through two verticals over a three-year period. Under the Phytothon vertical, innovation challenges and hackathons will be conducted every six months to identify promising innovations in plant biotechnology, nutraceuticals, functional foods, botanical ingredients and sustainable biomanufacturing.

Up to three startups will be supported annually through access to shared scientific infrastructure and specialised laboratory facilities at the IIT Madras Bioincubator and HL-IITM CoE PCFT, including customised bioreactors for plant cell cultivation, analytical and computational systems, along with technical mentorship, pre-incubation support, and proof-of-concept development.

The second vertical, Global University Innovation Network, will foster international collaborations through student and faculty exchanges, collaborative research, webinars, seminars, workshops, short-term courses, publications and co-organized conferences.