

Smart agriculture discussed at '4th National Conference on Agribiotech'

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With highly relevant sessions on the present scenario of agriculture in India, the '4th National Conference on Agribiotechnology' was loaded with equally fruitful discussions and cross talk on important subjects related to agriculture technology, policy implementation and challenges. The event held at New Delhi on November 25-26 was well appreciated by concerned stakeholders of the Indian agriculture sector.

Mr Mohanbhai Kundariya, Union Minister of state (agriculture) who interacted with the industry leaders in his inaugural address assured them of all help. He mentioned, "Our Government under the leadership of our Prime Minister, Narendra Modi is committed to working with industry leaders to bring about a revolution in the agricultural sector in India. We will discuss the various issues and challenges around agriculture, agri-biotechnology and other related areas raised during today's conference and come up with measures to provide an impetus to the sector."

Stressing on the importance of producing more from the available land and water, Mr Kundariya said, "Technology, like agri-biotechnology, if used intelligently will play an important role in improving our agricultural output especially in the light of our limited land and water resources which are reducing day by day."

The opening session of the conference was presided by welcome and introductory remarks given by Mr Ashwin Shroff, co-chairman, CII National Conference on Biotechnology and chairman and MD, Excel Industries. He opined, "Last century belonged to India because of IT and this century will belong to India because of biotechnology." He further said that the potential of biotechnology is often curbed by the pulls and pressures of the myths associated with it due to which opportunities are missed.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Ram Kaundinya, director general, ABLE-AG mentioned, "The need of the hour is a predictive policy that can augur well with the needs of the people and industry. We require a science based system with a streamlined regulatory system. Also, there is a need for political commitment." Mr Kaundinya stressed upon proper infrastructure and support to innovation and technology. He mentioned that there is a need to educate and aware all stakeholders about the evolving technologies.

Dr P S Ahuja, director general, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) who was present in the inaugural session laid emphasis on the awareness for right technologies that can benefit the farmers. "There is a need to combat salinity for making it drought resistant," he stated further.

Momentum has been lost after the first green revolution, remarked, Mr Rajesh Kumar Singh, joint secretary (Seeds), ministry of agriculture and cooperation, government of India. He, in his address said that there needs to be a harmony in the new seeds bill to bring about positive change. He also added that integration of biotech to farming can revolutionize India. He further added that GM momentum is lost and it needs to be introduced in other areas of technology.

The mix of topics including sustainable Resource Use - Challenges and Answers, Lab to field - Successfully Reaping benefits and resolving Farmer & Consumers Challenges - Role of Biotechnology were discussed at length during the conference.

The conference was attended by close to 200 persons from the industry, policymakers, academia and heads of research institutes. The recommendations from the two day event shall be sent to the agriculture ministry for further action.