

â€œICRISAT focusing on inclusive developmentâ€?

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Q: How has been the incubation climate as far as agri-business focused entrepreneurs in India are concerned?

'The business incubation in agri sector is gaining momentum in India with the support provided by the Govt. of India initiatives through DST & ICAR. The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), pioneering this initiative in 2003 and having successfully run over a decade, is set as a role model for many emerging agri-business incubators. Globally this phenomenon is popular among the developed nations and with success of Indian agribusiness incubators (Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators-NIABI), many countries in Africa have initiated similar programs. These incubators are supporting entrepreneurs with agro technologies, market research, scientific support, funding facilitation and other business related services.

Q: What are objectives of innovation and partnership program initiated by ICRISAT? What have been the achievements so far and which new opportunities are you looking at?

The Innovation and Partnership or INP program is one of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives established under the aegis of Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) at ICRISAT. Established in 2007, it is set up to facilitate collaborative and partnership research for established agricultural companies / institutions with ICRISAT. The focus of INP is to develop strong collaborative R&D partnerships with public, private and allied sectors in the areas of plant breeding, agricultural

biotechnology, natural resource management, knowledge sharing, and value chain development that support the small holder farmers of dry land tropics across the agricultural and agribusiness value chains. So far companies like Pioneer, D1 Oils, Nandan Biometrix, ITC, Kenes Exhibitions, DevGen, Hytech Seeds, Gubba Group have partnered with ICRISAT for their various R&D activities. ICRISAT through INP program extends partnership opportunities to corporate sector in the areas of product development, contract research, collaborative projects, innovation led business models and events in agribusiness that can benefit the farming communities on large.

Q: Please tell us about AgBioAsia and its relevance in present context?

ICRISAT has been partnering with the State Government of Andhra Pradesh and the Federation of Asian Biotech Associations [FABA] in organizing the State's flagship event BioAsia for many years now. This partnership continues strongly for the eleventh BioAsia also, scheduled to be organized from Feb 17-19, 2014 organized with the theme of "Harnessing the potentials of Global Nutraceutical Market" and special focus on Food, Nutrition and Health. The sector faces great challenges in terms of ensuring food security for hundreds of millions of miserably poor people, supply chain constraints and regulatory apprehensions. Recognizing the potential of India's rich, traditional and natural resources that form the basis of nutraceutical products, AgBioAsia will also focus on Health and Nutrition in order to leverage on this strength and transform the potentials into successful opportunities. Additionally, the conference will also focus on novel concepts to complement research & development in the nutraceutical sector, creating awareness, and generating social, economic and environmental benefits. Aimed at driving scientifically validated solutions, products and enterprises for the benefit of society, the event will connect the traditional knowledge to modern practices, science and technology and emerging opportunities in the area of health and wellness.

Q: What is the market potential for nutraceutical products in India? What are the latest trends in this area?

The global market for nutraceutical is projected at US\$250 billion by 2018 largely driven by the need for a disease free lifestyle, according to a Grant Thornton study. In 2012, the Indian nutraceuticals market accounted for only about 1% of the global nutraceuticals market. Given the changing demographics of the Indian population and increasing focus on fitness and good health, the nutraceuticals market is being identified as a high potential market in India. Nutraceuticals have entered the world food market and have gained tremendous importance in the last few years in the most developed countries. While USA and Japan are leaders in the segment, India, China and Brazil promises huge potential. With the mushrooming population and the percentage of undernourished children, India is poised to overtake China and represents an extremely favourable market for the growth of nutraceuticals.

Q: What are the current activities at ICRISAT and your goals for 2014?

ICRISAT focuses on research and development activities for the betterment of the agricultural sector in the Semi-Arid Tropics of Africa and Asia. We envision a prosperous, food-secure and resilient dryland tropic. To achieve this, our mission is to reduce poverty, hunger, malnutrition and environmental degradation in the dryland tropics. For a long time, dryland farm families have been marginalized out of the development loop. We have adopted an inclusive (broad-based) strategy that puts them into the mainstream to participate and reap the benefits of development. Moreover, it will enable the poor, particularly women and the youth/children, to participate in the development process. We call this strategy Inclusive Market Oriented Development or IMOD.

We believe that all stakeholders need to come together and work towards a positive transformation in the agricultural sector. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) hold the key for activating the IMOD cycle in order to replicate and scale-up the benefits of technology interventions and science-based solutions for millions of smallholder farmers. One of the best ways of achieving this is to promote entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector.

Entrepreneurs act as major building blocks of the economy anywhere in the world today. When it comes to the agricultural sector, however, the challenges facing entrepreneurs are many and diverse.

Q So, how do we address this? Which is the best mode to promote entrepreneurship in agriculture?

In 2014, we want to continue building partnerships to achieve our long term goals especially through our AIP-ICRISAT which is serving as a PPP model, furthering the mission of ICRISAT. We welcome our private sector partners to join hands with us in addressing the upcoming challenges of agriculture in the Semi-Arid Tropics.