



भारतीय कृषि एवं खाद्य परिषद्  
INDIAN CHAMBER OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

# 2nd ICFA Board Meeting Report 2025

*Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> July 2025 | New Delhi*

The Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA) serves as the apex national platform working at the confluence of industry, government, and farming communities to advance the country's food and agriculture agenda. With a mandate to function as a think tank, policy research and advocacy institution, ICFA facilitates global partnerships, technology transfer, trade, and investments across the agri-food value chain. By addressing critical policy challenges, enhancing the productivity and profitability of farmers, and promoting sustainable agribusiness development, ICFA plays a pivotal role in accelerating agricultural growth and rural transformation in India.

## Opening Remarks

**Dr. Tarun Shridhar, Director General, ICFA**, welcomed the Board Members and moderated the meeting, which deliberated on pressing agricultural and livestock issues, including technology deployment, water resource management, and strengthening policy ecosystems. He highlighted ICFA's growing responsibility as a national-level think tank and policy advocacy body, stressing the need for transformative, sustainable models rooted in agroecological and nutrition-sensitive farming systems. Emphasizing integrated approaches, public-private collaboration, and sectoral coordination, he called for the development of state-specific strategies in partnership with governments, industry, academia, and civil society. The meeting concluded with a consensus to establish working groups to address key priorities across sub-sectors and prepare actionable policy recommendations for government engagement.

## Welcome Address

**Shri Suresh Prabhu, Chairman, ICFA**, delivered the welcome address, setting an aspirational tone for the meeting by emphasizing the importance of unified, cross-sectoral collaboration in shaping the future of Indian agriculture. Reflecting on the fragmented nature of policy discourse in the country, he highlighted the critical role that platforms like ICFA can play in bridging institutional silos and bringing together diverse stakeholders—from government officials and industry leaders to farmers and research institutions. He underscored the necessity of a common forum outside the government structure that could function autonomously yet collaboratively to inform and influence public policy through evidence-



backed, consensus-driven recommendations.

Drawing from his extensive experience in public service and policy-making, Shri Prabhu acknowledged the complexity of agricultural policy formulation, which often involves competing interests and conflicting priorities. He pointed out that effective policy is not just about accommodating every viewpoint but about synthesizing diverse experiences to arrive at implementable, impactful outcomes. He stressed the urgency of integrating advanced technologies such as biotechnology, while also addressing the associated risks through responsible deployment and regulation.

Highlighting both challenges and opportunities, Shri Prabhu emphasized the need to leverage India's demographic dividend, especially the growing interest of youth in agriculture and agri-startups. He spoke about the importance of water-use efficiency, climate-resilient farming, and sustainable value chains. He proposed the creation of thematic subcommittees within ICFA, each chaired by domain experts and supported by technical secretariats, to systematically address sectoral concerns. Calling for financial and institutional backing from both public and private stakeholders, Shri Prabhu concluded by reiterating ICFA's commitment to becoming a global voice for Indian agriculture and a catalyst for inclusive rural transformation through science-driven advocacy and policy innovation.

## Deliberations

**Dr. Ashok Dalwai, Co - Chairman, ICFA** highlighted the role of expert networks in shaping strategic, evidence-based policies and supporting government-led initiatives. He urged ICFA to identify 8–10 high-impact priorities—such as feed and fodder policy, GM crops, post-harvest management, and export facilitation—and channel expert inputs into actionable, ministry-aligned policy papers.

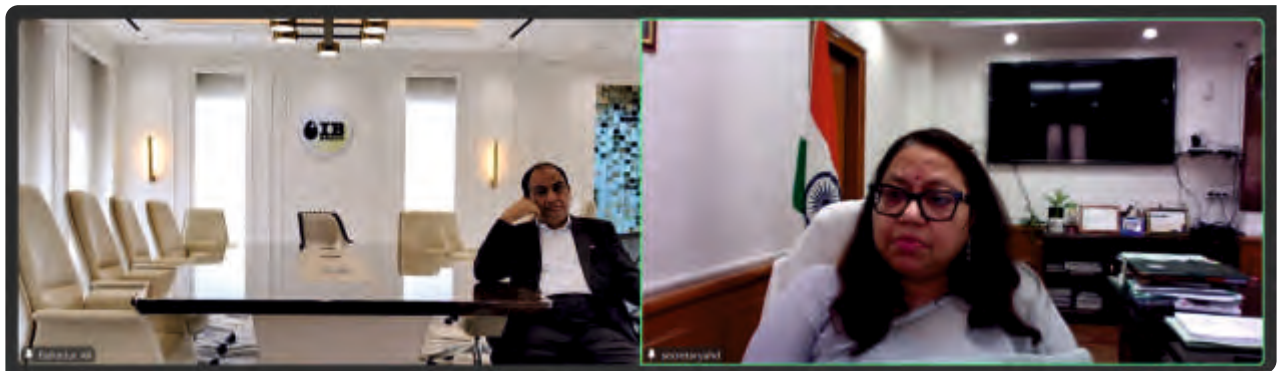
He proposed forming thematic working groups of senior experts and young researchers to produce technically sound, timely outputs, and stressed an integrated ecosystem approach linking agriculture, livestock, and fisheries. Recommending pilot interventions in select states across poultry, dairy, fisheries, and horticulture, he concluded that ICFA's credibility would depend on delivering a few deep, high-yield interventions rather than a broad, diffuse agenda.





**Dr. Ashish Kumar Bhutani (IAS), Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation,** highlighted the launch of the new cooperative policy document as a key step in strengthening India's cooperative movement. He shared that the policy was shaped through an extensive consultative process, involving 17 meetings and four regional workshops. Emphasizing the role of cooperatives in driving inclusive agricultural growth, he also participated in discussions on agro-ecological transitions, enhancing productivity, and linking agriculture to employment and nutrition. Dr. Bhutani acknowledged ICFA's role as a vital policy think tank and stressed the need for stronger collaboration between government, industry, and academia to drive impactful reforms.

**Ms. Alka Upadhyay, Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying,** stressed the urgent need for a strategic shift in supporting the livestock sector, making it economically viable and attractive for youth. She noted that while agriculture's Gross Value Output (GVO) has declined, livestock GVO continues to grow, underlining its rising significance. However, this growth is dependent on a strong agricultural base, with rising feed and fodder costs—exacerbated by maize diversion for ethanol—posing challenges. She called for sustained investment in feed and fodder management, genetic gains, and breed improvement across species.



Highlighting India's position as the world's largest milk producer, she urged leveraging this strength for global market opportunities through processing expansion, export strategies, disease control, and certification systems. She advocated integrated livestock farming models, a national breeding policy for underrepresented species, and reform of financing mechanisms to improve credit access. Concluding, she offered to lead the drafting of a comprehensive livestock policy paper as part of ICFA's initiative to develop ten thematic policy documents for government engagement.

**Dr. Anju Sharma (IAS) - ACS, Department of Agriculture, Government of Gujarat,** expressed her interest in all the ICFA initiatives and activities. She emphasized the importance of policy support, strengthening digital infrastructure in agriculture, and promoting integrated farming models tailored to regional needs.

**Dr. Harsh Kumar Bhanwala, Chairman, Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd.,** called for robust digital infrastructure and accessible agricultural data to drive innovation and entrepreneurship. Citing challenges faced by startups due to fragmented, non-digitized data, he advocated for a public digital framework with clear government-private sector roles. He emphasized the need for farmer digital literacy, drawing parallels with the impact of financial literacy in expanding banking access. He proposed a collaborative digital agriculture ecosystem to improve data usability, enhance service delivery, and create new income and employment opportunities at the grassroots.



**Shri Basant Garg (IAS), Administrative Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Government of Punjab,** noted his participation in his first ICFA board meeting. He expressed his appreciation for the Chamber's inclusive and collaborative approach and conveyed his enthusiasm about being part of such a diverse policy platform and noted the relevance of multistakeholder deliberations in strengthening agriculture in Punjab and beyond.

**Shri Sunil Kumar, Additional Secretary, Department of Science and Technology,** highlighted the Department's ongoing efforts in policy formulation and R&D to promote scientific utilization of agricultural by-products. He emphasized the potential of value-added chemicals derived from agri-residues as a transformative opportunity, underscoring the need for strategic convergence between scientific research and agri-industrial innovation. His remarks called for fostering inter-ministerial synergies to unlock the untapped potential of bio-based value chains.

**Mr. Deepak Ballani, Director General, Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA),** emphasized the Association's commitment to enhancing sugarcane productivity through emerging technologies. He shared insights into pilot projects currently being implemented in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, leveraging AI to optimize yield outcomes. His intervention highlighted the pivotal role that digital tools can play in uplifting farmer incomes and modernizing sugarcane value chains.

**Mr. Divya Kumar Gulati, Chairman, Compound Livestock Feed Manufacturers' Association (CLFMA),** underscored the livestock sector's vital dependence on agri by-products, noting that nearly all such outputs from the crop sector are absorbed into animal nutrition streams. Representing a wide spectrum of industry members—from integrators to cooperatives like Godrej and AMUL—he called attention to the need for an integrated feed strategy and stronger linkages between crop production, value addition, and animal husbandry.

**Shri Parikshit Mundhra, Chairman, Agro Chem Federation of India,** introduced his Federation's role in representing 45 agrochemical firms and emphasized the importance of rationalizing input use through science-backed practices. As a key executive at Willowood Chemicals Ltd., he articulated the urgency of aligning agrochemical innovation with environmental safety, while addressing farmer productivity challenges. He called for cohesive regulatory support and data-driven outreach to promote safe and efficient input adoption.

**Mr. Meenesh Shah, Chairman, National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)**, offered insights into NDDB's efforts in strengthening the dairy ecosystem, particularly through its subsidiaries and national cooperative institutions. He highlighted the growing strategic relevance of dairy in national nutrition and employment, and emphasized the importance of localized manufacturing, integrated infrastructure, and technology transfer to enhance operational efficiency and sustainability in dairy production.

**Mr. R.K. Tiwari (IAS Retd), Chairman, Global Grains & Pulses Council (GGPC)**, reiterated the centrality of water management to sustainable agriculture by reflecting on his extensive administrative experience. Drawing from his leadership in the irrigation and water sectors, he emphasized the climate-agriculture-water nexus and advocated for integrated water-use strategies. His remarks also touched upon social responsibility, underscoring the need to embed charitable values within institutional mandates.

**Mr. Raman Mittal, Executive Director, International Tractors Limited**, expressed his appreciation for the platform, marking his second participation in an ICFA board meeting. He highlighted the critical role of farm mechanization and precision tools in improving agricultural productivity. His intervention reaffirmed the importance of sustained private sector engagement in policy forums to co-develop actionable, technology-driven solutions for Indian farmers.



**Dr. Vibha Dhawan, Director General, The Energy and Resources Institute**, addressed the complex interplay between climate change, pesticide use, and livestock health. She called for more participatory dialogues to generate actionable solutions, and emphasized TERI's ongoing research on biogas and biogas slurry utilization. She encouraged participants to share innovative ideas that could inform future ICFA-led research and climate mitigation frameworks.

**Mr. Rajvir Rath, Director – Agriculture Affairs & Policy, Bayer Crop Science**, discussed Bayer's global footprint across pharmaceuticals, consumer health, and agriculture, with agriculture forming the core of its India operations. He highlighted export contributions and stressed the importance of strategic responses to challenges such as cotton distress. His intervention focused on harnessing global best practices to drive policy coherence and input efficacy in the Indian context.



**Mr. Tarun Sawhney, Vice Chairman & Managing Director, Triveni Engineering and Industries Ltd.,** reflected on the evolving ecosystem of agriculture and underlined the role of technology, trade, and multistakeholder dialogue in shaping future-ready agri-policy. He advocated for a shared responsibility approach, where all stakeholders, from enterprises to policymakers that can collaborate to resolve system-wide bottlenecks and build resilient value chains.

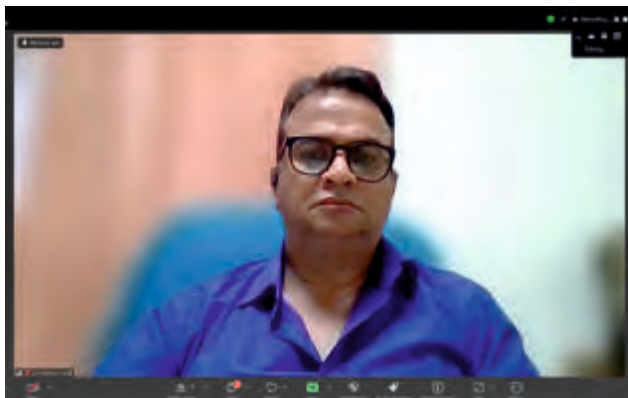
**Mr. Arun Raste, Managing Director, National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange,** emphasized the importance of collaboration to counteract policy fragmentation. He called for a unified national approach to commodity market development and advocated for strengthening forward linkages to ensure better price realization for farmers. His remarks reinforced the need for inclusive governance in market systems to unlock rural prosperity.

**Ms. Sandeepa Kanitkar, Chairperson & Managing Director, Kan Biosys Pvt. Ltd.,** shared her company's long-standing work in standardizing microbial formulations for sustainable agriculture. With a 250-member team, Kan Biosys focuses on soil health, crop nutrition, and biopesticides. Her remarks drew attention to the need for regulatory streamlining and greater institutional support for bio-input industries that hold promise for ecological balance and farmer profitability.

**Mr. Jagdish Prasad Meena (IAS Retd), Former Secretary General, Indian Beverage Association,** briefly introduced himself and conveyed his interest in the discussions ahead. His presence added administrative depth to the deliberations, reflecting the continued relevance of experienced leadership in guiding agricultural transformation through structured policy dialogues.

**Dr. Raghav Jadli, President, All India Food Processors Association,** stressed the need for technological upgrades in post-harvest management, citing recent mango crises in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu as examples of losses from poor infrastructure and mechanical harvesting gaps. He highlighted inconsistent supply chains, contamination issues, and frequent export rejections—particularly in the organic segment—as barriers to competitiveness. Emphasizing robust quality control and policy support, he reaffirmed his commitment to advancing technology adoption, ensuring supply consistency, and strengthening India's position in global agri-food markets.

**Mr. Rajasekhara Chinthapally (IFS Retd.), Ambassador, Government of India,** offered valuable administrative insights regarding upcoming ICFA engagements and coordination with government departments. He also acknowledged the significance of the upcoming Delhi Dialogue on Sustainable Agriculture (DDSA) and emphasized the need for strategic planning and alignment with national priorities.



**Mr. Bahadur Ali, Managing Director, IB Group,** underscored the poultry industry's role in improving rural livelihoods, particularly through backyard poultry systems for smallholder farmers. He advocated partnerships with SRLMs and NGOs, expansion of processing infrastructure, and capacity building for exports. Supporting technology adoption and research-driven solutions, he called for closer collaboration with government laboratories to address industry challenges. He also highlighted the need for a national strategy to boost productivity in key crops like sugarcane to strengthen food security and self-sufficiency.



**Mr. Deepak Pareek, Director, Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA),** emphasized the importance of the upcoming Grainsworld event as a pivotal platform to address challenges in the grain and commodity sectors. He noted that agricultural commodities are central to both food security and trade policy, and called for policies that benefit farmers while also enabling robust market engagement. He stressed that such initiatives would strengthen ICFA's engagement with policymakers and industry stakeholders.

**Mr. Vivek Mathur, Executive Director, ICFA,** highlighted ICFA's critical role in bridging the government and private sectors by convening diverse stakeholders. He encouraged the synthesis of key insights from the meeting into actionable agendas and emphasized the need for sustained collaboration to reinforce ICFA's leadership in the agri-food policy space.

**Dr. M.J. Khan, Chairman Emeritus, Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA),** underlined the alignment between ICFA's initiatives and the specific needs of regional and partner institutions. He emphasized strengthening internal communication with directors and enhancing regional engagement. He also highlighted the India-Africa Agriculture Forum and the upcoming Cotton Mission as key opportunities to elevate Indian agriculture globally and promote technology adoption across value chains.

**Mr. Maniprasad, Advisor, ICFA** emphasized the importance of maintaining a focused agenda and supported the structured approach proposed for ICFA's strategic planning. He highlighted the need to strengthen the secretariat through domain-specific advisors and to develop sustainable revenue models. He also recommended incorporating effective monitoring and evaluation systems to enhance ICFA's operational efficiency and long-term institutional growth.

### ***Closing Remarks***

Dr. Tarun Shridhar concluded the meeting by expressing his gratitude to all participants for their meaningful contributions and thoughtful insights. He emphasized that the discussions reflected a strong alignment with ICFA's mission and provided valuable direction for its future course of action. Dr. Shridhar assured that all key suggestions would be carefully reviewed and integrated into ICFA's strategic agenda, with a focus on delivering impactful and collaborative outcomes.



## Action Points:

### 1. Shri Suresh Prabhu

- **Organize a National Agri-Tech & Start-up Summit** - Bring together agri-startups and technologies from across India by the end of the year.
- **Create a Vertical for Agri-Startups on the Social Stock Exchange** - Enable agri-entrepreneurs to access funding through a dedicated exchange platform.
- **Improve Water Use Efficiency in Agriculture** - Prioritize water conservation and efficiency as a key policy area.
- **Support Responsible Use of Biotechnology** - Promote adoption of biotech solutions while addressing environmental and ethical concerns.
- **Develop a Soft Advocacy Model Based on Science and Evidence** - Influence policy through data-driven, non-confrontational advocacy.
- **Form Subcommittees on Strategic Issues** - Create expert-led working groups to address priority areas like feed, exports, and climate change.
- **Strengthen Secretariat with Member Support** - Seek financial and personnel support from member organizations to run ICFA operations effectively.
- **Address Policy Fragmentation Through Multi-Stakeholder Platforms** - Position ICFA as a neutral forum to align diverse interests and reduce conflicts in policymaking.
- **Engage Youth in Agriculture and Policy** - Leverage the rising interest of young people in agriculture to drive innovation and reform.
- **Generate Independent Revenue Through Flagship Events** - Host events and activities to fund ICFA initiatives and reduce reliance on external funding.

### 2. Dr. Tarun Shridhar

- **Identify Key Focus Areas for Policy Development** - Select 3–4 critical issues across the agricultural-animal husbandry value chain (e.g., GM crops, feed & fodder, backyard poultry) to serve as anchor topics for robust policy documents.
- **Engage with the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying** - Establish active coordination with DAHD to support policy alignment, particularly on livestock feed, fodder security, and integrated sectoral development.
- **Draft a Comprehensive Policy Paper on Feed and Fodder** - Lead the preparation of a detailed document addressing current challenges, proposed interventions, and implementation mechanisms for sustainable feed and fodder systems.
- **Facilitate Consultations on Backyard Poultry Initiatives** - Organize stakeholder discussions on promoting backyard poultry, with emphasis on branding products as “from small farmers” to enhance market access and rural livelihoods.
- **Promote Agriculture-Livestock Integration** - Develop policy recommendations that ensure agricultural support mechanisms (e.g., crop planning, agri-waste utilization) are effectively linked to animal husbandry growth.

- **Integrate Diverse Stakeholder Interests Across the Value Chain** - Build consensus around complex issues by involving policymakers, private sector, researchers, and farmer organizations in structured dialogues.
- **Set Clear Timelines and Deliverables** - Establish topic-specific work plans and define milestones for each selected theme.
- **Identify and Mobilize Resource Persons Within One Week** - Create a list of domain experts, young researchers, and practitioners to lead and support policy drafting on each selected issue.
- **Maintain a Policy Document Delivery Rate of One per Month** - Ensure systematic drafting, review, and dissemination of at least one policy paper per month, in alignment with ICFA's strategic goals.

## Recommendations

- ✓ **Prepare state-specific agriculture strategies** - Collaborate with ministries and state governments to design region-focused agricultural plans.
- ✓ **Promote nutrition-led agriculture** - Align farming systems with nutrition and health goals, following the Prime Minister's vision.
- ✓ **Strengthen digital agriculture and literacy** - Develop digital infrastructure and literacy programs in partnership with NABARD and private entities.
- ✓ **Formulate livestock feed policy** - Work with the Department of Animal Husbandry on feed, fodder, and productivity strategies using agri-waste.
- ✓ **Engage private and global partners** - Strengthen collaboration with industry and forums like the World Agriculture Forum for policy and innovation.
- ✓ **Showcase agri-tech and startups** - Host a national event to highlight innovations and explore a dedicated agri-startup vertical on the Social Stock Exchange.
- ✓ **Support climate and resource efficiency research** - Compile studies on water use, ethanol, and climate change for informed policy inputs.
- ✓ **Institutionalize policy processes and funding** - Set up expert subcommittees, engage board members, and build a sustainable funding model for ICFA's operations

## ICFA Corporate Members



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