



भारतीय कृषि एवं खाद्य परिषद्
INDIAN CHAMBER OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

National Conference on Quality Agri Inputs

Addressing the Challenge of Spurious Inputs in Indian Agriculture

5th September 2025 | India International Centre, New Delhi



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National Conference on Quality Agri Inputs

5 September 2025 | 09:00 AM – 5:00 PM India International Centre, New Delhi

Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture, recognized by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is a national institution committed to advancing India's food and agriculture sectors. It leads in policy advocacy, trade facilitation, technology promotion and agribusinesses, while also serving as a global platform for investment support, business partnerships and dialogue.

With 20+ sector-specific Working Groups and various Councils, and farmer focussed agenda, ICFA represents stakeholders across the agri-food value chain. By addressing emerging challenges and fostering international collaborations, it works to boost farmers' incomes, promote innovation, and position Indian agriculture prominently on the global stage.

To address the pressing challenge of fake, spurious, counterfeit, sub-standard agri-inputs, the ICFA had the privilege of convening the **National Conference on Quality Agri Inputs**. Organized in alignment with the call of the Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture for a nationwide drive against such malpractices, the Conference provided a timely and significant platform for dialogue among senior representatives of government, regulatory authorities, industry leaders, research institutions, farmer organizations, and trade associations.

The deliberations of the Conference were guided by the following priorities:

1. **Curtailling counterfeit and substandard agri-inputs** – strengthening enforcement systems and ensuring strict compliance in seeds, pesticides, and fertilizers.
2. **Promoting transparency and accountability** – fostering fair distribution practices, mandating sales only against valid bills, and addressing coercive mechanisms such as forced tagging.
3. **Harnessing digital technologies** – enabling effective monitoring, grievance redressal mechanisms, and awareness campaigns to safeguard farmers' interests.
4. **Encouraging self-regulation and global best practices** – motivating industry stakeholders to embrace responsibility while aligning with international standards.
5. **Safeguarding agricultural exports** – examining the adverse implications of poor-quality inputs on India's global competitiveness and sensitising stakeholders to the need for quality assurance.

Welcome Address by Dr. Tarun Shridhar, Director General, Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture

Delivering the welcome address, Dr. Tarun Shridhar highlighted the pivotal role of quality seeds, fertilisers, stimulants, and pesticides in ensuring productive farming and safeguarding food and nutrition security. He cautioned that any compromise in their quality undermines farm economics and weakens India's global standing in agriculture. Stressing the urgency of the issue, he called for a robust regulatory framework to guarantee the use of genuine inputs and strict action against spurious products, thereby setting the tone for the technical sessions that followed.



Session : 1

From Counterfeit to Confidence: Strengthening India's Agri-Input Systems



Smt. Neelkamal Darbari (Rtd. IAS), Former Secretary, Government of India, in her opening, reflected on the continued challenges in agriculture, including counterfeit inputs, opaque procurement, overuse of pesticides, and heavy reliance on urea. She stressed the need for farmer awareness, balanced nutrient use, and technology-driven solutions such as blockchain, IoT, and certification systems for transparency and accountability.

Dr. R G Agarwal, Chairman Emeritus, Dhanuka Agritech Ltd, highlighted the impact of spurious pesticides on productivity and farmer incomes, while pointing to gaps in technology access, fair pricing, and input quality. He called for government focus on smallholders, stronger seed and insurance systems, and adoption of digitalisation and global best practices to enhance competitiveness and sustainability.

Mr. Rajit Choksi, President, NBIF, underscored the need for stronger institutional and policy linkages in agriculture, aligning practices with fiscal frameworks like GST. He proposed earmarking CSR contributions for research, innovation, and farmer welfare, and

advocated wider adoption of eco-friendly bio-stimulants supported by government-industry collaboration.

Dr. Indra Mani, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Vasantrao Naik Marathwada Krishi Vidyapeeth, Parbani emphasized the importance of holistic agricultural development through better farm machinery, transparent licensing, and digitalisation. He called for science-led, evidence-based policies and collective efforts to empower farmers and position agriculture as a driver of India's economic growth. He emphasised that collaborative action across institutions is essential for ensuring sustainability and competitiveness



Session : 2

Ensuring Quality and Compliance in Agri Inputs



Mr. Sahil Malik, Secretary General, NBIF (Moderator), began the session by raising concern over spurious bio-stimulants, noting that less than half of nearly 1,300 applications were cleared. He stressed the need to demystify bio-stimulants, highlight their benefits for soil health and productivity, and improve farmer awareness at the grassroots. Calling for stronger government-industry collaboration.

Dr. Pushplata Singh, Director, The Energy and Resource Institute, highlighted the risks of excessive urea use, which has degraded soils and contributed to climate change. She underlined the potential of nanotechnology when applied judiciously under strict safety standards and urged efforts to debunk misconceptions around its use. Stressing the importance of transparency and farmer empowerment.

Dr. Prafull Gadge, Founder & CEO, Biome Technologies, underscored the urgent need for stronger quality testing and reliable extension services to protect farmers from exploitation. He cautioned that spurious products, often sold with institutional complicity, erode farmer trust and sustainability.

Stressing that healthy soil underpins a healthy nation, he urged decisive regulatory action to safeguard both cultivators and industry.

Dr. R.P.S. Yadav, DGM and Head, IFFCO-FMD, emphasised that spurious inputs not only reduce productivity but also endanger farmer livelihoods. He called for eliminating counterfeit products, addressing pricing disparities, and strengthening traceability systems. Highlighting IFFCO's commitment to quality, he urged policy reforms that ensure fair access and robust quality control frameworks.

Mr. H.S. Grewal, Farmer, stressed that genuine seeds are central to sustainable farming and reliable yields. He highlighted the value of underutilised practices, such as natural pest management, and called for greater research and farmer education. Advocating recognition of organic farming, he underlined its potential to provide resilience, sustainability, and environmental protection.

Session : 3

Technology & Traceability to Ensure Quality Inputs



Mr. RK Tripathi, Director, NSAI underscored the importance of strict quality compliance in agri-inputs, warning that spurious products erode productivity and farmer trust. He called for systemic reforms through a “One Nation, One License” framework, digital traceability tools, and modernised testing systems. Emphasising technology-driven solutions and awareness campaigns, he underlined the need to safeguard farmer welfare and strengthen sectoral resilience.

Mr. Raghavan Sampathkumar, Executive Director, FSII, cautioned against oversimplifying the issue of spurious inputs, noting their deepening impact on farmers, particularly cotton growers. He stressed that collective responsibility across the value chain is essential, but weak enforcement and persistent farmer knowledge gaps remain major hurdles. Calling for stronger awareness and capacity-building.

Dr. Nutan Kaushik, Director General, Amity Food & Agriculture Foundation, highlighted the role of technology in ensuring quality agri-inputs, stressing the need for detection kits, rapid testing, and traceability systems. She pointed to innovations like

hyperspectral technology and real-time monitoring to build credibility. Emphasising that authentic information is as vital as technology; she called for bridging knowledge gaps to ensure transparency, sustainability, and farmer empowerment.

Mr. Durgesh Chandra, Secretary General, Crop Life, outlined challenges in detecting spurious products, stressing the importance of strengthening traceability and simplifying complex regulations. He noted that while steps like GST reductions are helpful, stricter action against counterfeiters and effective use of technology are vital.

Mr. Archit Karnawat, Director of Quality Control and Production, Gentex Agri Inputs Pvt. Ltd., highlighted that weak implementation of regulations allows spurious products to persist, stressing the urgent need for uniform SOPs and a centralised framework. He underlined the role of technology and reliable information in strengthening monitoring and countering misinformation. Concluding, he called for regulation, farmer awareness, and digital solutions to eliminate spurious products and uphold quality.

Session : 4

Value Chains, Trade and Risk Management



Mr. Vipin Saini, CEO, BASAI (Moderator), started the session by stressing the need to strengthen value chains and improve risk management in Indian agriculture. He highlighted excessive pesticide use and counterfeit seeds as major concerns, urging a science-based approach and cautioning against abrupt, unscientific policy interventions. He further pointed to policy gaps and trade barriers, emphasising harmonisation and compliance with export standards to protect consumer health and India's credibility.

Dr. Narendra Dadlani, Former Director, Asia & Pacific Seed Association, called for stronger regulatory frameworks to curb misuse of agro-inputs and illegal seeds that erode productivity and farmer confidence. He highlighted India's potential as a global seed hub but noted that inconsistent policies and political interference weaken progress. On bio-stimulants, he described current regulations as incomplete and urged science-based policies to foster innovation, credibility, and sustainable growth.

Dr. Dinesh K Abrol, Professor - TRCSS, Jawaharlal Nehru University, underscored that the Pesticide

Management Bill must be inclusive and rooted in science rather than politics. He cautioned against a "one-size-fits-all" approach, calling for region-specific solutions aligned with India's agro-climatic diversity. On IPR, he warned that compliance burdens farmers and disadvantages Indian companies, stressing that policies must integrate environmental, social, and economic dimensions for sustainability.

Mr. Rajat Srivastava, General Manager, General Crop Science, focused on the gaps in intellectual property rights (IPR) with regulatory frameworks, particularly in microbial pesticides under the Biodiversity Act. He cautioned that politically driven pesticide bans disrupt markets and farmer confidence, stressing the need for alignment with MRL and Codex standards. Underscoring Integrated Pest Management Systems (IPMS), he called for stronger industry-government collaboration to safeguard innovation, protect farmers, and enhance competitiveness.

Mr. Sushant Narang, Senior Manager, CNH Industrial, outlined strategies for risk management in agri-value chains, including diversifying suppliers, precision

farming, predictive analytics, and stronger insurance and forecasting systems. He stressed the role of public-private partnerships in scalable solutions and underscored digital traceability tools like blockchain to enhance transparency.

Audience Reflections

The session highlighted concerns over restrictions on chemicals and the incomplete implementation of Food Law amendments, which often hinder India's compliance with international trade requirements. Participants questioned how exports can grow when knowledge gaps around safety standards persist, while also pointing to unethical pesticide use and the need for stronger awareness, regulation, and accountability. Responding, Dr. Dinesh K. Abrol shared his perspective on intellectual property rights (IPR), stressing their role in shaping fair and sustainable agricultural practices.



Session : 5

Sustainable Growth & Impact on Farming Community due to Spurious Inputs



Mr. Rajiv Choudhary, Vice President, NBIF (Moderator), opened the session by highlighting the damaging impact of spurious inputs on productivity and farmer confidence, stressing the need for systemic interventions and stronger extension services. He urged companies to take greater responsibility in providing farmer-focused support, alongside stronger private-public collaboration to bridge gaps and promote sustainable growth. He concluded that empowering farmers with knowledge and reliable inputs is key to building resilience and long-term trust in Indian agriculture.

Smt. Neelkamal Darbari (Rtd. IAS), Former Secretary, Government of India, addressed the critical issue of spurious inputs and weak procurement systems cause major losses for farmers and hinder income growth. She called for accountability, resource optimisation, and regenerative practices, while stressing the role of digital technologies, blockchain, and timely fund release in strengthening extension services and building trust. She reiterated that coordinated action across government, industry, and institutions is essential to protect farmers and

safeguard the credibility of Indian agriculture.

Mr. Hariom Singh, Head Sales & Business Development, Asia Pacific Region Converte Pty Ltd., highlighted the challenge of spurious and unregistered products in agri-retail markets. Drawing on global examples, he cited Kenya's use of scratch cards as a simple, low-cost solution to secure supply chains. He recommended farmer-friendly, practical measures suited to the Indian context, stressing that meaningful dialogue is essential to design strategies that are both effective and economically viable.

Dr. Kalyan Goswami, Director General, ACFI, drew attention to the counterfeit and substandard inputs that account for nearly 25-30 % of agricultural losses, causing widespread distress. He underlined persistent gaps in extension services and called for stronger regulatory enforcement and innovative PPP models to improve outreach. Citing the Guntur chilli sector, he illustrated how misuse of inputs harms crop quality and incomes, while advocating for organic and natural farming as sustainable alternatives.

Mr. Diptesh Mukherjee, Founder, Xen Farms, centred his remarks on the urgent need to revive soil health as the basis of sustainable productivity. He highlighted the role of carbon-based fertilisers in restoring fertility and called for farmer education on sustainable practices to prevent degradation. Emphasising holistic biotechnology solutions, he urged the integration of digital tools and better communication to empower farmers with resilient, long-term practices.

Audience Reflections

The interactive session raised concerns about the continued circulation of banned pesticides, with Mr. Rajiv Choudhary noting that past usage and perceived effectiveness contribute to their persistence. On farmer welfare, Smt. Neelkamal Darbari stressed that while many decisions lie within judicial processes, government departments are making consistent efforts to extend support. Dr. Tarun Shridhar called for more structured government-industry engagement, urging that industry be enabled to grow independently. Participants also suggested strengthening the Animal Husbandry Department to reduce losses from spurious inputs and enhance sustainable farming systems.

Concluding Remarks by Mr. Vivek Mathur, Executive Director, Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture

In his vote of thanks, Mr. Vivek Mathur described the deliberations as both timely and pivotal for advancing Indian agriculture. He emphasised that the insights shared during the sessions hold strong potential to improve farming practices and reinforce national food security. He called for their careful consideration by ministries and decision-making bodies. With this, he expressed confidence that the recommendations would translate into actionable policies, directly supporting farmers and strengthening the resilience of the sector.



Recommendations

- ✓ **Strengthen Regulatory Mechanisms** – Streamline and enhance enforcement systems to curb the manufacture and sale of counterfeit and substandard agri inputs.
- ✓ **Digital Traceability & Monitoring** – Leverage digital technologies such as QR codes, blockchain, and IoT for input traceability, authentication, and transparent supply chains.
- ✓ **GST Reforms for Farmers** – Allow farmers to claim GST input credit of up to ₹50,000 per annum to ease access to quality inputs and technologies. Beyond this threshold, all agri inputs and farm machinery should be placed under the 5% GST slab to enhance affordability and accessibility.
- ✓ **Capacity Building & Awareness** – Launch nationwide awareness campaigns and structured training programs for farmers, dealers, and FPOs on identifying and accessing genuine inputs.
- ✓ **Public-Private Partnerships** – Foster collaborations among government agencies, research institutions, the private sector, and FPOs to ensure the timely availability of high-quality inputs.
- ✓ **Policy Advocacy & Uniform Quality Standards** – Work with policymakers to establish uniform quality benchmarks and strengthen assurance systems across states.
- ✓ **One Nation, One License Framework** – Introduce a unified licensing system for agri-inputs across states to reduce duplication, streamline compliance, and strengthen nationwide enforcement.
- ✓ **Strengthen Quality Testing Infrastructure** – Modernize seed and input testing laboratories with rapid detection kits, sensor-based tools, and updated standards to ensure timely, reliable, and accessible quality verification.
- ✓ **CSR & Innovation Funding** – Mandate a share of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions from agri-businesses towards farmer training, research on safe inputs, and innovations that promote sustainable practices.
- ✓ **Farmer-Centric Extension & Technology-driven farmer support** – Expand tech-enabled advisory platforms and farmer education programs in regional languages to bridge awareness gaps, combat misinformation, and empower farmers to make informed choices.

Glimpses of the Conference





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