



भारतीय कृषि एवं खाद्य परिषद्
INDIAN CHAMBER OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

DELIBERATIONS

ICFA FIRST BOARD MEETING

3rd February 2025 | New Delhi



Deliberations from ICFA First Board Meeting

The first Board Meeting of the reconstituted Board of Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA) took place on February 3, 2025, in New Delhi. The meeting was chaired by Shri Suresh Prabhu, the newly appointed Chairman of ICFA. He is Chancellor of Rishihood University and Former Union Cabinet Minister with a distinguished career, holding key portfolios like Railways, Commerce & Industry, and Civil Aviation. He serves as a Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics and has contributed to several global strategic dialogues, including engagements with the World Economic Forum and the G20.

Shri Prabhu has been a strong advocate for sustainable development, renewable energy, and agricultural reforms, playing a pivotal role in shaping India's economic and environmental policies.

The meeting focused on identifying key opportunities for expanding ICFA's impact and financial sustainability. Board members and industry leaders engaged in in-depth discussions on strengthening policy advocacy, fostering strategic partnerships, and enhancing resource mobilization. The deliberations emphasized the need to position ICFA as a knowledge-driven institution that not only influences policy but also drives actionable initiatives in areas such as sustainable agriculture, agri-exports, digital transformation, and climate resilience. With a strong commitment to innovation and collaboration, the board reaffirmed its vision to scale ICFA's contributions, ensuring long-term growth, financial viability, and a greater impact on India's agricultural landscape.



Welcome and Introduction to Shri Suresh Prabhu

The meeting commenced with a warm welcome extended to all participants, with special recognition given to Shri Suresh Prabhu. To mark the occasion, the Board members and attendees welcomed him with a bouquet of flowers, acknowledging his leadership and vision for the future of Indian agriculture. His presence set an optimistic tone for the discussions, reinforcing ICFA's commitment to driving impactful policy advocacy, sustainable agricultural growth, and strategic collaborations.

Welcome Address by Dr. Tarun Sridhar

Dr. Tarun Shridhar, Director General ICFA, welcomed Shri Suresh Prabhu as the newly appointed Chairman of the Chamber, expressing gratitude for his leadership. He also acknowledged the board members and dignitaries, emphasizing their expertise and contributions. Highlighting ICFA's progress under Dr. M.J. Khan, he noted the careful selection of professionals for the reconstituted board to strengthen policy advocacy in the food and agriculture sector. This meeting marked the first gathering of the new board, and Dr Shridhar thanked everyone for their participation.

Introduction of Members

Dr. M.J. Khan, Special Advisor to the World Agriculture Forum, reflected on the journey of the Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA), an idea first discussed in 2003 and officially launched in 2015. Having led ICFA for an extended period, he recently transitioned to a global role as Special Advisor to the World Agriculture Forum, where he may soon take on an elevated position. He mentioned about the leadership transition to Dr. Shridhar, former Secretary to the Government of India.

Dr. Ashok Dalwai, Co-Chairman ICFA, is a distinguished agricultural economist and policy expert. He acknowledged the Chamber's diverse expertise and its potential to address evolving agricultural challenges. Dr Dalwai had led the Committee on Doubling Farmers' Income and chaired the empowered body coordinating with state governments and ministries. He also served as CEO of the Rainfed Area Authority of India.

Dr. Tarun Sridhar, Director General ICFA, is a retired civil servant. He served as Secretary of the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying, GOI, playing a key role in its formation and the establishment of a separate fisheries department.

Mr. Meenesh Shah, Chairman, National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), highlighted NDDB's pivotal role in driving the White Revolution in India and its contributions beyond dairy, particularly in agriculture. Through its subsidiary, Madhu Dairy, NDDB provides market access to farmers, selling fruits and vegetables under the Suppal brand and edible oils under the Dhara brand.

Mr. Simon Wiebusch, President, South Asia, Bayer CropScience expressed his deep passion for agriculture in the country and his enthusiasm for working with the Board to make a meaningful difference.

Mr. Jayen Mehta, Managing Director, Amul Ltd. introduced himself as a seasoned professional with over 34 years of experience at Amul. A graduate of IRMA (Institute of Rural Management, Anand) from the 1991 batch, he has been deeply involved in the dairy sector, contributing to the growth and success of Amul, which ranks among the most iconic dairy brands globally.

Mr. Rajasekhar, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, recently retired from his diplomatic career. He expressed that he felt honoured in working under Shri Suresh Prabhu's chairmanship and commended ICFA's seamless onboarding process. With extensive diplomatic experience and a global network, he aims to strengthen ICFA's international outreach by leveraging his connections and expertise.

Mr. Atul Chaturvedi is Chairman, Renuka Sugars Ltd. with a career spanning over four decades in agribusiness. He previously served as the CEO of Adani's agribusiness division, including Adani Wilmar, for a significant period. His extensive experience and leadership in the sector have contributed to the growth and development of the agricultural industry.

Mr. R.K. Tiwari, Chairman GGPC and a former IAS officer (1985 batch, Uttar Pradesh cadre), retired last year after serving in key positions, including Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh and Chairman & Managing Director of the National Horticulture Board. With extensive experience in agriculture and cooperation, he is now engaged in multiple initiatives, including establishing an international water institution headquartered in Sweden and expanding its branch in India. Recognizing the crucial role of water in agriculture, food security, and climate, he remains actively involved in government and philanthropic projects aiming to drive meaningful changes in the sector.

Mr. J.P. Meena, Secretary General, Indian Beverage Association (IBA), is a retired Secretary of the Ministry of Food Processing, Government of India, with over 16 years of experience in the agriculture and food sectors. He has led IBA for five years, contributing significantly to policy and industry development.

Dr. Harsh Bhanwala, Chairman MCX India Ltd., has extensive experience in banking, finance, and agriculture. Currently, he serves on the board of HDFC Bank and advises agri-startups at Omnivore. From 2013 to 2020, Dr Bhanwala was Chairman of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the Government of India's apex development bank, which oversees all aspects of agricultural credit as well as the supervision of regional rural banks and cooperative banks. Dr Bhanwala has also been Chairman & Managing Director of the India Infrastructure Finance Company (IIFCL), Senior Vice President at IL&FS Water, and the Managing Director of the Delhi State Cooperative Bank. A native of Haryana and the son of a farmer, he remains deeply committed to agricultural development.

Mr. Sailesh C. Mehta, Managing Director, Deepak Fertilisers and Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd, oversees crop nutrition, mining chemicals, and industrial chemicals. The company, with nearly one million tons of NPK fertilizer production, has shifted from commodity fertilizers to crop-specific solutions, focusing on direct farmer engagement. They offer over 40 products, including bio-stimulants and water-soluble fertilizers. Mr. Mehta raised concerns over India's ₹2 lakh crore fertilizer subsidies, which have led to soil nutrient imbalances and stagnant productivity. He stressed the need for long-term policy reforms to unlock India's agricultural potential and enhance global competitiveness. His participation aims to drive meaningful sectoral change.

Mr. Ramal Mittal is Joint Managing Director, Sonalika International Tractors Limited, a leading Indian company headquartered in Shahpur, Punjab. Sonalika is India's top tractor exporter and the third largest in the domestic market. As a Fortune 500 company, it drives innovation in agricultural mechanization. Mr Mittal emphasized the need for farmers to adopt new technologies to address rising costs and challenges.

Mr. Ashish Khandelwal is Managing Director of BL Agro Industries Ltd, Bareilly. Mr. Khandelwal is an industry leader in edible oil and food processing, with a strong commitment to innovation, quality, and farmer-centric practices. Under his guidance, BL Agro has emerged as a trusted name, expanding its product portfolio and strengthening rural supply chains. He has been instrumental in promoting sustainable food processing practices and empowering farmers by ensuring fair pricing and reliable market opportunities.

Ms. Sharmila Oswal, Founder, Basillia Organics Pvt. Ltd. and recognized as the 'Millet Woman of India,' is a Social Agriculturist, Environmentalist, British Scholar, & Agro Water Diplomat from MIT Harvard, USA & NUS Singapore, specializing in water and food security. She has represented India at international forums, serves on the AEPDA Board for Nutri, Cereals, Millets and co-leads the Center of Excellence for Agriculture and Millets under the Pehla India Foundation.

Mr. K. S. Narayanaswamy is a seasoned professional with 40 years of experience in seed development. He has worked with multinational and public sector seed companies and has held leadership roles in the National Seed Association of India and the Karnataka Seed Producers Association. He is also a Director at Bangalore's Agriculture University (GKVK) and leads the Agri Innovation Center (AIC), supporting 65 Agri-startups.

Dr. Rajaram Tripathi, National General Secretary, All India Farmers Alliance, has won various prestigious awards and is recognized as being among India's richest farmers. Dr Tripathi is actively involved in farming spices and medicinal crops with 7,000 Adivasi families in Bastar, Chhattisgarh. A pioneer in organic farming, he established Bastar's first certified organic farm in 1996 and received the Best Exporter Award in 2007.

Mr. Satish Babu Gadde is a fourth-generation practitioner of cattle-based agriculture and has been decorated with many prestigious awards. Committed to sustainable farming, he focuses on extending this traditional agricultural system to areas with limited water availability. His efforts aim to promote resilience and efficiency in farming practices.

Mr. PPS Pangli is President, Borlaug Farmer Association, and is associated with the Global Farmer Network and the Nuffield Farmer Scholarship Program in Australia. His association, with 8,000 members linked to Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), has maintained a record of no farmer suicides in 50 years and is expanding to 12,000 members to enhance farmer support and agricultural advancements.

Dr. Hiresha Verma, Founder, Han Agrocare, is a farmer, entrepreneur, and industrialist specializing in medicinal mushrooms. Her enterprise cultivates mushrooms and produces nutraceuticals and functional foods, exporting to three countries. She has empowered over 10,000 women through training and buyback support, earning her the title of the Himalayan Queen of Mushrooms.

Mr. Kaushal Jaiswal, Managing Director of Rivulis Irrigation, leads the world's second-largest micro irrigation company, headquartered in Israel and the United States. In India, he serves as the President of the Irrigation Association of India, representing manufacturers of micro irrigation equipment. His leadership is instrumental in advancing irrigation technologies and promoting sustainable water management.

Some Board Members could not attend the meeting due to prior engagement.

Dr HS Oberoi is Director of the National Institute of Food Technology & Management, Bangalore. Dr. Oberoi holds a Ph.D. in Food Technology and has led research in food processing innovations. His efforts have advanced food safety, quality control, and industry-academic collaboration. He has also worked on developing new processing technologies to reduce food wastage.

Mr TR Kesavan is Group President of TAFE Limited, Chennai. Mr. Kesavan holds a degree in Mechanical Engineering and has decades of experience in agricultural mechanization. He has led innovations in farm machinery, introducing technology-driven solutions to improve farm productivity and reduce manual labor. Under his guidance, TAFE has expanded its global presence and focused on empowering small and marginal farmers.

Mr Ajit Jain is the Managing Director of Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd, Jalgaon. Mr. Jain holds a degree in Agricultural Engineering and has been instrumental in revolutionizing micro-irrigation systems. Through his leadership, Jain Irrigation has introduced precision agriculture practices, empowering farmers to enhance productivity and conserve water.

Mr Tarun Sawhney is Vice Chairman & Managing Director of Triveni Engineering and Industries Limited, Noida. Mr. Sawhney holds an MBA from a leading global university and has vast experience in the sugar and power sectors. He has led initiatives in renewable energy, industrial excellence, and sustainable production. He is also driving Triveni's innovation in bioenergy and green technologies.

Mr Arun Raste is Managing Director of NCDEX Limited, Mumbai. Mr. Raste holds a Master's degree in Business Administration and has over two decades of experience in commodity markets and agri-trade. He has played a critical role in enhancing transparency and efficiency in agricultural trading through digital platforms, benefiting farmers and stakeholders alike. Under his leadership, NCDEX has strengthened market linkages, improved price discovery mechanisms, and provided better access to national and global markets for agricultural producers.

Dr. Vibha Dhawan is Director General of The Energy & Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi. Dr. Dhawan holds a Ph.D. in Biotechnology and is a recognized leader in sustainability. She has led groundbreaking research on climate solutions, agriculture, and energy systems, driving policies and practices that promote environmental stewardship.

Mr. Bahadur Ali is Chairman of IB Group, Raipur. A pioneer in India's poultry and agri-business sector, Mr. Ali has contributed to transforming the poultry value chain with innovation and enterprise. Under his leadership, IB Group became a key player in sustainable poultry production and rural employment. He has received accolades for his contributions to the agri-business sector.

Mr. Siraj Chaudhry is former Chairman of Cargill and Chairman, SATS India Pvt. Ltd., Gurgaon. Mr. Chaudhry holds an MBA in Business Management and has over three decades of experience in food systems, supply chain management, and agri-business. He has been instrumental in modernizing food logistics and advocating food safety and sustainability.

Ms. Khair Ul Nissa is Executive Director, World Trade Centre, New Delhi. Ms. Nissa holds a Master's degree in International Business and has led initiatives to promote global trade partnerships. She has played a pivotal role in facilitating investments, driving economic growth, and enhancing India's global trade footprint. Her expertise has supported Indian MSMEs in accessing international markets.

Role of ICFA and Future Direction – Insights by Ashok Dalwai

Dr. Ashok Dalwai emphasized that ICFA members play a crucial role in transforming Indian agriculture. He highlighted the need to shift from welfare-based income support to job-led growth by encouraging capital investments and liberalizing policies. While increasing production is important, he stressed transitioning from input-heavy farming to agro-ecological models, integrating organic and natural farming as long-term strategies.

Dr Dalwai called for reforms in research and development, focusing on sustainable crop varieties and low-input farming. He emphasized that the value chain approach should replace the current production-centric mindset, ensuring efficient post-harvest management, food processing, and market access. With agriculture expected to employ at least 20% of India's workforce by 2050, it must drive job-led income growth while prioritizing nutrition security. ICFA must strengthen institutional linkages between central and state governments, facilitating policy reforms and capacity building.

Instead of rapidly expanding councils in every state, ICFA should develop financially sustainable models that can be effectively replicated. He concluded that ICFA has a major responsibility in shaping India's agricultural future by fostering sustainable growth, improving research frameworks, and driving policy interventions to enhance global competitiveness.

Opening Remarks by Shri Suresh Prabhu

In his opening remarks, Chairman ICFA Shri Suresh Prabhu emphasized that while land fragmentation is a challenge in agriculture, the greater issue lies in policy fragmentation. He stressed the need for a unified approach and commended the Chamber for bringing together diverse stakeholders. Acknowledging agriculture as the foundation of economic growth, he highlighted the necessity of increasing farmers' incomes to boost GDP and accelerate demand for industrial and service sector products.

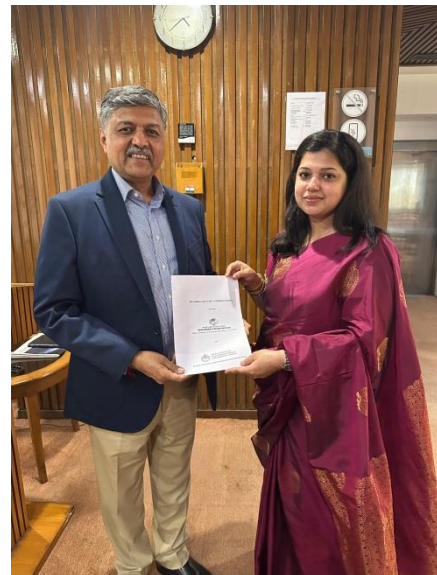


Shri Suresh Prabhu underscored the need for productivity improvements despite natural constraints like land and water. He advocated for making agriculture central to macroeconomic planning, not just as a support measure for farmers but as a strategic necessity for India's growth. He also stressed the importance of nutritional security alongside food security, calling for stronger industry-agriculture linkages to enhance productivity. Commending ICFA's efforts in establishing state-level councils, he emphasized that the involvement of state governments is crucial for effective policy implementation. He cited Telangana and Uttar Pradesh as examples where dynamic leadership has advanced agricultural initiatives. On employment, he highlighted the challenge of retaining farmers in agriculture due to low incomes and social issues, stressing the need for non-farm job creation while ensuring agriculture remains viable.

Recognizing climate change as a major threat, he called for research-driven solutions to climate-proof agriculture, particularly in managing India's limited water resources. He concluded by appreciating ICFA's role in shaping policy and fostering collaboration beyond government efforts, expressing confidence that collective expertise and dedication would drive positive change in Indian agriculture.

MoU Signing Ceremony

ICFA signed an MoU with Deepak Fertilisers and Petrochemicals Corporation Limited (DFPCL) during the Board Meeting to foster collaboration in advancing agricultural productivity and sustainability. The MoU was signed by Ms. Shreyasi Agarwal, CEO, ICFA and Mr. Sailesh C. Mehta, Chairman & Managing Director of DFPCL. Through this partnership, ICFA and DFPCL will work together to promote innovative agri-input solutions, enhance soil health management, and drive policy advocacy for a more sustainable and productive agricultural sector.



Address by Dr. MJ Khan on ICFA Role and activities

Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA) has played a pivotal role in shaping agricultural policy, trade, and innovation in India. Established through extensive deliberations since 2003, ICFA was formally conceptualized in 2015. Unlike larger industry associations, ICFA uniquely engages with central and state governments, industry leaders, and global institutions. It is the only chamber of food and agriculture recognized by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry among the 32 recognized chambers, including FICCI and CII.

ICFA has forged partnerships with top global agricultural universities, Indian research institutions like ICAR, and other key stakeholders. ICFA has established 21 industry working groups covering poultry, dairy, farm mechanization, and seeds, serving as vital industry-government interfaces. Specialized councils such as the Global Grains and Pulses Council and the India Digital Agriculture Council align with national initiatives like the Digital Agriculture Mission. ICFA was instrumental in drafting India's first-ever agricultural export policy, leading the consultation process despite competition from FICCI and CII.

Internationally, ICFA has expanded through India-Africa, India-ASEAN, India-EU, and India-Latin America councils, with plans to strengthen engagement in the Gulf region. The appointment of country directors in multiple nations reinforces its commitment to global agricultural cooperation. The Farmer Plus initiative, inspired by the World Economic Forum's Maharashtra model, integrates financial institutions, agribusinesses, and government agencies to deliver services at the district level, targeting 10,000 farmers per district.

ICFA has been a leading voice in media discussions on agricultural policy, earning recognition from key political leaders, including the Haryana Chief Minister and the Prime Minister. It played a crucial role in forming the All India Farmers Alliance (AIFA), strengthening grassroots representation. Its policy research has been cited in NITI Aayog documents, highlighting its role as a think tank.

Moving forward, ICFA is evaluating strategic directions, balancing policy advocacy with trade facilitation. Key collaborations with Bayer Crop Science, NDDDB, and other agribusiness leaders aim to drive innovation and sustainability. Through ongoing partnerships and policy engagements, ICFA remains committed to empowering farmers, fostering industry-government cooperation, and positioning India as a global leader in food and agriculture.

Comprehensive Presentation on ICFA by Ms. Shreyasi Agarwal

Ms. Shreyasi Agarwal, CEO ICFA, outlined the Chamber's comprehensive strategy and roadmap for the future. She highlighted its journey over the past six months, where ICFA has successfully launched new State Agriculture Councils in Karnataka and Telangana, with Uttar Pradesh also being active.



Efforts are underway to establish or relaunch councils in Uttarakhand, Haryana, and the Northeast region, with a target of expanding to Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and other states. The goal is to launch ten new state councils in the next year as part of a structured, quarterly rollout.

Additionally, ICFA is working towards the creation of India Continental Forums, appointing country directors across 12 to 15 nations to enhance international collaboration and structured policy engagement. To further strengthen its grassroots presence, ICFA is developing District Agriculture Councils, encouraging stakeholders to identify priority regions for engagement and intervention.

In addition, ICFA is expanding its portfolio of thematic councils and forums, launching initiatives focused on food and nutrition, digital agriculture, and international cooperation, such as the US-India Agri Forum, to facilitate knowledge exchange, policy advocacy, and industry collaboration.

Business engagement remains a key priority, with ICFA actively participating in trade delegations and organizing bilateral business interactions. The organization aims to expand corporate partnerships, increasing membership from the current 500 to 1,000 members.

To enhance collaboration, ICFA has a structured plan to sign Strategic MoUs on a quarterly basis with embassies, international organizations, and trade bodies.

On the policy and research front, ICFA aims to release ten policy papers, position papers, and industry reports, along with launching the Agriculture Policy Forum in collaboration with key industry players such as Deepak Fertilizers. Sub-committees will be established to focus on critical issues like soil health and plant nutrition.

In terms of events and conferences, ICFA has structured its activities into multiple formats, including 12 sector-specific roundtables annually to be held at monthly frequency. Major upcoming flagship events include ICFA Knowledge and Business Week, Seed World (Hyderabad, September 10-12), AgTech and AgroWorld (Bangalore), and GrainsWorld (Dubai).

Other key engagements include the Delhi Dialogue on Sustainable Agriculture and several industry interactions. Additionally, Agro World, previously held in New Delhi with participation from seven central ministers and six governors, is now being planned for Bangalore. With these strategic initiatives, ICFA is strengthening its role in policy advocacy, industry engagement, and sustainable agricultural development while fostering international collaboration and business partnerships.

Valuable Suggestions by Board members

Mr. Atul Chaturvedi emphasized that in order to remain relevant, forums must ensure active engagement from all stakeholders, each with their own businesses and interests. He highlighted that the key challenge is bringing everyone on board and fostering collective participation, stressing that this is a shared responsibility rather than an individual effort. He emphasized three key focus areas: productivity & sustainability, profitability for all stakeholders (including farmers), and strong policy advocacy. He highlighted that policy advocacy is crucial for driving meaningful change and ensuring long-term impact in the agricultural sector.

Mr. Juzar S. Khorakiwala emphasized that the Chamber should prioritize a few key areas in agriculture rather than spreading its efforts too thin. He noted that while creating a desire for change is one challenge, sustaining it is even more difficult. Drawing from his experience as the President of the Indian Merchants Chamber, he stressed that without a clear focus, initiatives often lose momentum. He proposed that the Chamber should identify two or three major areas—such as farmer prices, soil health, or nutrition—and maintain a long-term focus to create meaningful impact. This concentrated approach would enhance the Chamber's influence on government policies and state-level agricultural ecosystems.

Additionally, he highlighted the fragmentation of agricultural advocacy, noting that thousands of associations independently approach the central and state governments, creating confusion among policymakers. Given this landscape, he suggested that ICFA should distinguish and differentiate itself by focusing on a specific, well-defined agenda to stand out and drive meaningful change.

Mr. Simon Wiebusch emphasized the need for the Chamber to define a clear North Star for Indian agriculture, aligning with the nation's vision of becoming a developed country by 2047. He cautioned against turning discussions into a broad wish list and urged a firm stance on critical agricultural issues, such as self-sufficiency in edible oils, global competitiveness, and India's role in feeding the world. He stressed that national agricultural priorities should be based on economic and environmental realities, including climate change and water availability. While institutions like NITI Aayog play a role, he noted a lack of visible progress in setting a long-term vision for Indian agriculture. He suggested that if the Chamber could take the lead in defining India's agricultural identity and priorities for 2047, it would be a powerful and impactful contribution.

Mr. Sailesh C. Mehta emphasized an outcome-based approach to ensure a measurable impact and return on investment for everyone's time. He proposed identifying three key focus areas for the next 12 months, tracking progress quarterly to ensure accountability and course correction.

He highlighted two key priorities:

1. **Improving Nutrient Use Efficiency:** Currently, only 40% of fertilizers applied are absorbed by crops, with 60% lost, causing pollution and inefficiencies. Enhancing efficiency to 85-90% through technology, policy advocacy, and farmer engagement could boost yields, reduce subsidies, and improve soil health.
2. **Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) for Fertilizer Subsidies:** With the government spending ₹1.5 lakh crore on subsidies, reforming the system through DBT could ensure direct financial support to farmers, improving efficiency and economic outcomes.

He urged experienced leaders to help define these focus areas, ensuring alignment with national priorities. He suggested focusing on high-impact areas first, celebrating successes, and then moving on to new priorities to build long-term momentum.

Dr. Hiresha Verma emphasized the need for a state-wise approach to address agricultural challenges effectively. She highlighted the untapped potential of medicinal mushrooms, a trillion-dollar global industry dominated by China, growing at a CAGR of 7.2%. She pointed out the lack of a dedicated government policy for medicinal mushrooms in India, limiting subsidies and support for farmers. Given their proven health benefits and superior quality, she urged policy inclusion and promotion to help India compete in the global market.

Ms. Sharmila Oswal emphasized ICFA's role in bridging gaps between key ministries to ensure a more cohesive agricultural policy. She highlighted the need for a clear roadmap and financial sustainability for ICFA's long-term impact. She urged collective responsibility from all members to support ongoing efforts and strengthen the organization's effectiveness.

Dr. Glory Swarupa emphasized the need for stronger collaboration between MSMEs and agriculture, highlighting branding and marketing as key to improving farmer profits. She offered MSME sector support to enhance value addition and market access for agricultural products.

Mr. Raman Mittal emphasized the need for district-specific agricultural branding based on soil, climate, and water availability, rather than just market prices. He advocated for a structured ecosystem similar to the automotive sector, where quality and vendor networks drive exports. Using examples like Nasik for wine and Himachal for apples, he stressed the promotion of export-quality produce. Additionally, he highlighted the need to shift from single to multiple cropping systems to boost productivity and expressed willingness to support a well-structured, long-term initiative.

Dr. Balvinder Shukla, Vice Chancellor of Amity University, has led the institution in actively engaging with agriculture and horticulture verticals, focusing on productivity, supply chains, and food preservation. The university conducts farmer training programs and is set to host 200 Gram Pradhans to discuss agriculture, skill development, and technology integration. Amity has also established centers for drone usage and AI in farming.

Dr. Glory Swarupa is Director General, National Institute for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (ni-msme), a key institution, with focus on policy advocacy and capacity-building for MSMEs and government ministries. Under her leadership, ni-msme conducts extensive research and initiatives to foster entrepreneurship among professionals and government officers.

Mr. S.R. Reddy, is Founder and Managing Director of Sresta Natural Bioproducts, known for its brand 24 Mantra Organic, which operates across 12 Indian states and exports to 40 countries. He is also the Founder Chairman of the Association of Indian Organic Industry, contributing to the growth of the organic sector in India.

Mr. Juzar Khorakiwala, Chairman, Biostadt India Limited, a leading agrochemical company specializing in biostimulants, crop protection, aquaculture, and seeds. He also serves as the Chairman of BASAI, an association representing nearly 30 agrochemical companies focused on biostimulants in India. Established 4–5 years ago, BASAI plays a key role in advocating for the biostimulant industry.

Mr. KS Narayanaswamy emphasized that the Chamber should focus on both food and agriculture, highlighting the need to enhance productivity to avoid future challenges. He stressed the effective utilization of innovations, emerging technologies, and digital transformation in agriculture. Additionally, he underscored the importance of addressing food shortages in pulses and oil crops, warning that losing focus could lead to foreign exchange losses and impact agricultural sustainability.

Mr. Rajasekhar emphasized the convergence of desirability and feasibility in deliberations, given limited resources and time. He highlighted fertilizer absorption and utilization as a key priority and stressed shifting focus from food security to nutrition security, as malnutrition and stunting remain major concerns. Drawing from his diplomatic experience, he offered support in leveraging international examples like Vietnam and South Korea. He suggested curating an action plan with programs, visits, and interactions for time-bound implementation and assured of his availability to contribute.

Mr. PPS Pangli noted that the renaming of the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare still lacks a clear definition of "welfare", recommending that benchmarks be set for fertilizer, seed availability, technology, and drone applications. He stressed the need for policy interventions on drone technology, pointing out that air force clearances are delaying adoption, despite its potential to reduce pesticide use by 60-70% and minimize environmental damage. He urged ICFA to engage with ministries for faster policy approvals.

Mr. KM Jayahari, Country Director, Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU) India emphasized the need for ICFA to carve out a specific niche to effectively bridge the gap between field-level stakeholders, civil society, the private sector, and the government. Highlighting existing policy gaps, he stressed ICFA's crucial role in fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration and translating field insights into actionable policies. He shared insights from a three-days event in Delhi, where 220 experts and organizations convened to discuss food systems. The outcomes are being compiled into a Food System Hub, a digital repository with a geospatial database providing location-specific data on organizations, projects, and resources. He urged ICFA to strengthen its role in policy advocacy by drafting policy papers and enhancing engagement with policymakers and the private sector to drive impactful reforms.

Dr. Rajaram Tripathi highlighted the disconnect between agricultural policies and ground realities, questioning the sustainability of farming as a profession. While agribusiness sectors are thriving, farmers continue to struggle, with 1.5 crore farmers having left farming, a critical issue needing urgent attention. He emphasized the need for a closer examination of policy implementation to bridge the gap between government initiatives and the real challenges faced by farmers.

Dr. Balvinder Shukla emphasized leveraging academic institutions for research and innovation in agriculture to address key challenges. She proposed industry-academia-farmer meets with government participation to foster dialogue and develop solutions. Highlighting Amity University's initiatives, including community radio programs, farmer support during COVID-19, and global conferences, she expressed willingness to collaborate with ICFA in research, events, and skill development. She also mentioned Amity's existing industry partnerships, including Dhanuka, and extended full support to ICFA's initiatives.

Mr. JP Meena emphasized the need to enhance equity research investments in agriculture, drawing inspiration from private sector research models to drive transformation. He highlighted the lack of synchronization in the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative and stressed the importance of bridging gaps for more effective implementation. He proposed that ICFA develop a structured advocacy model, serving as a benchmark for other organizations, making it easier to gain government support and active participation. By leveraging ICFA's knowledge base and organizational capacity, he recommended expanding revenue-generation opportunities through such engagements while also mobilizing investments for various states, reinforcing ICFA's role as a key facilitator in agricultural development.

Mr. RK Tiwari emphasized the need for stronger engagement and coordination among ICFA Board members, proposing regular meetings, group discussions, or a dedicated platform to enhance collaboration. He pointed out inconsistencies in agricultural policies, where farmers are encouraged to use more fertilizers while also being urged to switch to organic farming, creating confusion and uncertainty in their decision-making. He also cautioned against unconditional advocacy for productivity increases, as overproduction often results in price crashes, adversely affecting farmers. To ensure credible and impactful advocacy, he stressed that ICFA's policy positions must be data-backed and well-researched, rather than being reactive to media narratives. He called for a broader focus on land use efficiency, in addition to water and fertilizer efficiency, pointing out that many farmers achieve financial stability through land sales rather than agricultural productivity. Regarding farmer income growth, he highlighted the disparity between agriculture's 4% growth rate and the 9-10% growth of other economic sectors, raising concerns about farmers' incomes keeping pace with the overall economy. He urged ICFA to conduct long-term research on sustainable agricultural investments and income growth to support well-informed, data-driven policy recommendations.



Key Suggestions by Dr MJ Khan for Growth and Impact

Dr. MJ Khan emphasized the need for ICFA to expand its focus beyond crop cultivation to allied sectors like fisheries and dairy, which are experiencing higher growth. While 90% of farmers are engaged in crop cultivation, the slow growth in this sector calls for targeted interventions. He highlighted that states are prioritizing exports and investment through large-scale events, and ICFA can play a crucial role in facilitating investment opportunities and integrating district-level export programs with the Ministry of Commerce. However, gaps in existing initiatives must be addressed for better efficiency. To strengthen ICFA's impact, he proposed launching a Soil Health and Nutrition Plan as a flagship initiative, leveraging ICFA's recent partnership with the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC). He also suggested restructuring ICFA's activities under four key categories—Roundtables, Knowledge Week, Business Week, and International Week, to enhance engagement and outreach. Strengthening policy advocacy was another key focus, with a proposal to establish an Agriculture Policy Council consisting of sector-wise policy groups for fertilizers, sugar, food, and horticulture. Additionally, he called for revamping the ICFA Parliamentary Forum to engage new Lok Sabha members in policy discussions. A major initiative he proposed was the Delhi Dialogue on Sustainable Agriculture, modeled after the Raisina Dialogue, to position India as a global leader in climate-resilient agriculture. This event would serve as a global platform to showcase India's expertise and foster international collaborations.

Closing Remarks by Dr. Tarun Shridhar

In his closing remarks, Dr. Tarun Shridhar emphasized that ICFA must focus on well-defined objectives rather than just activities, ensuring strategic differentiation from existing bodies. He highlighted the need for resource optimization and bandwidth mobilization to successfully implement its ambitious initiatives. As a knowledge-driven institution, ICFA should provide policy insights, research, and strategic advice to policymakers while persistently engaging in shaping the future of Indian agriculture. A holistic approach is essential, integrating livestock, fisheries, and aquaculture, which contribute over 30% of agricultural output. To ensure sustained impact, ICFA must foster continuous engagement beyond board meetings and work on initiatives that policymakers find compelling, leading to actionable outcomes. Additionally, strengthening professional relationships through informal gatherings will help build a more cohesive and committed community, reinforcing ICFA's role in advancing India's agricultural sector.

Key Recommendations

Here are key recommendations based on the insights shared by board members during the meeting:

1. **Transition to Agroecological Models:** ICFA should promote organic and natural farming as a long-term strategy rather than a temporary trend.
2. **Job-Led Agricultural Growth:** Advocate for employment generation within agriculture, ensuring sustainable income growth.
3. **Strategic Focus Areas:** Prioritize key issues like soil health, Nutrient & Water Use Efficiency farmer incomes instead of spreading efforts too thin.
4. **Clear Agricultural Vision for 2047:** Define national agricultural priorities, including self-sufficiency in edible oils and global competitiveness.
5. **Outcome-Based Approach:** Set measurable goals with quarterly progress tracking to ensure tangible impacts.
6. **Strengthen Policy Advocacy:** Strengthen ICFA's role by focusing on critical gaps and unifying fragmented agricultural advocacy.
7. **State-Specific Agricultural Strategies:** Develop region-wise agricultural solutions considering climatic and economic variations.
8. **Ministry Coordination:** Strengthen ICFA's role in bridging gaps between various ministries for effective agricultural policy implementation.
9. **Collaboration with MSMEs:** Partner with MSMEs to enhance value addition, and market access for farm products.
10. **Drone Technology Adoption:** Push for policy reforms to expedite drone approvals for agriculture to reduce pesticide use and improve efficiency.
11. **Strengthen Agri-Food Synergy:** Ensure productivity and sustainability across food and agriculture sectors with innovative technologies.
12. **Academic-Industry Partnerships:** Engage universities for research and innovation in agriculture, hosting joint farmer-industry-academia meets.
13. **Reform Fertilizer Subsidies:** Advocate for Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) to ensure subsidies directly reach farmers.
14. **Bridge Policy & Ground Reality:** Address farmer distress by ensuring policies align with real-world farming challenges.
15. **Develop Sustainable Revenue Model for ICFA:** Define a long-term roadmap for financial sustainability and impactful engagement.



भारतीय कृषि एवं खाद्य परिषद्
INDIAN CHAMBER OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

info@icfa.org.in, 214 B Wing, 2nd Floor,
Naurang House KG Marg, New Delhi 110001

www.icfa.org.in