NSAI NEWSLETTER

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Collaborative Vision for India's Seed Future: NSAI Pushes for Rationalisation of Licensing Norms

On June 2, 2025, Dr. Y.R. Meena, Executive Director, and Dr. R.K. Tripathi, Director (Technical) of NSAI had a meeting with Joint Secretary (Seeds), Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare to garner institutional support for the upcoming Asian Seed Congress 2025. The NSAI Officers requested the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare to extend support akin to that provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Emphasis was laid on facilitating coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs and Home Affairs for timely processing of visa applications for international delegates, considering the event's national importance and its potential benefits to India's seed sector. A detailed note on the genesis of APSA (Asia and Pacific Seed Association), its key objectives, India's engagement with the association, past instances of India hosting the Congress, roles played by Indian representatives in APSA's leadership, and the broader strategic advantages of organizing the 2025 edition in India was also provided.

It was also discussed that NSAI may involve the Ministry of Commerce, given its pivotal role in regulating seed import-export, and to seek their formal participation and endorsement.

In a parallel discussion on policy matters, the Joint Secretary invited NSAI to share recommendations for strengthening R&D infrastructure in the Indian seed sector under the National Seed Mission. Suggestions were also welcomed on creating supportive mechanisms for the private seed industry's R&D efforts, as well as rationalizing license fees and MoU charges imposed by ICAR institutes and State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) to ensure mutual benefit.

Russian Delegates Conduct Audit of Seed Testing Laboratories of Indian Seed Companies to Boost Bilateral Trade

In a significant step towards enhancing Indo-Russian cooperation in seed exchange, ten NABL-accredited Seed Testing Laboratories of member seed companies of the National Seed Association of India (NSAI) have been shortlisted for audit by the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance of the Russian Federation (FSVPS). This initiative follows a resolution passed by the Government of the Russian Federation on May 27, 2023, aimed at facilitating the import of seeds and planting materials from India.

As part of the programme, an official delegation from FSVPS conducted audits of the STLs of the shortlisted companies from June 10 to 20, 2025 to assess their quality systems, phytosanitary compliance, and export readiness. The audit is expected to pave the way for smoother regulatory approvals, increased bilateral trade, and expanded market access for Indian seed exporters. This engagement underscores growing trust and collaboration between India and Russia in the seed and agri-input sectors and marks a strategic move towards diversifying India's seed export destinations.

APSA Executive Committee and Indian NOC Hold Key Planning Meet for Asian Seed Congress 2025 in Mumbai

On June 13, 2025, The Asia and Pacific Seed Association (APSA) Executive Committee, along with Indian National Organizing Committee (NOC) members from the National Seed Association of India (NSAI) and the Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII), convened for the June EC meeting at the Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai, the official venue for the upcoming Asian Seed Congress 2025, scheduled from November 17–21.

With just five months to go, preparations are in full swing to host one of the most significant international events in the seed sector. The coordination meeting focused on progress updates, logistics, international outreach, sponsorships, and delegate engagement strategies. The delegates expressed enthusiasm about India hosting this prestigious event, which is expected to bring together over 1,200 participants from across Asia, the Pacific, and beyond. India's hosting of ASC 2025 is set to boost its global standing in the seed industry while fostering partnerships, policy dialogue, and innovations critical to the future of agriculture.

NSAI Engages with GEAC to Facilitate Timely Approval of HT Cotton Technology

NSAI team consisting, Dr. Y.R. Meena, Executive Director along with Dr. Deepanker Pandey, Assistant Director (Tech.), NSAI had a meeting with Dr. Abhilasha Mathuriya, Member Secretary, GEAC on June 13, 2025. At the outset, they briefed her on the issue of herbicide-tolerant (HT) cotton and emphasized how early approval of new technology could significantly help the industry and farmers tackle the current situation of high weed incidence in cotton. They also highlighted the rampant spread of illegal players and spurious seeds in the market.

Dr. Abhilasha acknowledged the gravity of the situation and shared that she has been actively pursuing early approval of the new technology. Since, a new Chairman, GEAC has taken over, who is well-versed with the subject, it was hoped that tangible progress shall be achieved in the matter. If all goes well, approval could be expected within three months.

NSAI Proposes Study Tour to Argentina; Ambassador Welcomes Strengthened Bilateral Cooperation

On June 17, 2025, NSAI group comprising, Dr. Y.R. Meena, Executive Director, Dr. R.K. Tripathi, Director (Tech.), Dr. Deepanker Pandey, Assistant Director (Tech.) and Mr. Sudhir Kansal, NSAI Member from Kohinoor Seed Farms held a courtesy meeting with His Excellency Ambassador of the Argentine Republic, Mr. Mariano Agustine Caucino and Minister Attaché, Agriculture, Argentine Embassy, Mr. Mariano Beheram.

H.E. Ambassador welcomed the team NSAI and appreciated the proposal for a study visit of the Indian Seed Industry delegation to Argentina. Mr. Mariano Beheram emphasized that the ideal time to visit Argentina would be second fortnight of October when the sowing of most of the seed crops takes place.

H.E. Ambassador also requested NSAI to block the dates as soon as possible so that the Argentine Seed Association can plan accordingly and confirm the dates with concerned institutes, seed industry, farmers and Government Departments. As October is a crucial period for the seed industry, advance planning will help both parties making the visit more fruitful.

It was also discussed that if officers from the PQ department, Germplasm exchange, and PPVFRA Authority could also join the seed industry group, it would be useful in identifying policy related issues in exchange of seeds between two countries. These initiatives will open up new opportunities for seed trade between India and Argentina, particularly in corn, soybean, and sunflower.

NSAI President Dr. M. Prabhakar Rao Conferred Honorary Doctorate by Krishna University for Pioneering Contributions to Agriculture and the Seed Industry

NSAI is delighted to share that NSAI President and NSL Group Chairman, Dr. M. Prabhakar Rao, has been conferred an Honorary Doctorate Degree (Honoris Causa) from Krishna University, Andhra Pradesh. The honor was presented by the Hon'ble Governor & Chancellor, Shri Syed Abdul Nazeer, and Hon'ble Minister Shri Nara Lokesh during the university's Combined Convocation on June 25, 2025 at Machilipatnam. This prestigious recognition is a testament to Dr. Prabhakar Rao's exemplary leadership and invaluable contributions to the field of agriculture and seed industry in the country.

Seed Industry Updates

'Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan' Concludes Successfully, Reaches Over 1.34 Crore Farmers Across India

Hon'ble Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan declared the *Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan* a grand success as the 15-day national campaign concluded on June 12, 2025, in Bardoli, Gujarat. The campaign was flagged off on May 29 from Puri, Odisha, with the aim of educating and empowering farmers on climate-resilient agriculture, technological advancements, and key government schemes. Spanning 721 districts and reaching over 1.34 crore farmers across 1.43 lakh villages, the initiative marked an unprecedented outreach effort. A total of 60,281 programmes were conducted nationwide, including in remote tribal, aspirational, and border regions. Shri Chouhan described the campaign as "One Nation - One Agriculture - One Team," underlining the unified efforts of the Centre and state governments. The campaign mobilized 2,170 teams consisting of 8,280 agricultural scientists from ICAR institutes and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs). These experts engaged with farmers through demonstrations, advisories, and awareness sessions.

Discussions included district-specific crop advisories based on soil health and climate data, as well as the benefits of natural and organic farming. Importantly, farmers' feedback and suggestions were collected and will be considered in future agricultural policy and planning. Hon'ble Minister emphasized that scientists would also undertake targeted research based on these insights, and innovative practices by progressive farmers would be further promoted across the country.

Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan Lays Foundation Stone for ₹250 Cr Global Millet Research Hub in Hyderabad

In a landmark move to boost millet research and innovation, Hon'ble Union Agriculture Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan laid the foundation stone of the Shri Ann Global Centre of Excellence and Advanced Phenomics Complex in Hyderabad. The Government of India has sanctioned ₹250 crore for the establishment of this cutting-edge facility, reaffirming its commitment to positioning India as a global leader in millet research and development. The new Centre of Excellence will house seven major components, each dedicated to various aspects of Shri Ann (millet) promotion, innovation, and dissemination on an international scale. These include advanced phenomics research, global outreach programmes, climate-resilient varietal development, nutritional studies, policy advocacy, and capacity-building initiatives aimed at smallholder farmers and millet-based industries.

Speaking at the event, Shri Chouhan highlighted the nutritional and ecological benefits of millets, calling them "the grain of the future" due to their high resilience to climate stress and rich micronutrient profile. "The Shri Ann initiative is not only about food security but also about securing the health of our people and the sustainability of our planet," he noted. This development aligns with India's year-long celebration of 2023 as the International Year of Millets, and is expected to further catalyze global collaborations, innovation-driven agriculture, and millet entrepreneurship. The initiative marks a significant stride toward mainstreaming millets as a core component of national and global food systems.

NAARM Shines Bright at International Agri-Horti-Organic Expo 2025

The ICAR-National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), Hyderabad, has been awarded the First Prize at the International Agriculture, Horticulture and Organic Expo 2025 held at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi from June 21-23, 2025. The prestigious event, which brought together stakeholders from across the agri and allied sectors, recognized ICAR-NAARM for its outstanding contributions to agricultural innovation, capacity building, and knowledge dissemination.

The award highlights NAARM's leadership in nurturing agri-entrepreneurship, promoting digital agriculture, and empowering researchers, extension professionals, and startups across India. The institute's exhibits on cutting-edge agri-technologies, policy research, and innovation ecosystems received wide appreciation from visitors and industry experts alike. This recognition reinforces NAARM's pivotal role in strengthening India's agricultural education and innovation ecosystem on both national and global platforms.

BICOTA by Bayer: A New Line of Defense for Indian Paddy Growers

In a major step toward strengthening pest management in rice cultivation, Bayer has launched BICOTA, a new crop protection solution specifically designed to help Indian paddy farmers tackle the persistent challenge of stem borers. Stem borers are among the most destructive pests affecting rice crops, significantly reducing yields and causing economic losses for millions of farmers. The launch of BICOTA reflects Bayer's continued commitment to sustainable agriculture and science-based solutions tailored to local farming needs.

Developed by using advanced chemistry, BICOTA offers long-lasting control of stem borers with a favorable safety profile for crops, beneficial insects, and the environment. Bayer's field trials across major rice-growing regions in India have demonstrated that BICOTA not only improves pest control but also supports higher productivity and profitability for farmers. The company is also planning extensive awareness and training programs to ensure safe and effective use of the product. With this launch, Bayer aims to further empower Indian farmers with modern tools to secure their harvests and improve their livelihoods.

Premium Indian Cherries Hit Shelves in Saudi and UAE Markets

In a significant boost to India's horticultural exports, the first-ever commercial consignment of Kashmiri cherries arrived in Riyadh on June 17, 2025 and is now available in Lulu Hypermarkets across Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Sourced directly from the orchards of Kashmir, the two-tonne shipment marks India's entry into the Gulf cherry market and has been hailed by the Ministry of Commerce as a major step under the 'Vocal for Local' initiative. The move was facilitated by Lulu Group International, a leading retail chain with strong sourcing networks across India and a strategic presence in the GCC. This development not only opens new market opportunities for Indian farmers but also paves the way for future exports of high-value horticultural produce such as apples and saffron, with planned investments in cold-chain logistics and dedicated sourcing hubs in Srinagar and Kerala.

Consulate General of Japan Visits ICAR-CCRI, Nagpur: Strengthening Indo-Japan Ties in Citrus Innovation

The Consul-General of Japan in Mumbai paid a significant visit to the ICAR-Central Citrus Research Institute (CCRI), Nagpur, to explore collaborative avenues in citrus research and sustainable agriculture. During his address, Dr. Dilip Ghosh, Director of ICAR-CCRI, emphasized the critical need for global partnerships to tackle key challenges faced by citrus growers, including disease resistance, climate resilience, and access to advanced technologies. He highlighted the socio-economic relevance of citrus cultivation in the region and the institute's role in empowering farmers through science-led initiatives.

A video presentation showcased CCRI's major contributions to citrus development, decline management, and farmer-centric innovations across India. A key highlight of the visit was an interactive session between ICAR-CCRI scientists and citrus farmers, focusing on shared challenges, emerging technologies, and collaborative opportunities in climate-smart agriculture, precision farming, and potential partnerships with Japanese start-ups. The visit concluded with a tour of the institute's nursery and experimental fields, where sensor-based drip and sub-surface irrigation systems demonstrated precision farming solutions. The visit laid the foundation for a promising Indo-Japanese partnership in sustainable citrus farming and agricultural innovation.

BAU Develops Four Climate-Resilient Rice Varieties to Boost Yields in Flood-Prone Regions

In a major stride toward climate-smart agriculture, Bihar Agricultural University (BAU), Sabour, has developed four new rice varieties tailored to withstand the growing threats of floods and diseases, offering renewed hope to farmers across eastern India. The new varieties, Sabour Katarni Dhan-1, Sabour Samba Dhan, Sabour Shri Sub-1, and Sabour Vibhuti Dhan were recently approved by BAU's Research Council and are undergoing national evaluation for official release. Designed for flood-prone and disease-affected zones, these high-yielding cultivars are expected to play a vital role in ensuring food security and raising farmer incomes. Among them, Sabour Katarni Dhan-1 stands out for reviving the aromatic, short-grain Katarni variety, a traditional GI-tagged rice from Bhagalpur offering nearly 1.5 times higher yield than its conventional counterpart.

Meanwhile, Sabour Shri Sub-1, developed to endure up to 14 days of submergence, addresses the growing risk of flash floods, with yield potential of 30–55 quintals per hectare under varied conditions. Sabour Vibhuti Dhan, developed through advanced gene pyramiding, exhibits strong resistance to bacterial leaf blight, a major yield-limiting disease while Sabour Samba Dhan offers an ideal alternative for mid-duration cropping, targeting better productivity across wider agro-climatic zones. BAU scientists, including breeders Dr. Mankesh Kumar, Dr. Shweta Sinha, and Dr. Amarendra Kumar, led the initiative, with state-level demonstration and seed multiplication already underway. The State and Central Varietal Release Committees are now assessing the varieties, after which they will be made available for large-scale farmer adoption. “This innovation is a significant leap for sustainable rice cultivation in Bihar, especially in the face of climate variability and disease outbreaks,” said a university official. “We are confident these varieties will bring economic and ecological stability to farming communities.” The rollout aligns with national objectives to enhance crop resilience, improve productivity, and empower farmers through science-led solutions.

Technology Must Reach Fields as per Farmer's Needs: Agriculture Minister at ICAR-CIAE Bhopal

Hon’ble Union Agriculture Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan emphasized the urgent need for farmer-centric innovation in Indian agriculture, stating that “technology must reach the fields in a form that suits farmers’ real needs.” He made this call while addressing scientists and stakeholders at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research – Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering (ICAR-CIAE) in Bhopal.

In his keynote address, Chouhan urged agri-scientists and technocrats to accelerate the development of affordable, localized tools and technologies, especially those suited for small and marginal farmers who form the backbone of Indian agriculture. “The future of our agriculture lies not just in big machines but in smart solutions for small farmers,” the minister said. “Innovations must focus on reducing drudgery, increasing efficiency, and improving income—especially in rainfed and resource-poor areas.” During the visit, several new agri-machinery prototypes developed by ICAR-CIAE were showcased, including a tractor-operated plastic mulch layer-cum-planter and energy-efficient tools for post-harvest management.

Shri Chouhan praised the institute's work in mechanization and called for more field-level integration and farmer feedback in research programs. He also highlighted the need to promote youth participation in agri-entrepreneurship and ensure that innovations are quickly transferred from labs to land. "Our goal should be speed with scale—what's invented in Bhopal must reach Bharat," he remarked. The event underscored the government's broader push toward a more inclusive, sustainable, and tech-enabled farming ecosystem, aligned with the vision of doubling farmers' incomes and ensuring climate resilience.

'Beej Utsav' Celebrates Indigenous Seeds and Biodiversity in Tribal Heartland

In a vibrant celebration of India's agricultural heritage, the tribal region at the confluence of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat hosted 'Beej Utsav', a seed festival dedicated to promoting indigenous seed diversity and sustainable farming practices. Organized in the tribal belt known for its rich agro-biodiversity, the festival brought together farmers, seed savers, agronomists, NGOs, and policymakers to highlight the critical role of native seeds in ensuring food security, climate resilience, and ecological balance.

Participants engaged in workshops, seed exchange programmes, cultural performances, and panel discussions centered around traditional seed knowledge, biodiversity conservation, and the threats posed by monoculture and hybrid seed dependency. Speakers emphasized the importance of reviving community seed banks, empowering tribal farmers, and integrating traditional agricultural wisdom with modern eco-friendly techniques. The event served as a reminder that seed heritage is not only about food, it is about identity, culture, and survival. As climate change continues to threaten conventional farming systems, events like Beej Utsav underscore the urgent need to preserve local seed varieties that are naturally adapted to local soils, pests, and weather conditions. The festival concluded with a renewed call to "Return to the Roots", urging communities to embrace biodiversity-led farming for a more sustainable and self-reliant future.

ICRISAT Launches World's First Speed Breeding Protocol for Finger Millet

In a groundbreaking advancement for millet research, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) has unveiled 'Rapid-Ragi', the world's first speed breeding protocol for finger millet. The new protocol drastically shortens the crop's growing cycle from the usual 100–135 days to just 68–85 days, enabling up to five generations per year, compared to the conventional one or two cycles in open field conditions. This innovation is expected to accelerate genetic gains, support climate-resilient agriculture, and strengthen food security in Asia and Africa regions where finger millet is both a dietary staple and a key component of public nutrition and school feeding programs.

Finger millet, ranked third in global millet importance after sorghum and pearl millet, is gaining attention for its nutritional profile and resilience. The breakthrough aligns with growing global advocacy for millets, especially following India's National Year of Millets (2018) and the United Nation's International Year of Millets (2023), which emphasized their role in sustainable agriculture and human health. ICRISAT's Rapid-Ragi protocol is being hailed as a pivotal tool to fast-track crop improvement and support the broader millet movement across developing nations.

Pune Residents Lead Urban Biodiversity Effort through Personal Seed Banks

In a remarkable display of grassroots environmental action, residents across Pune are establishing personal seed banks to conserve native and heirloom plant varieties. From home gardeners in Bavdhan and Deccan to eco-enthusiasts in Kondhwa and Undri, citizens are meticulously collecting, drying, and preserving seeds of indigenous vegetables like okra, chilies, white brinjal, basil, and tomatoes. These seed banks are part of a growing urban biodiversity movement aimed at promoting self-reliant, sustainable gardening and preserving local genetic heritage. Seeds are sourced from local farms, tribal regions, and forest ecosystems, creating a decentralized yet powerful network of biodiversity guardians. Many residents report successful germination rates, with some achieving over 50%. This citizen-led initiative complements larger efforts by the Pune Municipal Corporation to expand green cover and counter the effects of urban sprawl, which has significantly reduced the city's carbon sequestration capacity. Through these efforts, Pune is emerging as a model for urban ecological resilience, driven by community participation and a shared commitment to nurturing native biodiversity.

Illegal GM Cotton Seeds Penetrate Indian Market Despite Ban

Herbicide-tolerant Bt (HT Bt) cotton seeds banned in India for environmental and regulatory reasons have gained surprising popularity among farmers, now accounting for an estimated 15% of the country's ₹3,600-crore cotton seed market. Growers are increasingly opting for these illegal seeds to reduce labour costs through herbicide use for weed control.

Despite the ban, farmers in several states are openly planting HT Bt cotton, defying regulatory norms. Industry groups have called on the government to conduct field trials and evaluate the performance of these seeds, arguing that unapproved variants may actually reduce overall cotton yields. Environmentalists and scientists, however, caution that the unchecked spread of HT Bt seeds could have long-term ecological consequences, including herbicide resistance and biodiversity loss. The situation highlights growing tensions between economic practicality for farmers and the enforcement of agricultural biotechnology regulations in India.

National Turmeric Board to Boost Farmer Incomes, Enhance Global Trade: Amit Shah

In a significant boost to turmeric farmers across India, Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah inaugurated the headquarters of the National Turmeric Board in Nizamabad, Telangana on June 29, 2025. The move fulfills a long-pending demand by farmers from Telangana and other turmeric-producing states, aiming to institutionalize support for the crop known as India's "golden spice." Speaking at the event, Shah announced the government's commitment to increase turmeric prices by ₹6,000–7,000 per quintal over the next three years, raising the average rate from the current ₹18,000–19,000 to nearly ₹25,000–26,000 per quintal. "We are working to ensure turmeric farmers earn what they deserve," Shah stated, adding that the government is committed to protecting farmer interests through better price realization, export facilitation, and quality control.

The establishment of the Board is seen as a transformative step for farmers in regions like Nizamabad, Erode, Sangli, and parts of Odisha and Northeast India. According to farmer leaders, the projected price hike could translate into an additional income of ₹20,000–₹25,000 per hectare, offering much-needed relief amid rising input costs. Shah also announced an ambitious target of achieving $1 billion in turmeric exports by 2030, leveraging India's dominant position in global turmeric production, which currently stands at over 75% of world output.

Officials said the new Board will collaborate with national agencies like NCEL (National Cooperative Export Limited) and NCOL (National Cooperative Organics Limited) to promote value-added turmeric products, encourage scientific cultivation methods, and build processing infrastructure in producing districts. A budget of ₹200 crore has been earmarked for quality enhancement, export-oriented research, and farmer welfare schemes under the Board's initial phase of operations. As Shah concluded, "Turmeric is not just a crop, it is India's heritage and a symbol of our wellness economy. This Board will help take our farmers and their produce to the global stage."

New Soybean Variety JS 20-116 Promises High Yields in Rainfed Regions

A new soybean variety, JS 20-116, is making waves among agricultural experts and farmers for its promising performance in rainfed and semi-irrigated regions, especially across Rajasthan and similar agro-climatic zones. Developed as a medium-duration, high-yielding cultivar, JS 20-116 has demonstrated strong agronomic traits, including resilience to major pests and diseases, making it a reliable choice for farmers facing erratic monsoon patterns.

Agronomists have noted that the variety's adaptability under limited water conditions offers farmers a viable alternative to traditional varieties, ensuring stable yields and better income in challenging environments. Initial field results show that JS 20-116 not only meets yield expectations but also contributes to sustainable cultivation by reducing dependence on intensive irrigation and chemical inputs. Experts believe that wider adoption of JS 20-116 could significantly enhance soybean productivity in dryland farming belts, aligning with national efforts to boost oilseed production and improve farm incomes.

NSAI Welcomes Two New Executives in its Secretariat

NSAI Secretariat has been further strengthened with the joining of Dr. Aashima Batheja as a Research Associate and Ms. Celeste Sarah Varghese as an Office Executive on June 5, 2025.

Dr. Aashima Batheja is Ph.D. in Genetics and Plant Breeding from CSK HPKV, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh. She has qualified ASRB NET in 2017 and authored several peer-reviewed research papers, book chapters, articles and a book. She was awarded the Dr. Ram Dhan Singh Gold Medal for academic excellence. She has previously served as a Trainee Seed Certification Officer with the Haryana State Seed Certification Agency, gaining hands-on experience in seed quality assurance and certification protocols.

Ms. Celeste Sarah Varghese is a social work professional with a Master's degree in social work (Medical & Psychiatry) from St. Claret College, Bangalore University, and a Bachelor's in Sociology from Delhi University. She has served as a social work trainee at institutions such as Diya Foundation and IDIA Law at Bangalore, Karnataka. Her active involvement in cultural events, paper presentations, and volunteering reflects a well-rounded, committed, and driven individual ready to contribute meaningfully to social development.

nsa National Seed Association of India

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