

Conference Brochure

Global Conference on Women in Agri-Food Systems (GCWAS-2026)

Driving Progress, Attaining New Heights

 12-14 March 2026

 ICAR Convention Centre,
National Agricultural Science Centre
(NASC) Complex, Pusa Campus,
New Delhi, India



Background and Rationale

The representation of women and gender parity in all spheres is critical for overall growth and success for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unless there is equal representation, we will not be able to achieve our desired goals. Women, who constitute nearly 50 per cent of the population and are engaged in all fields, must have equal representation in leadership and decision making. Women in agriculture are of special importance. To meet our agricultural growth targets, the full participation of women is essential. Women are active in every aspect of agricultural development, from research to industry and farming, contributing to increased productivity and production. However, their numbers are often small, especially in decision-making roles, leading to a clear absence of gender balance. To meet our agricultural growth targets, therefore, full participation of women cannot be overlooked.

It is unequivocally agreed that women's empowerment is key to strengthening their participation in decision-making, which is crucial for socio-economic development. Research has shown that empowering women accelerates a country's economic growth. While we focus on empowering women in leadership, we cannot lose sight of their important role at the grassroots level. To build effective women leaders, implement gender-sensitive policies, and achieve progressive outcomes, we must nurture women leaders and empower women at the grassroots level, both technologically and socially for promoting diverse agri-food systems.

For many years, we have discussed gender diversity and agreed on the need for more women in leadership and decision-making roles. We have also agreed on the need for empowerment to facilitate this process. What we

now need is to collectively deliver on the ground. The *First Global Conference on Women in Agriculture* organized at New Delhi in 2012, brought together a large number of women who shared their success stories and examples of their major role in agricultural development through new technologies, research, extension services, and industry activities. There is need for a greater focus now on sharing experiences and success stories of women leaders, entrepreneurs and farmers for promoting diverse agri-food systems and developing enabling policies to make it happen.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite women's indispensable role in agriculture, their representation in decision-making remains disproportionately low. Structural barriers, including male-dominated extension services, unequal access to information and technology, and entrenched social norms, systematically exclude women from leadership roles and policy influence. While forums like the *First Global Conference on Women in Agriculture* (2012) raised the awareness, progress has been slow due to implementation gaps, resource constraints and institutional policies which lack enforcement mechanisms and last mile reach to grassroots. Women farmers face limited access to markets, training, and digital tools. Leadership programs often overlook rural women, focusing instead on urban elites. This imbalance not only undermines gender equity but also constrains agricultural productivity, innovation, and progress towards the SDGs (2, 5, and 8). Empowering women in agriculture not only helps achieve these goals but also enhances productivity, drives innovation, and promotes sustainability.



Since agri-food system encompasses the entire value chain that brings food from the farm to our tables, and even beyond, all the activities, *viz.*, producing, processing, distributing, marketing and consuming food and other agricultural products, need to be paid focused attention. Women play an important role in all aspects from primary food production (crops, livestock, forestry, aquaculture, fisheries) to post-harvest handling, transportation, processing, and ultimately, consumption and disposal. Understanding the complexities of agri-food systems is crucial for addressing global challenges related to food security, environmental sustainability, and economic development. Agri-food systems play a potentially central role in driving economic growth and transformation in low- and middle-income countries. It needs to be emphasized that each part of the agri-food system is linked to others, and changes in one area can affect the entire system. Agri-food systems need to be sustainable, ensuring food security while minimizing environmental impact and promoting social equity; and to be resilient to shocks like climate change, disease outbreaks, or economic instability. They affect livelihoods, food security, and access to nutritious food for all. Also, it is important to move towards a more circular agri-food system that involves minimizing waste and using byproducts as resources. The Global Conference will provide an opportunity to have in-depth discussions on all these aspects and will pave the way for developing a clear road map for concrete actions supported with enabling policies.

The declaration of **2026 as the International Year of Women Farmers** by the United Nations serves as a global milestone that can spark policy reforms, public awareness campaigns, and international collaboration, while also providing an opportunity to mobilize resources, forge partnerships, and create a shared agenda for advancing women's role in agriculture. Access to modern agricultural technologies, training programs, and digital tools can further improve women's efficiency, increase their incomes, and strengthen their decision-making power, with digital platforms offering ways to amplify their voices and link them to broader markets. Social protection schemes tailored for women farmers, such as crop insurance, maternity benefits, and pension plans, can enhance their resilience and economic security. Better rural infrastructure like roads, agricultural produce markets, storage, and clean energy can reduce their workload and increase productivity.

Building on the successes of the 2012 Global Conference, a renewed platform in New Delhi will focus on moving from discussions to action-oriented implementation. It will serve as a space to showcase success stories, exchange best practices, and launch progressive policy frameworks. At the grassroots level, targeted training and mentorship programs for rural women can nurture a pipeline of skilled women and future leaders. Women-led Cooperatives, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and Self-Help (SHGs) Groups will strengthen collective bargaining power and ensure that progress reaches even the most marginalized communities. Meaningful collaboration between key stakeholders can help build sustainable support networks, while public-private partnerships (PPP) can accelerate transformation through combined technical expertise and funding. Empowering women is not just about ensuring equity, but making them a catalyst of change for food security, economic growth, and climate resilience. The year 2026 must mark the year when we move from rhetoric to real results.

Against this backdrop in view, a **Global Conference on Women in Agri-Food Systems (GCWAS-2026)** will be held at **New Delhi, India** on **12-14 March 2026**.

Conference Objectives

- To bring together stakeholders – women leaders, scientists, entrepreneurs, farmers, students to share experiences and case studies.
- To showcase inspiring success stories of women's empowerment and leadership in agriculture to provide replicable and scalable models.
- To identify and promote national and global best practices for nurturing women's leadership and fostering mentorship and networking for the next generation of women leaders.
- To discuss measures for strengthening the policy framework and ecosystem for mainstreaming gender and empowering women technologically and economically.
- Identify Emerging and disruptive technologies for gender transformative change.

Expected Outcomes

- Comprehensive report on success stories across research, industry, farming, and education.
- Road Map to strengthen women's participation and leadership, empower women for economic inclusion, and mainstream gender in policy, market access, and new technology development.
- Identification and dissemination of global and national best practices for women's inclusive participation and empowerment.
- Compendium of new technologies that have technologically and financially empowered women in the agri-food sector.
- Strategy and roadmap for institutionalizing gender initiatives across global, regional, and national programs.

Conference Details

Organizers

- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi, India
- Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), New Delhi, India
- Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), Montpellier, France
- Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPVFR), New Delhi, India

Co-Organizers

- International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), Mexico
- CIMMYT-Borlaug Institute for South Asia (BISA), New Delhi, India
- International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad, India
- Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, Montpellier, France
- International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Beirut, Lebanon
- National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS), New Delhi, India

Event Format

Plenary Talks | Keynote Addresses | Technical Presentations | Panel Discussions
Interface with Global Performers | Youth Forum | Posters | Exhibition

Themes

- Driving Progress, Attaining New Heights
- Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
- Emerging and Disruptive Technologies for Gender-Transformative Change
- Building Future Leadership in the Agri-Food Sector
- Women Farmers Forum-Empowering Women through Leadership
- Gender Dynamics in Policy and Market Access

Participants

- Around 500 participants from India and abroad, including researchers, policymakers, leaders, representative of CGIAR centres, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Farmers Organizations (FOs), successful women farmers, industry, start-ups, entrepreneurs and students are expected to participate.

Date : 12-14 March 2026

Venue : Bharat Ratna C. Subramaniam Auditorium, ICAR Convention Centre, National Agricultural Science Centre (NASC) Complex, Dev Prakash Shastri Marg, Pusa Campus, New Delhi 110012, India.

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