

**DBT's Smart Agriculture Conclave sets the stage for FarmerZone: The future of agriculture****DBT's Smart Agriculture Conclave sets the stage for FarmerZone: The future of agriculture**

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), under the Ministry of Science and Technology, convened the Smart Agriculture Conclave in New Delhi from August 29 – 31 2017, in partnership with the UK's Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and Research Councils UK (RCUK) India. The objective of this conclave was to set the stage for "FarmerZone" - a collective open-source data platform for smart agriculture which will use biological research and data to improve the lives of small and marginal farmers. It is envisaged that "FarmerZone" will help cater to all needs of the farmer, from dealing with climate change, weather predictions and soil, water, and seed requirements to providing market intelligence.

FarmerZone has been envisioned by the DBT and aligns with the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi's call for effective decision-making in agriculture that integrates science, technology, innovation and the farm ecosystem.

With the agricultural conclave, DBT aims to advance the process of technological intervention to help small and marginal land-holding farmers, who constitute a major component of Indian agriculture.

The conclave identified the challenges faced in each agro-climatic region, and discussed possible solutions through scientific interventions. The FarmerZone platform will connect farmers and scientists, government officials, thought leaders in agriculture, economists and representatives from global companies who work in the big-data and e-commerce space to bring about technology-based localised agri-solutions.

The platform will work on getting relevant quality data related to agriculture into the cloud, develop sentinel sites to help link with farmers and evolve PPP based enterprises for data delivery.

Food security is a global concern and the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of families depend on small-scale agriculture. The conclave worked to address this challenge collectively and showcased the enormous research strength of India and its international partners in a global context, to achieve impact and build strong and sustainable research and innovation partnerships.

Over two days, national and international experts in policy, IT, agritech companies, academics, farmers and representatives, along with research and innovation agencies from India, the UK, the US and other countries, brought ideas, implementable solutions and discussed their potential role in building new partnerships that will help co-design and develop "FarmerZone" - a public good that can be scaled up and applied across a number of different agro-climatic zones across the world.

The conclave was chaired by Secretary DBT Prof VijayRaghavan, who stated: "This

conclave has brought together a diverse group of stakeholders ranging from farmers, scientists and businesses from the national and international arena, who share DBT's vision to use research and technology to deliver "FarmerZone" that will focus on solutions in the farming ecosystem, especially for small and marginal farmers."

British High Commissioner to India Sir Dominic Asquith KCMG, said the joint initiative at the official as well as the academic level will further strengthen burgeoning relationship between the UK and India, and will go a long way to put to effect the enthusiasm of the Prime Ministers of both the nations to use research, innovation and technology for people's benefits.

Deputy Executive, International for BBSRC Mr Steve Visscher CBE, said: "The UK Research Councils have a strong, growing partnership with India – a vital research nation. BBSRC and RCUK India are delighted to work with DBT to help make their vision of "FarmerZone" a reality that will benefit India and other areas in the world. This partnership demonstrates the vital role that research and innovation has in delivering prosperity and addressing shared global challenges."

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