

Institutional updates

ILRI celebrates 50 years of livestock research and development

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) South Asia office organized a livestock policy workshop to celebrate the institute's 50th anniversary. Titled 'Organizational livestock research and development priorities for India', the event was held at the National Agricultural Science Complex, New Delhi, on 14 November 2024.

As well as celebrating ILRI's journey, the workshop served as a platform to chart a shared vision for the future of livestock research in India. Policymakers, donors, researchers and partners deliberated on synergy, collaboration and innovation to address emerging challenges in the livestock sector.

In his remarks, ILRI director general Appolinaire Djikeng stressed the value of indigenous animal genetic resources in ensuring resilience and sustainability. He urged stakeholders to reconvene within six months to review progress, realign priorities and strengthen collective efforts.

The event also featured the release of ILRI's new strategy, followed by a technical session where panellists from CGIAR institutions, donor agencies and partner organizations shared their priorities for livestock research and development. These discussions emphasized the need for synergy, collaboration and innovation to address emerging challenges in the livestock sector.



ILRI's celebrations in New Delhi combined reflection with forward-looking dialogue, reaffirming the institute's long-standing partnership with India and its commitment to advancing livestock research for sustainable, inclusive and climate-resilient agri-food systems.

In addition to chief guest Alka Upadhyaya, secretary in the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD), participants included representatives of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), CGIAR centres, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation (FAO), World Bank, Gates Foundation, TATA Trusts, Brooke and Heifer International, alongside ILRI's former and current staff.



Welcome note

Welcome to the 14th edition of ILRI's South Asia newsletter!

This newsletter shares key updates of ILRI's activities in South Asia with stakeholders, partners and donors.

I hope you will enjoy reading it and thank you for your strong support of ILRI South Asia.

Learn more about our work at <https://asia.ilri.org/>. If you have any feedback, please contact ilri-delhi@cgiar.org

Hung Nguyen
Regional director for ILRI Asia

Project news

ILRI-Hyderabad acquires Deoni bulls for climate-smart research

On 13 September 2024, ILRI-Hyderabad added two Deoni bulls to its herd. Aged 4 and 3.5 years, the pair is from a dual-purpose breed that is common in drought-prone areas of India, and which displays resilience to heat and humidity.

In collaboration with veterinarians from PV Narasimha Rao Veterinary University, the animals are being fistulated to support advanced research on in vitro digestibility and methane emissions. This initiative marks an important step in ILRI's climate-smart livestock research and contribution to the development of sustainable and environmentally responsible livestock production systems.



One of the Deoni bulls at ILRI-Hyderabad's animal facility (photo credit: ILRI/Krithika Anbazhagan).

Forage team builds regional and global research collaborations

From 5–7 February 2025, ILRI-Hyderabad hosted Chris Jones (ILRI program leader for Feed and Forage Development based in Nairobi) and Melkamu Derseh (an animal nutritionist at ILRI Ethiopia). The two met with regional teams and research partners from the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) to explore opportunities for deeper collaboration.

Discussions centered on the integration of crop–livestock systems, the role of fodder traits in breeding programs and potential avenues for joint research initiatives. In addition, the visitors engaged with the animal nutrition team at PV Narasimha Rao Veterinary University, where they explored opportunities for student training and collaborative studies, further strengthening ILRI's

commitment to regional capacity building and innovation in livestock research.



Chris Jones, Melkamu Derseh, and KSV Prasad, ILRI; and Ovais Hamid Peerzada and Kuldeep Singh from ICRISAT; discussing with Rajasri Sharma, Research Technician from ICRISAT (photo credit: ILRI/Krithika Anbazhagan).

Animal health camps strengthen veterinary linkages in distressed areas of India

Between April and June 2025, ILRI, in collaboration with the ICAR–Central Institute for Women in Agriculture (ICAR–CIWA), held 12 animal health camps and 8 capacity development programs across Odisha, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh states.

This was organized under the gender–livestock–climate analytic approach (GLCAA) designed to strengthen rural livelihoods in distressed regions of India by addressing the intersection of gender roles, livestock-based livelihoods and climate variability. Recognizing women as key actors in livestock rearing—yet often excluded from resources, technologies and decision-making—the approach focuses on building resilience and equity. Supported by local veterinary officers, the camps provided preventive and curative care, vaccination and deworming for 298 animals. Farmers also received mineral mixtures, medicines and training on disease prevention, hygiene and biosecurity.

These efforts not only improved livestock health and productivity but also empowered women livestock keepers, enhanced their technical capacity, and strengthened veterinary linkages in underserved areas.



Attendees at the animal health camp in Bihar, India (photo credit: ILRI/Braja Bandhu Swain).

Veterinary conference challenges experts to adopt new approaches to livestock development in India

The urgent need to make India's livestock sector more resilient, inclusive and sustainable was the key message delivered by ILRI at the Indian Veterinary Extension Forum (IVEF) on 24 June 2025. In his keynote address, Ram Pratim Deka, ILRI India country representative, highlighted the sector's critical global role—contributing about 40% of agricultural GDP and supporting 1.7 billion livelihoods.

Deka cautioned, however, that climate change, zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, feed scarcity and workforce attrition threaten the sustainability of the sector. Livestock, he noted, is both a cultural cornerstone and a growing concern due to greenhouse gas emissions (9.6% in India) and health risks.

Speaking under the theme 'Transforming livestock and rural development: a paradigm shift in teaching, research and extension', Deka emphasized the potential of emerging technologies—precision livestock farming, artificial intelligence, robotics, gene editing, and digital platforms—to revolutionize the sector.

But he warned that technology alone is not enough. He urged universities to move beyond textbook learning toward localized curricula, interdisciplinary teaching and entrepreneurial training. 'Students must be treated not just as learners, but as future problem-solvers,' he said.

The conference, attended by 120 experts from six countries, launched a compendium of keynote speeches and fostered dialogue on shaping the future of livestock development in India and beyond.



Ram Pratim Deka being felicitated by the organizing committee during the inaugural session of the conference
pPhoto credit: ILRI/Vijayalakshmy Kennedy).

Rapid assessment explores barriers to digital innovation in livestock sector

Digital technologies are increasingly seen as vital to transforming India's livestock sector, but adoption remains limited. Barriers include high costs, technological risks, complexity, limited use and distrust in the tools or their providers. Additional challenges relate to the lack of accessible information on costs and benefits, insufficient investment in human capital, weak incentives for innovation and the absence of inclusive data-sharing systems and competitive markets.

To address these issues, ILRI conducted a rapid assessment of the digital innovation and service landscape, with special focus on semi-arid regions of India. Key findings highlight that digital tools offer real-time opportunities to boost productivity, resilience and market integration in agriculture. The study recommends strengthening extension systems for last-mile delivery, co-creating demand-driven solutions with communities and generating robust evidence through case studies to attract investments. Link to the complete assessment report: <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/170244>

Survey generates insights on women's empowerment in agriculture

To assess the empowerment of women livestock keepers, the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index (WELI) has been implemented across four Indian states—Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Rajasthan—under the ICAR–ILRI collaborative project on gender. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, the survey was carried out by a team of about 20 trained enumerators across the four states.

The index focuses on several interconnected dimensions, including decision-making in agricultural production and nutrition, access to and control over resources, income and opportunities, as well as workload and control over one's own time. By examining these areas, WELI generates context-specific insights, providing valuable evidence to guide gender-responsive policies and interventions.



An enumerator interviews a farmer during the WELI survey
(photo credit: ILRI/Braja Bandhu Swain).

Capacity development

ILRI, in collaboration with ICAR–CIWA, organized six capacity development programs between April and June 2025 across Odisha, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh states of India. These initiatives empowered rural women—key actors in livestock rearing and highly vulnerable to climate change—by equipping them with practical skills and tools to build resilience.

Training covered climate-smart livestock practices such as precision feeding, sustainable fodder and water management, and animal healthcare in changing climatic conditions. In total, around 280 women livestock keepers actively participated, gaining valuable knowledge to enhance productivity, sustainability and community resilience.



Group photo during the training program (photo credit: ILRI/Braja Bandhu Swain).

Publications

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ILRI works to improve food and nutritional security and reduce poverty in developing countries through research for efficient, safe and sustainable use of livestock. Co-hosted by Kenya and Ethiopia, it has regional or country offices and projects in South and Southeast Asia as well as Central, East, Southern and West Africa. ilri.org



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Personnel update

ILRI India extends a warm welcome to Hung Nguyen, the new regional director for ILRI Asia, who assumed office on 1 August 2025.



Hung Nguyen (photo credit: ILRI).



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