

Institutional updates

CGIAR and ICAR hold annual meeting to review joint projects

This year's annual meeting to review collaborative projects by CGIAR and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) was held on 6 February 2024. Attended by the heads of CGIAR centres in India, senior ICAR officials and representatives from the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), this event is a platform to review and strategize ongoing and future collaborations.

Participants analysed the research progress made in 2023 and outlined activities for 2024, recognizing the significant impact of innovations like Harit Dhara, an anti-methanogenic compound with the potential to reduce enteric methane emissions from livestock. The forum also encouraged the initiation of projects on commercialization and up-scaling of technologies, particularly through partnerships with the private sector.

ICAR and 12 CGIAR centres, including the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), signed a memorandum of understanding in November 2022. Under this agreement, ICAR and CGIAR have been collaborating on agricultural research and education across various domains, including crops, livestock, fisheries, policy, land and water management, and agro-biodiversity.

Himanshu Pathak, secretary of DARE and director general of ICAR, emphasized the

need to reduce overlaps in research activities and to enhance the sharing of progress updates. He reiterated the importance of regular assessments to ensure projects are on track and up to the required standards.

Appolinaire Djikeng, director general of ILRI, underscored the institute's commitment to future projects: 'Many success stories have emerged from the CGIAR-ICAR partnership, and we look forward to even more achievements from our ongoing and future projects.'

ICAR-ILRI collaborations focus on four priority areas: vaccine and diagnostics development, red jungle fowl genomics, methane emission mitigation and gender research. During the review meeting, senior leaders from various CGIAR centres presented their progress reports and plans for 2024. ILRI's updates were delivered by Habibar Rahman, ILRI regional representative for South Asia, along with principal investigators of key projects.

Representatives from other CGIAR centres working in India, including the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the International Potato Center (CIP), and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), participated in the meeting. The next review meeting, focused on 2024 projects, is scheduled for early 2025.



Welcome note

Welcome to the thirteenth 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

Fred Unger
Regional representative for ILRI Asia



Participants from CGIAR and ICAR participate in one of the sessions at the review meeting (photo credit: ILRI/Vijayalakshmy Kennady).

Project news

ILRI and ICAR launch 'Indichick' chip to identify native chicken breeds

ILRI and ICAR have released 'Indichick', a genetic chip that identifies native chicken breeds with 97% accuracy. Beyond identification, the chip aids in genomic selection to enhance economically important traits in both native and improved chicken breeds.

Indichick is a medium-density single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) chip, covering critical SNPs across the genomes of native and exotic chicken breeds. SNPs are tiny genetic variations found at specific points in a genome, and this chip covers the most important SNPs found in the whole genomes of native and improved exotic chicken breeds. Developed under the ICAR-ILRI backyard poultry genomics collaborative project, the chip was released on 5 February 2024.

A total of 10 indigenous native chicken breeds from various parts of India, along with two exotic chickens (one white leghorn layer and one improved broiler chicken), were included in the study to develop a more comprehensive SNP chip combining both indigenous and exotic chickens. The chip is expected to boost the production of Indian poultry breeds at a time when commercial poultry production is rapidly increasing but native chicken performance is poor.

Read more: [ILRI and ICAR release SNP chip to identify native chicken breeds](#)



The launch of the 'Indichick' chip (photo credit: ILRI/South Asia).

ILRI and ICAR train women in distressed areas on climate-resilient livestock production

The ICAR-Central Institute for Women in Agriculture (CIWA), Bhubaneswar, organized two workshops to educate women farmers on climate-resilient livestock production. The workshops

were held on 5 and 19 January 2024 in Kajipatna and Mamdampur, Odisha State, under the CIWA-ILRI Gender-Livestock-Climate Analytic Approach (GLCAA) project.

During the sessions, women dairy farmers were introduced to scientific management techniques for reducing their vulnerability to climate-related challenges in livestock production. These techniques included hydroponic fodder farming and Azolla cultivation.



Focus group discussion in Bihar (photo credit: ILRI/Braja Bandhu Swain).

Gender-livestock project conducts workshops and baseline survey on women livestock farmers

As part of the GLCAA project, two awareness workshops on 'Promoting women's response to climate change in the livestock sector' were held in Supaul, Bihar, and Bikaner areas of Rajasthan. The sessions discussed the adverse effects of climate change on livestock and the livelihoods of women farmers, offering strategies to mitigate these impacts.

In Bihar, a baseline survey using a semi-structured questionnaire was conducted among 200 women livestock farmers to assess the Livestock Farmers Livelihood Vulnerability Index (LLVI) for climate change. Additionally, eight focus group discussions—four with women and four with men—were held on 8–14 June 2024 to gauge women's empowerment and determine the role of supporting institutions in the region.

Study measures climate vulnerability among women livestock farmers in Odisha State

A study conducted in four villages—Kathakoth and Kujanga in Jagatsinghpur District, and Gaindol and Kajipatna in Puri District, Odisha—assessed the LLVI for climate change. Using a semi-structured questionnaire, data were collected from 50 women dairy farmers.

The LLVI was found to be 0.59 in Puri and 0.38 in Jagatsinghpur, indicating higher vulnerability in Puri. This increased vulnerability in Puri is attributed to the women's lower adaptive capacity, including limited livelihood strategies, socio-demographic factors and weaker social networks compared to those in Jagatsinghpur.

Data collectors receive training on women empowerment in livestock index



Participants at the WELI training workshop (photo credit: ILRI/Braja Bandhu Swain).

The GCLAA for livelihood improvement in distressed areas of India project held a training workshop on the Women's Empowerment in Livestock Index (WELI) from 24 June to 3 July 2024. Conducted under the ICAR-CIWA-ILRI collaborative project, the event prepared enumerators to collect primary data on women's empowerment, climate change and livestock across five states in India.

Eighteen participants from Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan states attended the workshop and familiarized themselves on the use of the WELI survey questionnaire. The training was conducted by Alessandra Galiè, Immaculate Omondi, Eunice Kariuki and Braja Bandhu Swain from ILRI, with facilitation by A. K. Panda and Arpita Mahapatra from ICAR-CIWA. The WELI and Rural Household Multi-Indicator Survey (RHoMIS) surveys will follow in all five states.

ILRI and Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying meeting

Ram Pratim Deka, ILRI India's country representative, met with Alka Upadhyaya, secretary of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, to discuss ILRI's activities in India. During the meeting, Deka highlighted key livestock development issues, including the need for enhanced disease diagnostics and addressing antimicrobial resistance.

Upadhyaya expressed the department's interest in tapping ILRI's expertise to design a national livestock development program. She supported

the idea of signing a memorandum of understanding, based on specific critical areas with clear outputs.



Ram Pratim Deka (right) with Alka Upadhyaya (photo credit: ILRI/Vijayalakshmy Kennady).

ILRI and ICAR explore collaborative opportunities in livestock innovation

Ram Pratim Deka met with Himanshu Pathak, secretary of the DARE and director general of ICAR, to discuss ongoing activities and identify areas for future collaboration. Pathak said there were many areas where the two institutions could benefit mutually from each other's expertise and come up with projects that benefit the community.

During the meeting held on 21 March 2024 at the ICAR offices in New Delhi, Deka highlighted the importance of facilitating technology and innovation transfer between South Asia and Africa. Mentioning similar initiatives by other CGIAR organizations, he suggested the setting up of a South-South symposium on technology transfer.



Ram Pratim Deka (left) meets Himanshu Pathak (photo credit: ILRI/Vijayalakshmy Kennady).

Personnel updates

On 15 March 2024, ILRI India bid farewell to Habibar Rahman, who served for seven years as the ILRI regional representative for South Asia. We extend a warm welcome to Fred Unger, who succeeds Rahman as the new regional representative, and to Ram Pratim Deka, the new country representative.



Fred Unger and Ram Pratim Deka began their new positions at ILRI South Asia in March 2024 (photo credit: ILRI).



The International Livestock Research Institute (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 East, South and Southeast Asia as well as Central, East, Southern and West Africa. ilri.org



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