ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program:
An innovative institutional system to enhance R4D through agri-business incubation
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Foreword

The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of ICRISAT was the first agribusiness incubator in India to be set up under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode and has since been used as a model for setting up other agribusiness incubators globally. ICRISAT enjoys the distinction of being the first and only institute under the CGIAR system to initiate an incubation program to promote science-based agribusiness ventures and innovations.

The ABI is now under the Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) of ICRISAT and supports agribusiness ventures in their initial years by providing management expertise and mentoring, access to networks and seed capital, furnished offices and laboratory space, and shared resources such as specialized equipment and business support services. The incubator also fosters a system for promoting innovations and acts as a platform to assist in the uptake, adaptation and commercialization of research products of R&D institutes in the agricultural sector engaged in improving on-farm productivity, enhancing food production and creating better livelihood returns for smallholder farmers.

ICRISAT through its research for development (R4D) activities aims to bring the smallholder farmers into mainstream business so as to enable them to participate in and reap the benefits of development. This requires a wider range of innovations that can harness markets to improve farmer incomes manifold and make agriculture a respectable business and farming a profitable enterprise. Our strategy of Inclusive Market Oriented Development (IMOD) changes the way we think about agricultural development.

Since its inception in 2003, ABI-ICRISAT has supported hundreds of agribusiness ventures, facilitated commercialization of agro-technologies, and benefited smallholder farmers. In a short span of 10 years, ABI has scaled its initiative through co-business incubation programs in India and Africa and 30 incubators operating in seven countries.

I am pleased to see that ABI-ICRISAT has published this book that showcases and documents the various activities conducted by the incubator over the past decade. I hope this will inspire the development of many more similar incubators to promote entrepreneurship in the sector and ultimately help improve the livelihood of millions of farmers across the world.

More power to ABI-ICRISAT! More power to the farmer entrepreneurs!

William D. Dar
Director General
ICRISAT
Preface

With the increasing importance of market context in Indian agriculture, enhancing business skills of agri-preneurs assumes greater significance. The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of ICRISAT is an innovative institutional initiative that was established in 2003 with the intention of fostering agri-business innovations to enter the market for a fast and wide-scale impact. The ABI program thus remains a pioneering effort in the agricultural research domain to engage with the private sector agro-companies in taking R&D results off the shelf and out to the intended beneficiaries in the farming community.

Over the past few years, the Program has successfully developed a system that nurtures entrepreneurship in the sector by technology transfer as well as by supporting innovations from the grassroots level, using an array of business support services. With more than 160 ventures supported that has benefited more than 500,000 farmers, this initiative from ICRISAT has indeed shown that market-oriented development can have more rewarding results for the benefit of all the stakeholders of the sector.

One of the key parameters of any successful initiative is its scalability and replicability. ABI has been at the forefront of promoting similar agribusiness incubators in the Indian agricultural system as well as in Africa and other Asian countries. Through its innovative models in incubation, such as Seed Business incubation, Farm Business incubation, Co-business incubation etc., this endeavor has helped in reaching out to a large number of farmers and entrepreneurs, thereby developing an alternate conduit for technology transfer and the nurturing of agri-innovations.

This publication is essentially a collection of reports about ABI activities such as trainings, entrepreneurship development programs, seminars, meetings, conferences, exhibitions organized and participated in, and accomplishments and achievements of the Program and its incubatees, which was published in ICRISAT’s in-house newsletter, ICRISAT Happenings, during the last decade (2003-2013).

This publication would not have possible without the support of Dr William D. Dar, Director General of ICRISAT, Team ABI and the Strategic Marketing and Communication office.

Kiran K Sharma
CEO, AIP-ICRISAT
Introduction

ABI-ICRISAT

The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program is an initiative of ICRISAT under the Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) that was setup in 2003 in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, to promote agribusiness ventures and nurture innovations through public-private partnerships. The ABI program remains a pioneering initiative in the agribusiness domain in the country, and works towards maximizing the success quotient of start-up enterprises by offering the best of the opportunities with minimum risk.

MISSION

“Improving the well-being of the poor through the creation of competitive agri-business enterprises by technology development and commercialization”

OBJECTIVES

- To promote agri-innovations in the sector and enable its entry into the value chain to benefit the farming community
- To facilitate agro-technology commercialization by promoting and supporting agribusiness ventures
- To promote successful agribusiness ventures in order to benefit the farmers through new markets, products and services

ABI’s BUSINESS INCUBATION SERVICES

- Technical and Business Consultancy
- Business Development and facilitation
- Technology Commercialisation
- Mentoring, Capacity building and training
- Access to funding
- Market and Industry Networks
- Office and Laboratory facilities

ABI’s SPECIALIZED BUSINESS INCUBATION SERVICES

a) SEED VENTURES

Seed Business Incubation (SBI) is an initiative to develop and promote rural seed business ventures at the village level in order to bridge the demand and supply gap of open pollinated quality seeds through public, private and people partnership.

b) BIOFUEL VENTURE

Biofuel Venture is an initiative to promote sweet sorghum-based ethanol industry and other agricultural products.
c) AGRI-BIOTECH VENTURES
ABI-ICRISAT facilitates seed companies in the emerging area of agri-biotech, in developing transformation protocols for commercial crops, marker development for traits of interest and tissue culture for medicinal, horticultural and tree crops.

d) INNOVATIVE VENTURES
ABI-ICRISAT promotes innovative ventures in the agribusiness domain, which are proprietary products or novel services, and that have good market potential

e) FARM VENTURES
ABI-ICRISAT promotes farm ventures in the area of Contract farming, Organic farming and Precision farming.

f) SOFTLANDING
ABI-ICRISAT provides “softlanding” services to agro-companies who want to establish their business in India and Africa.

IMPACT STORY and ACHIEVEMENTS

IMPACT
- Access to markets for 64 agro-products
- Incubated over 200 agribusiness ventures so far
- Facilitated funding to 23 ventures worth $18 million
- Trained more than 2300 entrepreneurs
- Assisted in the commercialization of 194 agro-technologies

Awards and Accolades
- 2013 | Best Business Incubator Award at FICCI Food 360
- 2013 | Bioseed Research India Ltd, an incubatee of ABI-ICRISAT, won the ISBA 2012 Performance Award
- 2010 | Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India wins the Sankalp Award
- 2009 | ABI-ICRISAT won the Villgro Award
- 2008 | ABI-ICRISAT is the winner of Asia Pacific Association of Business–Incubators (AABI) Award
- 2007 | ABI client, Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India, won the FAPCCI Award for Rural development in June 2007
- 2006 | Rusni Distilleries, ABI-ICRISAT’s first client, received the Best Social Entrepreneur of the Country Award from the Prime Minister of India
- 2005 | ABI-ICRISAT wins the National Award for the Best Incubator in 2005 from the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India
The first meeting of the Governors of Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT was held on 1 April 2003. Mr Sarangal, Chief General Manager and Mr Renganathan, General Manager represented NABARD. Mr Babu Rao of AP Seeds Corporation could not make due to some urgent work. The board approved the formation of a Standing Advisory Committee for ABI at ICRISAT to give guidance on the various projects and in the recruitment of a CEO for ABI at ICRISAT. The operational manual for the ABI which was presented to the board is being modified to incorporate some of the suggestion made by the members.

The Governing Board members appreciated the effort put by ICRISAT to establish the incubator and DST for its support.
Comings and goings ABI gets a chief

Happenings No. 1068 26 September 2003

Somasundaram Karuppan Chetty has joined as the Manager for the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI), established at ICRISAT-Patancheru with support from the National Science and Technology Entrepreneurial Development Board (NSTEDB) of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India. ABI will provide the required infrastructure, support, and environment to entrepreneurs for commercializing technologies developed by ICRISAT, and its partners in India and abroad.

Karuppan is a graduate in agriculture and a post-graduate in business administration. He has formerly worked with EID Parry Limited and Maxworth Orchards India Limited. Welcome and all the best!
The standing committee.

The first meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee of the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) was held at ICRISAT-Patancheru on 5 November. Chaired by Rajesh Agarwal, it was attended by Mr Sarath Naru from the Andhra Pradesh Industrial Development Corporation, Prof Ramachandran from the Indian School of Business, NSS Prasad, KK Sharma and SM Karuppanchetty. The meeting screened and reviewed prospective clients and discussed the business plan for ABI.
There were distinguished visitors to the Agri-Business Incubator on 12 November. The team was led by Mr HK Mittal, Head of the National Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board (part of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India).

The other members were: Mr Rahul Patwardhan, CEO of INDIACO, Pune; Mr Jawahar of the Science and Technology and Entrepreneurship Park at the Trichy Regional Engineering College; Mr Purushottam from the International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Metals.

The team visited ICRISAT-Patancheru to monitor the progress of the ABI project. Dr Dar, who confirmed the commitment of ICRISAT towards the alliance with DST, met the team. Later, the members of the Standing Advisory Committee apprised them of the project’s progress. The visitors were impressed.
Sweet success!

The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) is moving closer to its first deal with Rusni Distilleries Pvt. Ltd. Dr Dar, Chairman of ABI-ICRISAT handed over an in principle letter of selection to Mr Palanisamy, Managing Director of the Rusni Distilleries. Rusni Distilleries Pvt. Ltd. is a start-up enterprise intending to produce gasohol (petrol blended with alcohol) and potable alcohol (extra neutral alcohol) from ICRISAT’s sweet sorghum cultivars of (with high sucrose content). This is a pioneering initiative in India.

The project is expected to generate value addition to farmers cultivating the sweet sorghum. ABI-ICRISAT expects to generate substantial revenue from this project.
ICRISAT burnt the midnight oil to put its best foot forward at the Asian biotech convention – Bio Asia 2004 – held at Hyderabad last week. The team’s efforts were rewarded when ICRISAT won the Best Stall Prize at the exhibition. Thanking the Andhra Pradesh Government for initiating the event, Director General William Dar wrote thus to Mr BP Acharya, Industries Secretary: “It was indeed a unique opportunity for ICRISAT to participate in Bio Asia 2004. We had a very good turnout at our exhibit, at the Business-to-Business forum, and for the DG’s presentation and press conference at the conference. We have had no fewer than 30 enquiries of businesses and others interested in setting up in our Agri-Science Park and/or partnering with ICRISAT. We already have had visits from three potential business partners and are arranging visits of others. We are very hopeful some of these entrepreneurs will complement our strengths to help us transform the livelihoods of the farming communities in AP, India, and beyond.”

The Andhra Pradesh Government is implementing its Genome Valley Project, which encompasses many biotech industrial parks in and around Hyderabad city. ICRISAT is one of the Centers of Excellence identified within the Genome Valley by the state government. ICRISAT is also hosting the Agri-Biotech Park within the Genome Valley. Dr Dar presented ICRISAT’s research work on transgenics to the business leaders from Asia at the Global Bio
Business Forum. A press meet was also organized, where Dr Dar, Barry Shapiro, Farid Waliyar and CLL Gowda spoke about ICRISAT’s partnerships with the private sector. At BioAsia ICRISAT showcased its Agri-Science Park, comprising the Agri-Biotech Park, the Agri-Business Incubator and the Hybrid Seed Consortium. Mention was also made of ICRISAT’s natural resources management program, and the initiative to launch agriecotourism.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT-Patancheru has launched its commercial operations with the signing of collaborative agreements with two private-sector clients. A few other projects are in the pipeline. The ABI held its Board of Governors meeting on 22 March. Rusni Distilleries Pvt. Ltd., the first client for ABI, will collaborate for generating extra-neutral alcohol (ENA), a raw material for producing potable alcohol, and fuel alcohol (gasohol) that can be added to petrol from sweet sorghum varieties developed by ICRISAT.

This collaboration will generate better value for sorghum. ICRISAT will help further increase the sugar content in the sorghum varieties. The ABI’s second client, Bio seed Research India Pvt. Ltd., will work on research projects related to the application of agricultural biotechnology for the development of superior cotton hybrids. ICRISAT will provide technology assistance for using molecular markers, gene marker identification and genetic transformation. Further, the seed company can make use of ICRISAT’s greenhouse space, biotechnology labs and agricultural land for testing of their material.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT-Patancheru had its Fourth Board of Governors (BOG) meeting on 19 November at ICRISAT and Dr William Dar chaired the meeting. Dr Dar appreciated the cooperation of Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) of ABI-ICRISAT and Board Members for the past year in bringing ABI into shape with a strong footing. The Chairman inducted Mr R Rajamani, IAS (Retd.) who is on the Board of ICICI Knowledge Park, ICICI Ventures and Sundaram Mutual Fund, to serve the ABI Board. ABI is as of now supporting three private companies.

They are M/s Rusni Distilleries Pvt. Ltd., M/s Bio seed India Pvt. Ltd., and M/s Seed Works India Pvt. Ltd. The fourth project by M/s Sessler Tomand Hy-Glass Chemicals was approved by the Board for incubation support is in the pipeline. Mr HK Mittal, Head-NSTEDB of Department of Science & Technology (GoI), who had participated in the Board meeting, congratulated the excellent progress of ABI on the mission outlined. He also acknowledged committed support provided by the ICRISAT management towards this initiative. After the meeting, all the Governing Board Members of ABI were shown the progress of ABI’s Biotechnology Lab and Facilities in Building 303, which is being commissioned.
A team of senior officials from ICAR, CSIR laboratories and state agriculture universities visited ICRISAT on 1 December. The National Academy of Agricultural Research Management organized their visit in connection with the National Directors Workshop on Commercialization of Agriculture Technologies. The team met DDG-R Dyno Keatinge, KN Rai, OP Rupela and SM Karuppanchetty. ICRISAT shared its experience on the Hybrid Seed Research Consortium, the Biopesticides Research Consortium, and the Agri-Business Incubator. The visitors appreciated the developments at ABI-ICRISAT and offered future technical support.
The Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT organized an Entrepreneurship Awareness Camp in Biotechnology, in collaboration with the Entrepreneurship Development Cell of the Jawaharlal Nehru Technical University at Hyderabad. The camp was held from 1 to 3 February.

The camp introduced the concept of biotechnology-based industries and the opportunities for entrepreneurship in the sector to 400 prospective entrepreneurs and students. It facilitated the interaction of participants with scientists and private sector industrialists such as Dr Varaprasad Reddy of Shanta Biotech, Dr P Sateesh Kumar from Nuziveedu Seeds and Dr GM Bogle of Microbax.

Speaking as the Guest of Honor, Dr Dar said that it was encouraging to see such a high interest in biotechnology, which is the industry with good potential for growth. DDG-R Dyno Keatinge inaugurated the camp on 1 February.
Board visits Rusni Distilleries

The Governing Board members visited Rusni Distilleries at Mohammed Shapur village in Medak district to inaugurate the ethanol from sweet sorghum project on 27 March. Board Chair Uzo Mokwunye symbolically crushed sweet sorghum stalks.

The ethanol from sweet sorghum project successfully links ICRISAT with the private sector Rusni Distilleries through the Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT. The sorghum breeding team at ICRISAT had bred sorghum varieties and hybrids that yield higher sugar-rich juice when their stalks are crushed. The sweet sorghum varieties were transferred to Rusni Distilleries through the ABI.

Rusni Distilleries is in the process of establishing its plant at Mohammed Shapur village, which will use a zero-effluent process to distill ethanol from the sorghum juice. The plant is expected to be commissioned in June 2006, according to Mr AR Palani Swamy, Managing Director of Rusni Distilleries. The plant, which is being constructed at a cost of US$ 5.3 million by Rusni Distilleries, will have an installed capacity of 40,000 litres per day and is expected to generate an annual turnover of over US$ 5 million.

About 3,000 farmers will be benefited by the distillery as it procured sweet sorghum stalks at Rs 450 per tonne and used stored sorghum seed during the lean season. Even by-products could be used to generate power and organic manure.
CLL Gowda welcomed the Board members and other guests on behalf of the partnership between ICRISAT and Rusni Distilleries.

Belum Reddy spoke about the research at ICRISAT to get the best sorghum hybrid with the highest sugar content. ICRISAT hybrid NTJ-2 was chosen for the project. While ethanol can be produced from sweet sorghum at Rs 13.11 per litre, ethanol from sugarcane costs Rs 14.98. There are additional benefits since sorghum needs less water to grow, and thus there is a benefit for the poor and marginal farmers of the SAT through this project.

Before the Board members left for Mohammed Shapur village, Kiran Sharma, in his capacity as the Chief Executive Officer of the Agri-Business Incubator, spoke about the activities and projects of ABI. The Board members also walked through the ABI and met some of its enterprise partners.

A team of over 20 journalists visited Rusni Distilleries along with the Board members, and the inaugural was covered well in the print and electronic media.
Director General William Dar received the National Award for Technology Business Incubators for the year 2005 from the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, on 11 May.

Dr Dar, along with Kiran Sharma and Karuppanchetty, received the Award for the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT, which was adjudged the best technology business incubator in the country during 2005.

Dr Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, presented the award to Dr Dar, in the presence of Mr Kapil Sibal, Honorable Minister of Science & Technology and Ocean Development. The award was presented at a function organized by the Ministry of Science and Technology, at New Delhi, to celebrate the National Technology Day on 11 May.

According to Dr Dar, the selection of ABI at ICRISAT for the best technology business incubator award is a testimonial to the institute’s success in attracting public-private sector partnerships for developing agricultural technologies into successful agri-business ventures. “It has been proved that a strong and dynamic agri-business substantially contributes to growth in agricultural production and employment,” Dr Dar said.

The ABI has been established with financial support from the National Science Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board (NSTEDB) within the Ministry of Science and
Technology. Through the ABI, ICRISAT is promoting several technologies ranging from farm-based to advanced biotechnologies.

The agri-business products and technologies incubated through ABI are: sweet sorghum for ethanol production; Helicoverpa-resistant transgenic cotton; bio fermenter for bio pesticide production; drought-resistant groundnut variety ICGV 91114; better-yielding chickpea varieties JG 11 and KAK 2; biopesticide formulations for controlling crop pest; pesticide-free crops and produce through organic farming.

The enterprise partners of ABI include Rusni Distilleries; Bioseed Research India; Seed Works India; Slesser and Tom Electronics; Hgyglass and Chemicals; Aakrruthi Agricultural Associates of India; Mekins Biotech; G-Tech Seeds Exports; AG Biotech Research; Agro-Biotech Research; Ecosense; Biotech Internationals; Indore Biotech; Multiplex Biotech; Navayuga; Romvijay; and Nirmal Seeds.
The second Global Forum on Business Incubation on the theme Empowering economies through ICT, innovation and entrepreneurship was held from 6 to 10 November at Hyderabad. The Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, the Government of Andhra Pradesh, the Information for Development Program (InfoDev), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and World Bank hosted the forum.

The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy inaugurated the forum. He stressed on the importance of business incubation to nurture the budding entrepreneurs. He also stated that there was a need to extend the benefits to make the average person to a player in the global business. In this context, he commended the performance of the Agri-Business Incubator @ ICRISAT.

The forum attracted more than 300 participants from about 70 countries, and included representatives of the public, private, academic and not-for-profit sectors. The event provided an opportunity to:

- Network with other participants to informally exchange ideas and explore opportunities for partnership.
- Learn from the achievements and lessons of InfoDev’s Global Network of Incubators.
- Attend training sessions designed to increase the capacity of incubator managers.
- Initiate plans of action for regional and global networks of organizations seeking to promote ICT-enabled entrepreneurship and innovation.

The Agri-Science Park @ ICRISAT exhibited a stall. A large number of participants were eager to know the services provided by ICRISAT to the entrepreneurs and its support to the business incubation.
An evening to promote business incubation

Happenings No. 1233

24 November 2006

As part of the Second Global Forum on Business Incubation held from 6 to 10 November at Hyderabad, Director General William Dar hosted a dinner for the delegates at Patancheru on 10 November. Dr Rex Navarro delivered the welcome address. Dr Dar, while extending a warm welcome, spoke about ICRISAT and explained the initiative promoting Public Private Partnership through Agri Science Park (ASP) and Agri Business Incubator (ABI) initiatives.

The ICRISAT Management Group along with Dean of Hyderabad Central University, Mr Venkat Ramana, felicitated Mr HK Mittal of DST, Mr Vivek Choudhary of World Bank and Mr Nirankar Saxena of FICCI for their active contribution in making the Second Global Forum a grand success. Mr HK Mittal and Mr Vivek Choudhary commended ICRISAT and its DG for excellent leadership and institutional innovation serving the farming community, and also thanked him for hosting the dinner.
ISBA 2007 conducted at Patancheru

2 March 2007

Honorable Geetha Reddy inaugurates the ISBA conference.

The Agri business Incubator at ICRISAT along with the ICICI Knowledge Park and the University of Hyderabad organized the first annual conference of the Indian STEP and Business Incubator Association (ISBA 2007) at ICRISAT-Patancheru from 25 to 27 February. STEP stands for Science and Technology Entrepreneurs Parks. The Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, and the Government of Andhra Pradesh were among the main sponsors of the conference. The conference attracted around 150 delegates who are managers of technology incubator parks and companies that are being incubated in the STEPs and business incubators. This conference attracted 40 speakers and resource persons including top management of successful companies, such as Mr Ramalinga Raju, Chairman, Satyam Computers Ltd.

The conference was inaugurated by the Minister for Tourism, Sugar and Major Industries, Commerce and Exports, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Honorable Dr J Geeta Reddy. Inaugurating the conference, Dr Reddy said that business incubation is a journey and not a job. Technology Business Incubators strengthen collaboration between industry and the academia, and turn ideas into viable businesses. She said that there are already five business incubators in and around Hyderabad, and two more are envisaged in the Shapoorji Pallonji Biotech Park and the IICT.

DDG-R Dyno Keatinge, speaking on behalf of Director General William Dar, said that ICRISAT has catalyzed public-private partnerships through the Agri-Business Incubator. A very successful example is the development of sweet sorghum varieties and the incubation of a commercial venture to produce ethanol from these varieties in collaboration with Rusni Distilleries. Mr HK Mittal, Advisor and Head, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, said that technology business incubators make business out of ideas, and are finishing schools for future business tycoons.
The Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh, felicitated Mr AR Palaniswamy, Managing Director of Rusni Distilleries (India) Ltd., as the Individual Achiever for Economic and Social Development on 14 March in New Delhi. The International Achievers Development Organization organized this event. Rusni Distilleries is a start-up company pioneering the production of ethanol from sweet sorghum that is being incubated in the Agri-Business Incubator under the Agri-Science Park of ICRISAT. On this occasion, Hon Manmohan Singh appreciated Mr Palaniswamy’s efforts towards making the dream become a reality and recollected the evergreen memories of his earlier visit to ICRISAT about 20 years ago. He also acknowledged the pioneering work of ICRISAT on sweet sorghum research, which is making it reach the farmers through the Agri-Business Incubator.

Dr Singh emphasized that the sweet sorghum based industry for ethanol production should be further enhanced in the Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh and in developing countries in order to help the resource poor farmers. Mr Palaniswamy, while being felicitated, dedicated this pioneer award and his mission on sweet sorghum-based ethanol production technology to the people of India and the rest of the developing world and stressed that this endeavor was a part of the efforts of India towards energy security that includes three strategic objectives: A pro-poor strategy; biofuel without sacrificing food security; and green energy that will mitigate climate change. Mr Palaniswamy acknowledged the support he has been receiving from ICRISAT and took the opportunity to thank the Honorable Prime Minister and the organizers for providing a great source of encouragement to a small-scale but forward-looking entrepreneur like himself.
ICRISAT participated in the visit of an Indian delegation to Mauritius from 25 to 30 March to initiate the ideas of starting technology business incubators in the island country.

Karuppanchetty from ICRISAT joined a team led by Mr HK Mittal, Head, National Science & Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board (NSTEDB), Government of India (GoI), which met ministers, senior officials, chamber of commerce representatives, academia, entrepreneurs, and other key stakeholders on the developing entrepreneurship and incubation in Mauritius.

The other members of the Indian delegation included Dr Dinesh Awasthi, Director, Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDI), Ahmedabad, Mr Nirankar Saxena, Additional Director, Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), New Delhi among others.

The delegation provided the basic framework on entrepreneurship promotion, agri-business incubation and some specific new areas like seaweed farming to the Government of Mauritius (GoM). The visit of the mission was jointly supported/organized by the NSTEDB, and the Agricultural Research and Extension Unit (AREU) of the GoM.

The delegation made a need assessment for promotion of entrepreneurship and incubation in Mauritius by participating in a two-day workshop on Technology innovation-based agro entrepreneurship on 27 and 28 March. The workshop addressed various issues and methodologies to promote entrepreneurship, technology incubation and virtual platforms in
The workshop was inaugurated by Mrs Krishnawtee Beegun, Senior Chief Executive, Ministry of Agro Industry and Fisheries, and was attended by about 50 participants representing government, private sector and academia.

All the members of the Indian delegation made presentations in their areas of expertise. Karuppanchetty of ABI-ICRISAT presented on the technology innovations and commercialization opportunities through agri-business incubator. The workshop was widely covered in the press and official television channels.

The delegation had meetings with Dr Arvin Boolell, Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries; Dr Rajesh Jeetah, Minister of Industry, SMEs, Commerce & Co-operatives; Mr Anil Kumar Bachoo, Minister of Environment & National Development Unit; Karuppanchetty makes his presentation.

SA Cader Sayed-Hossen, MP and Chairman Commission for the Democratization of the Economy; Mrs Krishnawtee Beegun, Senior Chief Executive, Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries; Dr Dhaneshwar Dumur, Director, AREU; and Mr Shyama Prasad Bisnauthsingh, Scientific Liaison Officer, AREU.

Dr Arvin Boolell, Honorable Minister for Agro Industry, appreciated the support of the Indian Government and assured the delegation of the full support of the Government of Mauritius in this endeavor. He emphasized the need to hasten the process to establish such systems in Mauritius in the interest of the small scale farmers, unemployed youth and other disadvantaged groups in the country.

The focus of the delegation was on developing a comprehensive framework for promoting innovation-based entrepreneurship through incubation with special focus on agro industries and marine products. Both the partners expressed extreme satisfaction with the outcome of the visit and the discussions held at various levels. It was decided that three institutional mechanisms – Indo- Mauritius Center for Entrepreneurship Development, Agri-Business Incubation Center and a Virtual On-line Incubation and Information Platform –will be set up by EDI, ICRISAT and FICCI to promote innovations and entrepreneurship in Mauritius.

ABI-ICRISAT will provide technical assistance on setting up agri-business incubator for AREU of the GoM. The project will be supported for five years through the Ministry of External Affairs, GoI.
Mrs Rebecca Nayar, IFS, Director Biotechnology, Government of the State of Orissa, visited Agri-Science Park@ICRISAT on 9 May to understand the model of a science park, especially the Agri-Business Incubator. Mrs Nayar informed ICRISAT that the Government of Orissa is setting up a BioPharma Park in an area of 277 acres in Bhubaneshwar, Orissa, which will also have an Incubator in an area of 10 acres. She said that the BioPharma Park will have three broad verticals – Agro-biotechnology, Pharma and an IT Corridor. She also informed that Government of Orissa had initiated massive programs on BioDiesel and Rural Electrification.

The main objective of Mrs Nayar’s visit was to understand the framework of the Incubator and take home her learnings. Dr Kiran Sharma and Abdul Rahman Ilyas appraised her about ASP and ABI, and took her around the facilities. Dr Sharma assured Mrs Nayar that ICRISAT would extend whatever help was needed in strengthening their institutional initiative.
The Key Management Team (KMT) members of Farm Business Incubator – IIAM, Mozambique, visited India from 21 to 31 May, for an induction program on business incubation, organized by the Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT. The members of the team were Dr Paula Pimentel, Director of Technology Transfer & Training, IIAM; Mr Feliciano Mazuze, Senior Scientist, IIAM; and Dr Carlos E Dominguez, ICRISAT Country Director, Mozambique.

The KMT team met DDG-R Dyno Keatinge on 28 May. Keatinge appreciated the efforts of IIAM to initiate the establishment of the first Farm Business Incubator in Eastern Southern Africa (ESA) and commented that it could serve as a nodal centre for farm business development and also as a platform for access to new technology by the farmers.

KK Sharma and SM Karuppanchetty briefed on the progress and development of ABI-ICRISAT support with regard to the establishment of Farm Business Incubation in IIAM. As part of the induction program, the KMT members attended the International Conference on Business Incubation at Vellore Institute of Technology and learned about the various models of business incubation. They also visited PSG STEP, Coimbatore; TNAU, Coimbatore.
Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI), a client of the Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT, received the Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FAPCCI) award for Excellence in rural development. Chief Minister Hon YS Rajasekhara Reddy presented the award at the 89th annual function of FAPCCI on 8 June.

The Silver trophy, constituted by India Cements Ltd., has been given for their contribution to the rural development for empowering farmers through knowledge, market linkages and allied services.
Jade Grupo Mexicano signs MoU with ICRISAT

The Jade Grupo Cooperativo Mexicano, a social economy cooperative group from Mexico, signed an agreement with ICRISAT on 4 July, joining the ICRISAT Sweet Sorghum Ethanol Research Consortium as a member. This marks the enhancement of a new pattern of partnership as envisioned in ICRISAT’s pro-poor BioPower strategy.

A team of four members from the cooperative and private investors from Mexico visited ICRISAT from 1 to 4 July. The team included Mr Jesus Campos Orozco, President, and Mr Ricardo de la Torre Hernández, Director Operations, JADE Grupo Cooperative Mexicano; and Mr Manuel Cruz Gonzalez, Nekutli, and Mr Carlos Ludlow, Director, Sociedad para el desarrollo (SocDes s,c).

JADE promotes the creation, fortification and development of organic groups of cooperative companies of social & common economy and has a membership of 125 cooperatives with around 14,000 farmers and 68,000 beneficiaries. It generates improved conditions of life for the poor communities in different regions of the country.

The main agenda of their visit was to enlist research support on grain and sweet sorghum from ICRISAT and turnkey project consultancy from Rusni Distilleries. The group plans to establish sweet sorghum bioethanol distillery plants in Mexico with backward linkages with their farmers’ cooperatives.

Sweet sorghum is one of the crops for ethanol production since Mexico has suitable climatic conditions for its growth and utilization.
During their visit, the Mexican team had discussions on ICRISAT’s BioPower strategy and research activities on sweet sorghum with Director General William Dar, besides detailed discussions with Belum Reddy, A Ashok Kumar, Kiran Sharma, Suhas Wani and GV Ranga Rao. The team also visited Rusni Distilleries wherein Mr AR Palaniswami (Managing Director) explained the technology and processes of the bioethanol plant.

During discussions on collaboration, Dr Dar assured the visitors of a long-term association and commitment with the group for the cause of poor farmers in the SAT. As a first step, the group joined the membership of ICRISAT’s Research Consortium.

This association with the Mexican Cooperative is a major milestone towards the development of sweet sorghum for the benefit of farming communities in Mexico, including their energy security.

Ashok Kumar explains about sweet sorghum cultivation to the visitors.
Visitors from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) visited ICRISAT on 16 July. A team of two members, Dr Venkatesh Sosle, Coordinator of CIDA Projects from McGill University, Canada, and Dr N Varadharaju, Professor & Head, Food Business Incubator (FBI), Post Harvesting Technology Centre, TNAU, Coimbatore, visited ICRISAT-Patancheru campus.

The main agenda of their visit was to collaborate with Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) in business incubation processes. The delegates met Barry Shapiro and evinced interest to partner with ICRISAT both in India and Africa. Shapiro extended the cooperation on behalf of our Institute in the area of agricultural technology and business incubation systems. Later, the delegates had detailed discussions with KK Sharma, Karuppanchetty, Aravazhi and Andre F van Rooyen.

ABI-ICRISAT also proposed co-branding through joint business incubation for the clients and capacity building of FBI-TNAU staff on business incubation operations and systems. Besides, TNAU agreed to provide food technology consultancy support to ABI clients and provide unique process technology on ICRISAT mandate crops to be promoted as new ventures. CIDA has agreed to fund these activities through its on-going programs.
ICRISAT, ICAR and Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI) jointly organized a farmers-scientists interactive meeting on 18 July at ICRISAT campus. Around 110 farmers from Anantapur district participated in the event, which focused on groundnut and chickpea.

In the morning, the farmers were briefed on ICRISAT’s activities and were taken to the farm by G Ravikumar wherein they got an idea about the work being done at ICRISAT on the mandate crops. The farmers-scientists meeting was organized later in the afternoon. CLL Gowda inaugurated the farmers-scientists interactive session. Mr G Subba Rao of AAI welcomed the farmers and moderated the session. The farmers were shown a video on groundnut variety ICGV 91114 and R Aruna and GV Ranga Rao addressed their queries related to groundnut variety.

The session on chickpea variety JG 11 started with a video show followed by farmers’ interaction with PM Gaur, BV Rao and others facilitating queries on cultivation and IPM practices. Ranga Rao and Rameshwar Rao answered the questions at the IPM session on groundnut and chickpea.

During the morning session, around 20 farmers from Medak district were shown the video on sweet sorghum and had an interaction with Belum Reddy on cultivation and IPM aspects. The farmers’ response was overwhelming. This was evident from a song sung by Mr Anand, a farmer, on benefits to farmers from ICRISAT. The farmers appreciated the hospitality of ABI-ICRISAT and the scientists. The event was financially supported by AAI & ICAR.
SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi from the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT participated in a workshop organized by the Gujarat State Biotechnology Mission (GSBTM) to seek technical inputs from the stakeholders for establishing an agro-biotech park and agribusiness incubator in the state. The meeting, held on 30 July at Ahmedabad, discussed strategic issues such as markets, clients service and choosing an appropriate incubator model suited for Gujarat.

GSBTM has sought partnership with ABI to initiate a model agri-business incubator for agro-biotech business start-ups in Gujarat and technical support on biotechnology and biopesticides.
Senior officials from the Reliance Group, India’s largest private sector enterprise, visited ICRISAT-Patancheru on 6 August to explore partnership with ICRISAT on sweet sorghum research and business development. The team from Relene Petrochemicals Ltd. (RPL), a Reliance Group company, included Mr M Ganapati, President - Corporate Planning, and his team comprising Mr JV Narasimham, Assistant Vice President, Mr Dinesh Singh, Senior General Manager, Mr Suhas Japtiwale, Senior Manager and Mr AjitMore, General Manager.

Welcoming Mr Ganapati and his team, Director General William Dar explained ICRISAT’s experience in developing sweet sorghum varieties and hybrids, protecting the interests of the poor by providing food and energy security and facilitating the establishment of biofuel ventures through the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) under the Agri-Science Park@ICRISAT. He elaborated on the success story of Rusni Distilleries, the pioneering venture on sweet sorghum-based ethanol production, which is the first of its kind in the world. Later, the group visited the sweet sorghum fields and had detailed discussions with Kiran Sharma, Ashok Kumar, AR Palaniswamy, SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi on possible areas of partnerships and collaborations. The team had immense confidence on the opportunities for institutional complementarities on the research for value addition, industrial applications and business development for enhancing the sweet sorghum utilization through bioethanol production from stalk juice and biomass.

The Reliance Group is India’s largest private sector enterprise, with businesses in the energy and materials value chain. The group’s annual revenues are in excess of US$25 billion. The flagship company, Reliance Industries Limited, is a Fortune Global 500 company and is the largest private sector company in India. With a strong hold in the petroleum and natural gas sectors they plan to venture into biofuels in a big way. During the wrap-up meeting, Dr Dar and Mr Ganapati agreed that both the institutions could work together on targeted research for developing salinity tolerant sweet sorghum hybrids for Gujarat. Further, Relene could join the ICRISAT sweet sorghum ethanol research consortium for harnessing the technology. Besides, the ABI client – Rusni Distilleries – could facilitate RPL on technology consultancy and support.
ABI creates soft-landing platform with Chinese Incubators

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The Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT was invited and honored by Mr Wang Rong, President, Asian Association of Business Incubation, to participate in the Shanghai- Xinjiang International Forum from 27 to 29 August. The forum consisted of a technology innovation platform, an international workshop and a technology exhibition in Urumqi, Xinjiang province, China.

SM Karuppanchetty from ABI participated in the event and exhibited ABI facilities and ethanol from sweet sorghum technology of Rusni Distilleries. He also made a presentation on the agribusiness incubation activities and potential areas of partnerships on technology exchange and business facilitation at the international forum.

Mr Naiyimu Yasen, Mayor of Urumqi city, later hosted him as a state guest of Xinjiang province. Earlier Karuppanchetty met Mr Yao Fugen, Vice Chairman, Shanghai Fenggu Agricultural Hi-tec Service Co. Ltd. (agri-business incubation company in China) and agreed to partner with them for creating a soft-landing platform for incubation of cross border agribusiness ventures in both the countries. They also identified a few potential ventures for facilitation. Besides, a collaboration arrangement on technology exchange on agriculture was planned with Mr Wang Zang of Shanghai Technology Innovation Centre.
ABI teams up with the Shanghai Fenggu Agricultural Hi-Tec Service Company.

Exhibiting ABI-ICRISAT in the international forum.
ABI strengthens partnership with McGill University

The McGill University visited Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT in July 2007 seeking partnership opportunities. This was taken forward with the visit of Dr Vijayaraghavan, Professor, McGill University & Project Director, CIDA-UPCD Tier I Project Consolidation of food security in Southern India on 27 August. McGill seeks ICRISAT’s partnership in carrying out joint projects sponsored by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency).

Dr Vijayaraghavan had a brief discussion with Dyno Keatinge, Kiran K Sharma and Aravazhi Selvaraj and planned to submit a proposal to CIDA on “Building on Success” competition open to Canadian institutions that have worked successfully in the past with other institutions and partners from selected developing countries. McGill University is looking at creating a network, including the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, ICRISAT and one or two African institutions and wanted ICRISAT to help them identify the African partners. Dr Keatinge welcomed the partnering opportunity.
A silent success from ABI-ICRISAT

Agri-Business Incubator has successfully incubated several technologies and enterprises, such as the use of sweet sorghum for ethanol production, Bt Cotton, agriculture extension service companies, etc. Recently, ABI’s client – Bioseed Research India Pvt. Ltd. – commercialized six Bt Cotton hybrids in North Central and South Zones of India in the brands of Bajrangi Chiranjeevi, etc.

This company promoted by DCM Shriram Consolidated Ltd., offers a range of hybrid seeds in India through its subsidiary, Shriram BioSeed Genetics India Ltd., which is a joint venture with BioSeed Genetics International Inc. At present, the company markets hybrid seeds of corn, pearl millet, paddy, cotton, sunflower and vegetables in India. The company has a strong R&D-led operation that develops, produces and markets high quality hybrid seeds. At ABI, Bioseed worked on the introgression of Bt gene in their proprietary cotton lines through backcrossing and use of ELISA, PCR and molecular markers. The progress of Bt Cotton introgression has been encouraging because they were able to compress the breeding cycle and thus release their product Bajrangi Bt and others ahead of time, ie, by June 2007.

In June 2007, the Genetic Engineering Advisory Committee (GEAC) of the Government of India gave Bioseed approval for commercial release of Bt Cotton hybrids in the following areas: Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. ABI-ICRISAT congratulates Bioseed biotechnology and the cotton breeding team that enabled commercialization of new Bt Cotton hybrids.
ICRISAT incubates agri-business projects in Mozambique

After establishing a successful Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at its global headquarters at Patancheru, India, ICRISAT is initiating a similar incubator in Mozambique in collaboration with the Institute of Agricultural Research of Mozambique (IIAM). Director General William Dar and Dr Calisto Bias, Director General of IIAM, signed the Letter of Intent for establishing the Farm Business Incubator in Mozambique on 28 September.

The collaboration will explore the possibilities for IIAM and ICRISAT to develop the Farm Business Incubator together, share best practices, transfer technology, support the development of services and products in both regions, and interact with the market possibilities in Mozambique and India.

Dr Dar said that by taking the idea of the Farm Business Incubator to Mozambique, the Institute can carry forward to this great African nation the successful lessons learned in India in linking the poor dryland farmers to the market through agri-enterprise. ICRISAT and IIAM conducted a feasibility study in Mozambique and developed a business model for the Farm Business Incubator at IIAM.

A key management team from IIAM had visited India recently and studied the functioning of the Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT. When the Farm Business Incubator becomes a reality it will be among the earliest of its kind in Africa and will have the primary objective to develop agri-enterprise that will benefit Mozambique’s agriculture, animal husbandry and food processing sectors.

The Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT, Patancheru, India, has facilitated the transition of many agri-enterprises from idea to reality. One of the successful agri-business ideas facilitated is the project on producing ethanol from sweet sorghum. Through the
Business Incubator, ICRISAT linked with a private sector company – Rusni Distilleries – which established a distillery to convert the sweet sorghum juice to ethanol.

Currently ICRISAT is helping a Rusni subsidiary company – Rusni Biofuels Ltd. – to establish an ethanol from sweet sorghum plant in Mozambique. This plant will produce 100,000 liters of ethanol with an investment of around US$30 million, benefiting 5,000 smallholder farmers. It will cover 20,000 hectares through captive and contract farming. ICRISAT, Rusni Biofuels Ltd. and Petroleos de Moçambique (PETROMOC), the major national petroleum company of Mozambique, signed an MOU to enhance marketability and ensure successful implementation of the project.

According to Dr Carlos Dominguez, ICRISAT’s representative in Mozambique, the new collaborations agreed upon during Dr Dar’s visit to Mozambique will strengthen the existing collaboration that ICRISAT has with partners.

ICRISAT’s achievements in Mozambique include the development of guidelines for planning local seed systems interventions, creating the profile of the seed systems in place in the 58 districts of the country, producing and marketing foundation seeds of improved varieties, and helping the national agricultural system to implement good agricultural practices.

During the two-day visit, Dr Dar also had the opportunity to meet the Minister of Science and Technology and ex-President, Mr Joaquim Chissano, and sustain interesting discussions related to the cooperation of the CGIAR centers in general and ICRISAT in Mozambique in particular.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT participated in the Asian and Pacific Incubator Conference (AAPIC) 2007 organized by Infodev-World Bank, CRC Topic Incubator- Vietnam and Ayala Foundation, Philippines, from 3 to 5 October at Hanoi, Vietnam. The objective of the conference was to foster innovations and entrepreneurship in Asia and the Pacific. More than 150 incubator managers, policy makers, stakeholders and donors participated in the conference.

The conference facilitated discussions on focus topics such as improving awareness of policy makers and stakeholders, collaboration with universities and other R&D bodies, effective technology transfer and protection of intellectual property.

SM Karuppanchetty represented ABI at the conference and presented a paper at the session on ICT for Development: Incubation of agricultural and related sectors. Mr HK Mittal, Advisor to the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, moderated the session.

The deliberations focused on the need for a global working group on agri-business incubation and related sectors, current challenges in agri-business, the lessons from the existing models and the way forward to develop the framework on a global working group on agri-business incubation. It was concluded that a working group consisting of incubators from around the world in the area of agri- and related sectors needs to be formed wherein ABI-ICRISAT can play steering role. The working group will facilitate promotion and development of similar incubators and clients, assist in policy formulation and enhance the capacity of the incubators through training and development.

The conference recognized the global leadership of ABI-ICRISAT in agribusiness incubation, has paved the way for scaling up agri-business incubation through partnership and will also facilitate cross border business development.
As a part of strengthening the partnership with NARES, Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) conducted a capacity building program for the management staff of the Food Processing Business Incubator, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, India from 8 to 12 October. The participants included Professor and Head Dr Varadharaju, professors Dr Sekar, Dr Pushpa, Dr Malathi and associate professor Dr Sivakumar.

The team was trained on management of business incubators, which included the planning process, governance, incubation models, financial management, human aspects of incubation, client servicing, organizing and operating strategy and technology commercialization. The participants also visited the ICICI Knowledge Park, Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI), Rusni Distilleries and Srestha-24 letter mantra organic retail outlet.

Resource persons from ICRISAT, including Farid Waliyar, Kiran Sharma, I Nagaraj, S Sethuraman, Ashok Kumar, K Hanmantha Rao, and Suresh Pillay, and guest speakers from the industry, Ms Deepanwita (ICICI Knowledge Park), Mr Sanjay (ASCI), Dr Parihar (Bioseed), Mr Rajasekar Reddy Sreelam (Srestha) and Mr Sudhakar (APEDA) shared their experiences. At the concluding session, Director General William Dar awarded certificates with mementos to the participants and congratulated them on the successful completion of the program.
The Technology Development Board (TDB) of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, has approved a scheme for providing financial assistance as seed support for start-ups located in business incubators for further development and pre-commercialization of technologies.

ABI-ICRISAT had submitted a proposal for a project in this scheme that is now sanctioned. TDB of DST and ABI-ICRISAT signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to operationalize the project. Mr Dinesh Sharma, Secretary, TDB, DST, Government of India, and on behalf of Director General William Dar, who could not attend the meeting, Kiran Sharma signed the MOA on 15 November. SM Karuppanchetty was also present at the MoA signing function at the DST headquarters in New Delhi.

Mr Dinesh Sharma complimented Team ICRISAT’s excellent performance in incubation. DST has sanctioned Rs 1 crore (approximately US$ 0.25 million) through this seed funding that will cater to promotion of agri business ventures. Through this, ABI-ICRISAT’s services will be strengthened to provide comprehensive services for entrepreneurs working in agribusiness.
Praj Industries joined hands with ICRISAT by signing a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to become a member of the institute’s Sweet Sorghum Ethanol Research Consortium (SSERC) on 10 December. Director General William Dar and Mr Shashank Inamdar, CEO & Managing Director of Praj Industries, signed the MOA at Hyderabad.

According to Dr Dar, this partnership will go along way in enhancing the commercialization of sweet sorghum for bioethanol production globally. Production of ethanol from sweet sorghum as a biofuel can provide additional income to dryland farmers and does not compromise their food security. Through the ICRISAT Sweet Sorghum Ethanol Research Consortium (SSERC), the institute promotes the technology for producing the biofuel through public-private partnership. The overall goal of this consortium is to strengthen sweet sorghum research at ICRISAT and at its partners’ locations to improve the livelihood options of the smallholder farmers in the semi-arid tropics.

Praj Industries based in Pune, Maharashtra, India, is a leading biofuels technology company with a number of ethanol and biodiesel production plants to its credit. Praj, with its global operations, aims to provide end-to-end solutions backed by several years of research and development resources to support the biofuels industry. Through the MOA, Praj Industries can avail the sweet sorghum research outputs of ICRISAT to further refine their bioethanol engineering activities. This includes the testing of sweet sorghum varieties and hybrids along with technical know-how on sweet sorghum cultivation aspects.

Through this partnership, ICRISAT and Praj can work together to tap into the huge global opportunity to benefit millions of farmers by offering new market opportunities through the sweet sorghum for ethanol technology.
Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT provided assistance to women entrepreneurs in Dharwad by providing them a marketing strategy for their food products. This initiative was assigned to ABI-ICRISAT by McGill University, Canada, as part of a project Consolidation of food security in South India with financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The project is being implemented in collaboration with University of Agricultural Sciences, (UAS) Bangalore, Dharwad, and Tamilnadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore. The project aims at strengthening South India’s capacity for development in post-harvest technology and food processing to promote rural development and employment opportunities.

As a result of these interventions, villagers especially members of women’s groups in rural areas were involved in food processing and value addition activities. The products prepared by them include ready-to-eat food, ready-to-use products, and health foods. These groups are faced with challenges of marketing their products at different places, competing with available market products, and increasing their sales. In this context ABI-ICRISAT had undertaken a market research study to develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to address these challenges. The outcome of the study was presented at a workshop held on 11 December at Dharwad by S Aravazhi of ABI-ICRISAT. The workshop was presided over by Dr Vijaya Raghavan from McGill University.
Dr Mansur from UAS, Dharwad and SM Karuppanchetty also addressed the workshop. Around 70 women entrepreneurs participated in the workshop. The entrepreneurs highly appreciated the study, which provided them with insights on market demand, product quality, packaging, pricing, promotion and sales strategy. The study also highlighted the product mix and branding which will result in resource optimization, profit maximization, as well as benefit a greater number of entrepreneurs.
Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) and team ICRISAT facilitated the visit of 10 women entrepreneurs on the groundnut program from Tirupathi on 23 January. The team, led by Mr Ashok Reddy from the Commissionerate of Agriculture, Andhra Pradesh, and Mr RP Naidu from the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), Hyderabad, were interested in seed production and value addition of groundnut.

The women entrepreneurs visited ICRISAT farms, and V Pappaiah and S Sachidanandam from the groundnut team briefed them on identification and production of groundnut varieties. Veera Reddy from the aflatoxin lab spoke to them about the advantages of the aflatoxin test.

Later, SM Karuppanchetty discussed with them the possibility of producing and marketing seeds of groundnut, chickpea and paddy. He also deliberated on producing rural home-made food products from groundnut and pulses.

All the women entrepreneurs showed interest and agreed to take up the small-scale business in their villages.
The second Indian Science & Technology Entrepreneurs’ Park (STEPs) & Business Incubators Association (ISBA) 2008 Annual Conference was held from 31 January to 2 February at Techno Park campus, Trivandrum, Kerala. The event was inaugurated by Honorable VS Achuthanandan, Chief Minister of Kerala, and presided over by Hon Elamaram Kareem, Minister of Industries, Government of Kerala. SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi from ABI participated in the event. The theme of the meet was Global leadership through innovation, incubation and entrepreneurship.

The conference was an opportunity for ABI to network with the other incubators from across India. It was a platform for exchange of new ideas and technologies for the incubation industry. Karuppanchetty had discussions with Hon Kareem on agri-business entrepreneurship initiatives in Kerala. The Department of Science & Technology and the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Government of India sponsored the event. ABI was one of the important partners of the event. The first STEPs and ISBA conference was hosted by ICRISAT-Patancheru in February 2007.
ABI initiates seed business incubation program

The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) is initiating a new service on Seed Business Incubation (SBI) for promoting rural seed ventures in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu through public, private and people partnerships (PPPP) approach.

Unlike the cereals, the impact of seed technology on farmers’ fields for legumes has been limited primarily because of non-availability of good quality seed of improved cultivars. Legume crops have not been successful in attracting private seed sector investment due to lack of hybrid cultivars, voluminous nature of the seed and associated costs with storage and transportation, and shorter shelf life of the seeds. Therefore, ABI had initiated SBI to address this issue.

SBI is an initiative to develop and promote rural seed business ventures at the village level in order to bridge the demand and supply gap of open pollinated quality seeds through public, private and people partnerships. SBI provides holistic support to the entrepreneurs in terms of basic seeds, capacity building, quality control, business consultancy, branding and marketing by commercializing new varieties and benefiting the farmers.

SBI will be implemented in partnership with Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI) in Andhra Pradesh and Convenant Centre for Development (CCD) in Tamil Nadu. The program was initiated by scouting of entrepreneurs through the partners AAI. In the process, it received an overwhelming response from 75 entrepreneurs.

From these, around 30 candidates were called for a one-day screening camp on 5 March from Anantapur, Kurnool, Chittoor and Kadappa districts. After due diligence and screening, the panel successfully selected 17 potential entrepreneurs by the end of the day. They had discussions with KK Sharma, PM Gaur, Aruna Rupakula SM Karuppanchetty, D Yadagiri, BV Rao and Ravikumar Ganta of ICRISAT, and Mr K Chakaravarthy and Mr G Subbarao of AAI. Further, ABI plans to induct these candidates and incubate them in its seed business incubation program. This initiative will benefit the farmers of the SAT in terms of availability of quality seed material, access to market and better price realization for their produce.
Agri Business Incubator – ICRISAT (ABI) has launched the Seed Business Incubation (SBI) Program on 11 and 12 April at ICRISAT Patancheru. KK Sharma, Head, ABI welcomed the delegates and dignitaries and presented the highlights of the program.

Dr C Ramaswamy, Vice Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore and CLL Gowda, Global Theme Leader-CI inaugurated the program by officially releasing the brochures of the program. Later SN Nigam and KB Saxena distributed the seeds of groundnut and chickpea to the entrepreneurs. CLL Gowda, Dr C Ramaswamy and SN Nigam addressed the delegates and encouraged the entrepreneurs in the seed business ventures.

Dr SP Sharma, Sr. Scientist (Seed Technology) IARI, New Delhi, who was a special guest, highlighted quality issues in his speech. The SBI program will address the demand for Open Pollinated Seeds in our mandate crops - groundnut, pigeonpea and chickpea – along with paddy. Initially it will be operated in Rayalaseema in Andhra Pradesh and the southern districts of Tamil Nadu through the partners Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI) and Convenant Centre for Development (CCD).

Around 20 seed business entrepreneurs participated in the program. Following the Inauguration, a two-day training program on seed business was conducted. The training covered seed production of groundnut, chickpea, pigeonpea and paddy, team building and goal settings, seed quality control, marketing, seed business management and field visits. Mr Yadagiri, Mr BV Rao, Dr G Subba Rao, ARS, Uttukur, Mr Shiv Kumar (HR Consultant), Mr Kalyan Chakravarthy (AAI), and SM Karuppanchetty were resource persons.

Mr Ariz Ahamed, Managing Director of AP Seeds and Advisory Board Member of ABI was the chief guest for the valedictory session. He was impressed with this business model and encouraged the entrepreneurs with an open commitment to purchase the entire collection of seeds from the entrepreneurs. The Chief Guest also announced a common brand name decided by the entrepreneurs “Manna Seeds”. Mr Ahamed also presented certificates to the delegates. The entrepreneurs appreciated the program and firmly committed to producing seed of our mandate crops. This initiative will chart a new path in the formal seed systems and commercialize the varieties developed by the institute.
The Agri-Business Incubator-ICRISAT plans to set up a co-business incubator on agri-business in partnership with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU). An MOU was signed between TNAU and ICRISAT on 11 April at ICRISAT-Patancheru. Professor C Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and IR Nagaraj, on behalf of Director General William Dar, signed the MOU.

The TNAU Agri-Business Incubator is an initiative under its public-private partnership (PPP) efforts, which will serve as a platform for entrepreneurship promotion and development through commercialization and transfer of technologies developed at TNAU.

ABI-ICRISAT will be a joint partner in implementing this initiative and will serve as an experienced hand in promoting this concept. The MOU will serve as a stepping-stone in developing agribusiness in Tamil Nadu through an incubation mode. The incubator maximizes the success of agribusiness enterprise with minimum risk. Thus the Agri-Business Incubator will benefit farmers by improved technologies and services through the entrepreneurs incubated.

The TNAU team was led by the Vice-Chancellor and included Dr P Subbian, Director, Agribusiness Development, Dr S Natarajan, Director (SCMS) and Dr AS Ponnusamy, Special Officer (Seeds) TNAU. The ICRISAT team was represented by KK Sharma, SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi.
The Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) is proposing Business Planning & Development Units (BPD units or Business Incubators) under the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) Component 1 wherein it has identified five host institutes, IARI, New Delhi; CIRCOT, Mumbai; IVRI, Izatnagar; NIRJAFT, Kolkata, and CIFT, Cochin to set up the BPD units.

A workshop was organized on 8-9 April where participants were informed about the concept of business incubation, need for incubators, processes involved in setting up the units and an overview of ABI-ICRISAT and its progress in the last five years.

The participants interacted with ABI clients and discussed various needs of clients in incubation support services. ICAR will submit the proposal to NAIP to establish such incubators in India, which will help to promote entrepreneurship in agribusiness using the technologies developed in the host institute.

NAIP was impressed by ABI@ICRISAT and requested that it handhold these incubators on co-business incubation mode, which will be funded by them. The resource people for the training program included Dr Yadaraju, NAIP; Dr Kocchar, ICAR; Dr Ramachandran, ISB; Dr Paresh Varma, BioSeed; Dr Dwarkesh Parihar, Bioseed; Mr Kalyan Chakravarthy, AAI; and KK Sharma, Rajesh Agrawal, SM Karuppanchetty, S Aravazhi, ICRISAT.
The Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India, is operating a novel program, known as Technopreneur Promotion Program (TePP) to tap and encourage the vast potential for innovation among common citizens. The activities under TePP includes providing financial support to selected and screened innovators for converting original ideas into working models and prototypes.

TePP along with its network partners provide grants, technical guidance and mentoring to innovators to emerge as entrepreneurs by incubating their idea and enterprise in two phases. Till date 250 innovations have been supported. ABI-ICRISAT has been short-listed as an outreach center for the TePP in order to promote innovations in agribusiness.

Dr AS Rao, Advisor, DSIR, who visited ICRISAT-Patancheru on 4 July, congratulated Team ICRISAT on its successful operation of the Agri Business Incubator. He discussed the TePP concept with Barry Shapiro, IR Nagaraj, AR Ilyas, SM Karuppanchetty and Aravazhi Selvaraj.

Dr Rao said that since ICRISAT is an ideal place for nurturing innovation, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research of the Ministry has short-listed ABI-ICRISAT as an ‘Outreach Centre for Technopreneurship Promotion in Agribusiness’. Formal approval from the Government of India is expected shortly. ABI-ICRISAT will then be able to identify potential innovative technologies from the citizens of India and incubate them for the benefit.
ABI-ICRISAT organized a capacity building program jointly with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) and Covenant Center for Development (CCD) on seed business incubation. The capacity building program was held on 12 July at Sevioor, Virudunagar district in Tamil Nadu. Around 20 farmers representing five community-based organizations attended the program.

Mr Daniel Anandaraj, Agriculture Director of CCD, welcomed the participants and Dr Geeta, TNAU Scientist, presented groundnut seed production technology processing and quality control aspects. Dr Raja, TNAU Scientist spoke about the characteristics and suitability of varieties for this region. S M Karuppanchetty introduced the concept of seed business incubation model. This was followed by a presentation from Anandaraj and Sarvanan on the operational aspects of seed business and the formation of farmers’ federation.

The enthusiastic participants agreed to produce seeds in 30 acres during Kharif 2008. New varieties of groundnut from TNAU and ICRISAT, such as ICGV-76, ICGV-91114, TMV-13, and VRIGM-6 & VRI-2 were demonstrated at the farm. Pigeonpea hybrids of ICRISAT such as Maruti & ICPH 2671 were also introduced.

This program is envisaged to facilitate the introduction of new varieties, provide rural entrepreneurship and bridge the demand-supply gap of open-pollinated seeds in Tamil Nadu.
The Covenant Centre for Development (CCD), a partner of the Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT (ABI) for seed business incubation in Tamil Nadu, organized a two day workshop titled “Our common future – A workshop on sustaining farmer federations,” on 30 and 31 August, at Thiruvengadu, Nagapatinam district.

The workshop provided an opportunity for the community organizations and stakeholders to meet, share experiences, discuss and evolve a joint action plan for the local farmer federations. Aravazhi Selvaraj represented ABI and briefed the farmers on the opportunities in agri-business, especially the seed business venture initiative of ABI. The seed business incubation program of the ABI was launched in April this year in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. ABI has identified rural entrepreneurs in the two states and imparted training to them on seed production, processing, quality control and marketing.

The crops identified for seed production include groundnut, chickpea, pigeonpea and paddy. ABI is supporting this initiative by providing these entrepreneurs with the seed processing equipment and machinery in their respective project locations – Uravukonda and Tirupathy in Andhra Pradesh, and Poompukar and Madurai in Tamil Nadu. ABI initiated the process for establishing a seed processing unit for paddy at Poompukar.
September 18 marked a giant leap for ICRISAT’s sweet sorghum bioethanol technology. Director General William Dar inaugurated the world’s first decentralized crushing-cum-syrup-making unit in the remote village of Ibrahimbad in Medak district of Andhra Pradesh amid thunderous applause from smallholder sweet sorghum farmers.

The unit has been established with support from the National Agricultural Innovation Project (Govt. of India) under the sweet sorghum value chain development project led by ICRISAT. It is set up away from the distillery and closer to the village and the fields, thus avoiding the possible delay in transporting the sorghum stalks to the distillery, which would cause drying and reduced output of juice. Being the first of its kind, it will also serve as a training unit for the first batch of farmers who will use it.

The National Research Center for Sorghum (NRCS), Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA), Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University (SVVU) and Rusni Distilleries Ltd provide ample support to steer this intervention towards benefiting the smallholder farmers.

Dedicating the innovative training-cum-research unit to the farmers, Dr Dar stated that the decentralized unit goes a long way in increasing the availability of the feedstock to the distillery. He urged all the farmers and partners to make use of the unit for their economic advantage, while learning lessons to go forward. He commended the strenuous efforts of the sweet sorghum team lead by Belum VS Reddy in establishing the unit in record time.
The syrup produced from sweet sorghum will be supplied to Rusni Distilleries, which produces ethanol from the syrup. This business model provides a ready market for sweet sorghum farmers, he said. This private-public-farmer partnership model with sound scientific and technological backing should work with a business orientation to maximize the benefits not only to the distillery but, more importantly, to the smallholder farmers, he remarked.

The large-scale cultivation of sweet sorghum in farmers’ fields during the last two years has helped ICRISAT and partners to learn lessons, particularly methods for extending the feedstock supply, reducing the volume of raw material for transportation and containing losses in stalk weight and juice volume with delay in crushing. The decentralized unit helps address these issues, and also makes the bagasse available to farmers for use as animal feed.

This small unit in a remote village is indeed a giant leap in revolutionizing the sweet sorghum bioethanol industry.
Members of ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) along with Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI), a partner of ABI, organized a one day induction program on seed business incubation for the rural entrepreneurs of Andhra Pradesh on 29 September at ICRISAT-Patancheru. Fifteen new seed business entrepreneurs enrolled in this program that covered seed production of groundnut, chickpea, pigeonpea, paddy, seed quality control, marketing, seed business management and field visits. Mr Surrender Reddy; Mr R Vijay Kumar; Mr Sridhar; Dr SP Sharma, Consultant of ABI and Former Head, Division of Seed Technology, IARI; Mr GS Subba Rao; Mr Kalyan Chakravarthy (AAI) and SM Karuppanchetty were the resource persons for this program.

Dr KK Sharma, Head, ABI and Chief Guest for the valedictory session, welcomed all the entrepreneurs and encouraged them in this new initiative. He also presented certificates to the entrepreneurs. The participants appreciated the program and committed to producing seed in around 500 acres during the 2008 rabi season.

The Seed Business Incubation program of ABI proposes to address the demand supply gap of open pollinated seeds of groundnut, pigeonpea and chickpea through rural entrepreneurship and holistic incubation support. This is currently operating in Rayalseema district of AP, and in the Madurai and Nagapattinam districts of Tamil Nadu, in partnership with AAI and Covenant Centrefor Development (CCD), respectively. To date, around 50 Seed Business Ventures and Community-based Organizations (CBOs) have subscribed to this program and overall around 2000 acres have been covered in the 2008 kharif season. This initiative will chart a new path in the seed systems venture and will help commercialize the varieties developed by the Institute.
ICRISAT’s ABI Bags Asia’s Best Incubator Award

The Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT-Patancheru (ABI-ICRISAT) has been judged the winner of the prestigious Asian Association of Business Incubators (AABI) Award for the year 2008.

The award was presented by the President of AABI, Mr Saffar Annuar, to SM Karuppanchetty on 31 October. The award function was part of the 13th General Assembly of AABI held in Seoul, South Korea, from 29 October to 2 November. The Assembly was organized by Korea Business Incubation Association (KOBIA) and sponsored by the Korean Small and Medium Business Administration (SMBA).

Congratulating the ABI team, Director General William Dar said: “This is a significant achievement for the second time in a row to ABI-ICRISAT. ABI had earlier received the national award for Best Business Incubator for 2005 from the Government of India.” ABI-ICRISAT provides an opportunity for entrepreneurs to incubate agricultural technologies so that they become effective agri-business ventures. The entrepreneurs also get the opportunity to tap the expertise of ICRISAT’s scientists since the Incubator is hosted inside the Institute’s Patancheru campus with the support of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.

ABI-ICRISAT promotes agricultural technology commercialization through public-private partnership under the Agri-Science Park at ICRISAT. It provides a range of services that include consultancy, technical evaluation, exploration of business opportunities for the technologies
identified and help for startup ventures to be successful. Kiran Sharma, Head of ABI-ICRISAT, said that the Incubator has also globally pioneered the commercialization of the sweet sorghum based ethanol venture. It has also successfully commercialized ICRISAT’s groundnut ICGV 91114 and chickpea variety JG 11 in Andhra Pradesh along with Aakruthi Agricultural Associates. Through these initiatives ABI-ICRISAT has benefited around 30,000 farmers and supported around 60 entrepreneurs in the last five years of its establishment. It has also incubated 35 ventures and generated direct employment for around 543 persons and mobilized $8 million for the companies that it has incubated.

The Asian Association of Business Incubation (AABI) promotes business incubation activities by facilitating information exchanges among incubators, incubator clients and related organizations in Asia. AABI comprises associations that organize incubation resources and facilities, and organizations operating incubation programs.
The Asia-Pacific Seed Association (APSA) organized the Asian Seed Congress 2008 at Hyderabad International Convention Center (HICC), Hyderabad, in collaboration with the National Seed Association of India, from 9 to 13 November. The Congress provided a platform to the participants for exchanging notes on development and policy issues in the seed sector in the Asia-Pacific region. The Congress also made suggestions for the development of the seed industry. Around 800 participants from 45 countries participated.

The Agri-Science Park (ASP) at ICRISAT participated in the exhibition organized during the Congress. The exhibit promoted ICRISAT’s public private-people initiatives related to seed industry such as the ICRISAT Private Sector Hybrid Parents Research Consortium (HPRC), Ag-biotech Innovation Center and the Agri-Business Incubator’s Seed Business Incubation initiative.

Barry Shapiro presented the APSA-GlobalHort recommendations for the role of public-private partnerships in improving the vegetable sector.

The presentation was made on behalf of GlobalHort. According to Shapiro, ASPA GlobalHort advocates better knowledge management and sharing of vegetable information (gathering of statistics, database creation, and improving access to these databases), capacity building at all levels through scientific and technical training, promotion of simple techniques and good production practices, implementing and maintaining food quality standards by smallholder
farmers, better defined roles for the seed industry in extension, and the development of new types of extension as risk management strategies.

KN Rai spoke of crop improvement research at ICRISAT with emphasis on yield and resistance to biotic stresses, tolerance to abiotic stresses, biofortification, bioenergy (sweet sorghum), and forage production. Furthermore, he spoke extensively on the consortium model, which is ideal for a country like India, where private sector companies have gained immensely from partnering with research institutions such as ICRISAT.

These presentations were made on 12 November at the meeting of the Special Interest Groups on ‘Vegetables’ and ‘Field Crops’. Through their presentations and participation at this event Drs Shapiro and Rai sought to further strengthen collaboration between ICRISAT, GlobalHort and the APSA. GlobalHort and the APSA will sign a MOU to implement these recommendations.

ICRISAT also organized a post-Congress tour for APSA delegates wherein 25 participants from various countries visited ICRISAT Patancheru for a day on 13 November. Team ABI organized the program and Ashok Kumar, Rakesh Srivastava and SK Gupta had discussions with the participants and took them for a field visit of sorghum, pigeonpea and pearl millet crops. MD Gupta from Hytech Seeds interacted with the delegates.

A separate group consisting of around 10 seed companies had a meeting with ICRISAT’s team from Africa, consisting of Richard Jones, Hanchinal Rayappa and Carlos Dominguez on the possible areas of collaboration.

Many private seed companies acknowledged ICRISAT’s role as mentor and supporter of breeding seed companies that started business in the late 1980s and have now grown to become seed companies of international repute.
ICRISAT participates in Agri Expo 2008

The Foundation for Organic Agriculture and Rural Development conducted a unique three-day exhibition cum-workshop on agritech initiatives called India International Agri Expo 2008 from 31 October to 2 November at Kochi, Kerala, India, jointly with The IndUs Entrepreneurs (TiE) Kerala.

The event attracted a large number of exhibitors from India and abroad to showcase their products and services.

Agri-Science Park (ASP)-ICRISAT was a co-sponsor for the international seminar and Aravazhi Selvaraj presented the public-private partnership model of ICRISAT and canvassed for various programs of ASP, especially the Agbiotech Innovation Center and the Agri-Business Incubator.

ASP also promoted its activities and programs through a stall and exhibits jointly supported by Bhubesh Kumar from the ABI-ICRISAT Co-Business Incubator at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

ABI-ICRISAT also held a discussion with Dr KR Viswambharan, Vice-Chancellor, Kerala Agricultural University, on the possibility of commercializing their technologies to benefit the local farming community through partnership with ASP-ICRISAT.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI-ICRISAT) conducted a two-day training program on improved paddy seed production for seed entrepreneurs in Poompuhar region of Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu, on 6 and 7 November.

This was organized under the Seed Business Incubation (SBI) program of ABI-ICRISAT, in association with the Covenant Centre for Development (CCD), Madurai, to address the demand-supply gap of open pollinated crop seeds in rural areas.

About 40 rural seed entrepreneurs participated in the training program. Around 100 acres of paddy seeds are under production by the entrepreneurs in the current season. Under SBI, farmers’ federations were formed and given assistance on seed production, processing and marketing to promote them as rural seed entrepreneurs.

SM Karuppanchetty from ICRISAT explained the activities of the Seed Business Incubation program and responsibilities of the Seed Entrepreneurs, SBI partners and ABI-ICRISAT.

All the seed entrepreneurs were taken to the Tamil Nadu Rice Research Institute, Aduthurai by Mr Bubesh Kumar, Assistant Manager, ABI, and Mr Poomurugesan, Program Coordinator, CCD.
The Agri-Science Park (ASP) ICRISAT participated in Agro-Tech 2008, organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) to promote the public-private partnership initiative of ICRISAT. This 8th Agro Tech – India's premier biennial agro technology fair – was held from 28 November to 1 December at Chandigarh.

SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi participated in the exhibition and promoted ASP programs and services such as HPRC, AIC and ABI. The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI-ICRISAT) also promoted co-business incubation partner Science and Technology Entrepreneurs Park (STEP), Thapar University, programs and services during the exhibition. The exhibition participants included Indian and multinational organizations operating in the area of agri biotechnology, food processing, agricultural engineering, dairy and agricultural services.

Positioned as an international level agri-business fair, Agro Tech 2008 was an operative platform for successful business partnerships and joint ventures worldwide.

It not only showcased the latest and most effective agriculture trends worldwide, but also has become the medium of effective interaction between agri-technology and its potential consumers. Supported by the Government of India through its various ministries and agencies, and partnered by the various states of India, Agro Tech presented the true flavors of Indian agriculture to the world market.

ASP received overwhelming responses from farmers, individuals, research organizations and corporates on its programs, and expects beneficial partnerships in due course.
ABI promotes incubation in Punjab

The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI-ICRISAT) is partnering with Science & Technology Entrepreneurs Park (STEP), Thapar University, Patiala, to set up a co-business incubation facility. The partnership is intended to promote agribusiness ventures in Punjab, North India by leveraging mutual area of competence of both the institutes.

A training cum induction program on the strategic operations of the incubator was organized by ABI at STEP, Thapars, Patiala, on 2 December for the staff. A brief presentation on administrative functions, assessment and client intakes, basic support offered to clients, contracting and outsourced services, managing for quality and marketing management, and public relations was given during the program.

SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi also had discussions with Dr Dinesh Goyal, Executive Director, STEP, and his team members on co-business incubation activities and the strategic areas of collaboration. As a co-business incubation strategy, it was decided to identify and assess commercially viable technologies in the areas of biofertilizers, tissue culture and food processing, and provide a business plan for best-bet technologies, with marketing and financial strategies.
ABI conducts camp to identify innovators

Happenings No. 1342 26 December 2008

The Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT (ABI-ICRISAT) conducted an agri-business innovators identification camp on 13 December at Patancheru. The aim of the camp was to identify innovators in the field of agri-business and guide them on submitting proposals for financial assistance under Technopreneur Promotion Program (TePP), and incubate their ideas into successful ventures.

ABI-ICRISAT scouted innovations and invited applications from budding innovators across Andhra Pradesh through the release of advertisements in the national and local dailies. The camp received immense response and about 40 innovators attended and presented their innovations.

SM Karuppanchetty welcomed the dignitaries. In addition to Drs Rajesh Agrawal and MS Basu from ICRISAT, the expert panel consisted of Dr AS Rao, Advisor, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Government of India; Mr Durga Prasad, Managing Director, Vaishnavi Biopower; Dr Dwarkesh Parihar, Head, Biotechnology, Bioseeds India Pvt, Ltd; and Mr. Rajesh Kumar, Deputy General Manager, Coromandel Fertilizers. Rajesh Agrawal in his inaugural address appealed to all the innovators to participate enthusiastically and make use of the assistance provided under TePP program to commercialize their innovations and become successful entrepreneurs.

The Chief Guest, Dr AS Rao, appealed to the innovators to liaise with the officials of ABI-ICRISAT and present their ideas so as to evaluate the commercial viability of their innovations. He also highlighted the technical and financial assistance extended under TePP. Mr. Bhubesh Kumar, Assistant Manager, TNAU-ABI, Coimbatore, had mobilized innovators from Tamil Nadu who attended the camp with their innovations for final approvals for TePP funding.

Overall the camp was successful in which 15 innovations were identified and out of which 7 proposals were screened by the experts and recommended INR 800,000 (USD 16,440) of TePP funds. Dr AS Rao congratulated ABI-ICRISAT for the efforts taken up in identifying the agri-business innovators and commended the overall progress of the TUC. He reiterated his commitment in extending the required support from TePP-DSIR to make the program a success.
The third annual international conference on business incubation of the Indian STEPs and Business incubators Association (ISBA) was held from 29 to 31 January at Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. The conference witnessed many eminent international delegates from the incubation industry such as Mr Julian Webb, Australia; Mr Peter Harma, UK; Dr Rustam Lalkaka, US. The conference also provided a networking platform for national and international incubators. Around 150 delegates from 15 countries participated in the event.

The first ISBA annual conference initiative was started by ABI-ICRISAT in February 2007, and received overwhelming support from the incubation community in India. Team ABI-ICRISAT, comprising Karuppanchetty, S Aravazhi and Bhubesh Kumar attended the conference. Karuppanchetty anchored two sessions and was a speaker in the Incubation theme on Agribusiness incubation: What can be mined. The National Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting of the National Science & Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board (NSTEDB) was held during the conference, where the board and the chair were appraised of the progress and development of ABI-ICRISAT.

Dr C Joshi, Chairman of the National Advisory Committee of DST, congratulated team ABI-ICRISAT for its stupendous performance and also for the Asia-Pacific Best Incubator Award received from AABI.
A farm business incubation program was launched through the Co-business incubator initiative between Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT (ABI-ICRISAT) and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) by conducting a training program on *Precision farming – Vegetable cultivation*.

Eight “agripreneurs” representing primary producer groups from Andaman & Nicobar Islands were trained from 23 to 26 February at the Horticultural College and Research Institute (HC&RI), Coimbatore. This training program was sponsored by the Community Enterprise Forum International, New Delhi. During the inauguration of the training program, Dr P Subbain, Director, Directorate of Agri-Business Development, TNAU, brought to light the immense opportunities for vegetable cultivation in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Dr T Balamohan, Head, Department of Fruits, HC&RI, stressed on orientation of farm business to market needs. Dr Pugalendhi, Head, Department of Vegetables, HC&RI enlightened the trainees on the price advantage that the farmers can get by cultivating vegetables in Andaman & Nicobar Islands over importing the same from Chennai or Kolkata. Various sessions, including nursery technologies, construction of low cost polyhouses and shade nets, pest and disease management in vegetable crops were conducted as part of the program.

The participants were also trained on precision farming techniques that could be effectively practiced in Andaman & Nicobar under the protected system of cultivation. Most sessions were conducted in the field so as to make the trainees well-acquainted with the technologies. To provide complete knowledge on the farm business of vegetable cultivation and to start up an enterprise, a session on marketing was conducted by Mr R Bhubesh Kumar, Assistant Manager, ABI-ICRISAT and Dr SD Sivakumar, Professor, Agricultural Rural Management, TNAU, which covered all aspects of sales, distribution and marketing.

The participants were taken on field visits to Annur village, where they had hands on experience on hitech poly-house cultivation of tomato (tomato is one of the major vegetables being cultivated in the islands), and to Thondamuthur village for precision farming and shade net cultivation. The participants were given a vegetable seed kit and certificate upon completion of the program.
A workshop on Linking farmers and agro-based SMEs to markets was organized under the Indo-US Agri Knowledge initiative by ICAR-FICCI-NCAP at New Delhi on 17 and 18 March. The objectives of the workshop were:

- To know the status of R&D and future opportunities in R&D in agri-business
- Identifying an agri-business model and regulations that may speed up the sustainable growth of agri-business in India and develop a framework and work plan for enhancing Indo-US partnership.

Policy advisors, professionals, corporate leaders, bankers and representatives from the media participated in the workshop. Mrs Holly Higgins, US Embassy in India; Mrs Radha Singh, FICCI; Dr PK Joshi, NCAP, ICAR; Dr Mort Neufville, NASULGC; Mr AK Upadhyay, ICAR, and representatives from leading US universities participated in the workshop.

SM Karuppanchetty, ABI-ICRISAT participated in the workshop and gave a presentation on Successful models: Research-industryfarmer interface on the ABI success model. Members of the Indo-US initiative appreciated the ABI model and envisaged interest in enhancing this initiative, which could have an inclusive growth in agriculture development.
TNAU holds Agri-Business Incubation meeting

Happenings No. 1355 26 March 2009

The Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) have become change agents by starting agribusiness incubation in the state of Tamil Nadu under the co-business incubation partnership. An Agri-Business Incubation meeting was conducted by the Directorate of Agri-Business Development at TNAU on 18 March in which the incubation activities were officially started. Kiran K Sharma was the chief guest. Dr P Subbian, Director (Agri-Business), TNAU; Dr B Chandrasekaran, Director of Research, TNAU; Dr AS Ponnusamy, Special Officer (Seeds), TNAU; and several other scientists attended the meeting. Ten agripreneurs looking for business incubation services in various arenas attended the meeting.

Dr P Subbian welcomed the participants and spoke about the Directorate of Agri-Business Development and activities being carried out at the Agri-Business Incubator established under the MoU signed between TNAU and ICRISAT. R Bhubesh Kumar of ABI-ICRISAT presented the activities carried out, incubation services to be extended to the clients and future activities. Kiran K Sharma highlighted the need for business incubation and stressed that the scientific inventions have to benefit the common man for whom ICRISAT is working. Agri-Business Incubators will serve as an effective platform for commercializing scientific inventions.

Dr Sharma specially appreciated the women entrepreneurs who attended the meeting. Dr B Chandrasekaran, Director of Research, TNAU, elaborated the efforts of TNAU in developing need-based technologies. He appreciated the advances made in business incubation under the ICRISAT-TNAU partnership. A discussion session was also organized as part of the meeting during which Kiran Sharma and other officials clarified the queries of entrepreneurs. All the entrepreneurs expressed their interest in becoming members of the Agri-Business Incubator. Dr SD Sivakumar, Professor, Agricultural Rural Management, TNAU, proposed the vote of thanks.
ABI and STEP initiate co-business incubation

The Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT (ABI-ICRISAT) has partnered with Science & Technology Entrepreneurs Park (STEP), Thapar University, Patiala, to set up a co-business incubation platform. This partnership is intended to promote agribusiness ventures in Punjab, North India, by leveraging the mutual area of competence of both the institutes.

ABI-ICRISAT will leverage its experience on business incubation in creating successful agri-business ventures and ICRISAT’s cutting-edge technologies. STEPThapars is a leading technology university in Punjab and has good infrastructure, facilities and potential technologies in the agri-biotech domain. Besides, it is located in Punjab, the food bowl of India.

The National Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board (NSTEDB), Department of Science & Technology, Government of India has financially supported ABI for helping STEP on priority areas of agri-business ventures through co-business incubation in North India.

SM Karuppanchetty exchanged the MOU, signed earlier by Director General William Dar, with Dr Abhijit Mukherjee, Chairman of STEP-TU on 28 March. Dr Dinesh Goyal, Executive Director, STEP-TU, was present on the occasion.

To initiate the co-business incubation activities, ABI and STEP-TU organized an agribusiness development camp at Patiala on 28 March. The camp aimed to identify and promote agribusiness ventures in specialized areas such as bio-products, tissue culture and food processing, and to identify potential innovative technologies for funding through TePP program of DSIR.

ABI and STEP-TU invited technical and business experts in identified specialized areas to share their experiences with the participants. Karuppanchetty and Sweta Agrawal from ABI attended the camp.

Karuppanchetty talked about the various services that ABI and STEPTU could offer to their clients through co-business incubation programs. Sweta Agrawal gave a presentation about the TePP program and how an innovator can benefit from the program.

The participants got ample opportunity to interact with experts.
Dr Goyal gave a detailed insight on scope of agribusiness and incubation support services that is offered at STEP.

The co-business incubation strategy is to identify and incubate entrepreneurs for projects in the area of biofertilizers, tissue culture and food processing, and to provide a business plan for best-bet technologies, with marketing & financial strategy for its commercialization.

This co-business incubation partnership of ABI-ICRISAT will benefit the Punjab farming community and agribusiness entrepreneurs with new technology support, business escort services and better access to incubation facilities.

The camp was well attended by around 90 participants comprising budding entrepreneurs, progressive farmers and students.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT was represented at a seminar on agricultural innovation systems organized by the World Bank on 16 April at Washington DC, USA. SM Karuppanchetty presented on Agri-Business Incubator: The lessons learned from ICRISAT experience and the way forward in developing and under-developed countries through a global agri-business incubation model.

This is a recognition for ICRISAT’s pioneering initiatives on agricultural innovation systems that impacts on agricultural development of farmers. Dr Barry I Shapiro, Vice President of CNFA and former Managing Director of ASP-ICRISAT was also present as an observer during the seminar.

He strategically substantiated the presentation. This presentation evinced interest among the World Bank, CGIAR and InfoDev to scale up the Agri-Business Incubator initiative globally through strategic partnership.

This model evinced a tripartite partnership wherein the CGIAR could facilitate the technology commercialization, InfoDev could assist on initiation and coordination, and the World Bank could fund and facilitate it.

Senior officials and program directors from the World Bank, InfoDev and CGIAR Directorate appreciated ICRISAT on this initiative and welcomed this model that could benefit poor farmers.
SM Karuppanchetty represented ICRISAT at the 23rd International Conference on Business Incubation of the National Business Incubation Association (NBIA) held from 19 to 22 April at Kansas City, USA. The theme of the conference was Building on best practices to learn about first class programs and innovative strategies developed by top incubators in the world.

More than 500 delegates from the incubation community across the world participated. Karuppanchetty participated in the roundtables on agriculture and rural development and exhibited the ABI promotional materials in the conference.

He shared his experience with other experts such as Mr Steven Chiang, Director, Hawaii Agricultural Business Incubation program and Mr David Terry, Executive Director, West Texas A&M University. Mr Carl Schramm, Chairman, Kauffman Foundation, recognized as one of the world’s foremost thinkers on the importance of entrepreneurship to a nation’s economic growth delivered the keynote address at the conference.

This event has helped build awareness about the agribusiness incubation at ICRISAT among international incubators. Besides, it has created the right network for business development and technology transfer with international partners.

The participants appreciated the impact oriented initiative of ABI-ICRISAT for the welfare of poor farmers. The NBIA is an organization that has been advancing business incubation and entrepreneurship since 1989. NBIA supports the development and management of successful incubation programs worldwide.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT organized a workshop for state lead agricultural institutes on agribusiness incubation on 11 and 12 May at ICRISAT Patancheru. This workshop was organized based on a request from the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) of the Government of India. ICRISAT’s innovative agricultural systems had impressed many lead agriculture institutes in the country to establish similar systems. Around 15 persons from various state agricultural universities (SAUs), including Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Anand Agricultural University, Banaras Agricultural University, Jawaharlal Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya Kendra, Haryana Agricultural University, Indian Agricultural Research Institute and Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technology participated.

KK Sharma welcomed the participants and Dr NT Yaduraju, National Coordinator, NAIP, highlighted the importance of the Agri-Business Incubator, how it is useful for technology commercialization and its benefit to the farmers. He also spoke about the scope of the workshop to participants and thanked ABI-ICRISAT for organizing it. The workshop involved orientation sessions on agribusiness incubation, biotech business incubation, commercialization of technologies through agribusiness incubation, financial management of incubators and orientation on incubation proposal preparation for support through NAIP. The sessions were handled by experts such as Dr Deepanwita Chatopadhayay from ICICI Knowledge Park; Dr Dwarkesh Parihar, M/s Bioseed Research India Pvt Ltd; Mr Subba Rao, M/s Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India; Mr Kaginalli, M/s Gamma Agro Medical Processing Pvt Ltd. From ICRISAT, KK Sharma, Rajesh Agrawal, SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi made presentations.

Participants also had an opportunity to discuss with Dr Mark Neufuille, Executive Vice President of the National Association of State University, USA on their experience of technology commercialization and business incubation in the United States. Through this initiative, agribusiness ABI-ICRISAT has taken the concept of agribusiness incubation to north, south, east and west of the country. Around 10 incubators are being established in ICAR and SAUs funded by NAIP. ABI-ICRISAT will facilitate all these initiatives through co-business incubation. Due to this, ABI-ICRISAT will be able to benefit more agribusiness entrepreneurs and have greater impact on the livelihoods of the poor farmers.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT has partnered with the Science & Technology Entrepreneurs Park, Thapar University (STEP-TU), on co-business incubation to jointly execute programs on biopesticides, biofertilizers, organic farming, tissue culture and innovative ventures. This initiative of ABI is supported by the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India to strengthen the partnership between ABI and other incubators working on agribusiness. In order to execute the identified programs successfully, ABI conducted a capacity building program for two key staff members, Mr Kunal and Ms Harmanjit Kaur of STEP–TU for one week from 26 to 30 May.

GV Rangarao and V Rameshwar Rao, briefed the STEP-TU staff members on biopesticides and organic farming and explained the technical and practical aspects of neem-based biopesticides, NPV and bacillus subtilis. S Gopalakrishnan led the session on biofertilizers, production and application aspects. On the aspects of tissue culture and technology, production and business, the team had discussions with Pooja Bhatnagar and Kiran Sharma.

The team also showed interest in soil chemistry and biochemical analysis, and KL Sahrawat and PV Rao gave brief presentations on these subjects. The participants were also trained on business incubation, client services, technology commercialization and incubator operations by S Aravazhi.

As an exposure visit, the team was taken to the life sciences incubator of ICICI Knowledge Park where Vice President Jitendra Kumar briefed them on their operations and clients’ services. Overall, this program has helped in closer interaction and better understanding of each others’ incubation programs and will enhance the impact of agribusiness incubation in northern India.
As an outreach centre for Technopreneur Promotion Program (TePP), the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT conducted the third agri-business innovators’ camp on 3 June at ICRISAT Patancheru for identifying innovative technologies and products. TePP is an initiative of Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Government of India, to identify, promote and commercialize innovative technologies in India. The TePP program provides funding assistance to the innovators for prototype development and commercialization of technologies.

Round 20 innovators from various parts of Andhra Pradesh attended the camp and presented their technologies for various levels of funding assistance. The TePP screening committee comprising Dr AS Rao, Advisor, DSIR, Government of India; Dr Durga Prasad, Managing Director, Vaishnavi Biopower; Prof Chouhan, former President, Matrix Agri Sciences; Dr Dwarkesh Parihar, Chief Scientist, M/s Bioseed Research India Pvt Ltd; and S Aravazhi, ABI-ICRISAT, scrutinized the proposals and gave recommendations to the innovators.

About eleven proposals were selected for funding to the tune of Rs 3 million. Some of the innovations presented to the committee include enhanced liquid biofertilizer and cotton plucking machine.

Kiran Sharma and SM Karuppanchetty interacted with the participants and assured the innovators and DSIR of support services and cooperation in operating the TePP program successfully at ABI-ICRISAT. This program has helped ABI-ICRISAT effectively reach technopreneurs and grassroot innovators.
The Agri Business Incubator at ICRISAT (ABI–ICRISAT) conducted a one day exposure cum training program for aspiring women entrepreneurs in the field of agri biotechnology on 19 June at Patancheru.

The program was sponsored by the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development Institute, Hyderabad. About twenty young women entrepreneurs and a few men attended the program. S Aravazhi, Deputy Manager, ABI-ICRISAT explained the activities of ICRISAT and incubation services extended by the Business Incubator. He also explained the business opportunities in the field of Agricultural Biotechnology.

Kiran K Sharma, Head, ABIIICRISAT, highlighted the business opportunities in agri biotech and applauded the interest of women participants in starting new enterprises. He also suggested that the participants learn the skills required for running a successful agribusiness venture through ABI-ICRISAT. All the participants were taken to the biotechnology lab to be given an exposure on agri biotech enterprises.

An interactive session was also organized as a part of the training program. SM Karuppanchetty, Deputy COO, Agri Science Park enlightened the participants about the requirement of high level of business acumen for the aspirants to become successful entrepreneurs.

Six participants expressed interest to become incubates of the ABI and establish new agribiotech ventures.
The Agri Business Incubator at ICRISAT (ABI-ICRISAT) participated in the Multi Country Observational Study Mission on Entrepreneurship and Agrotechnology/Agribusiness Incubation organized by the Asian Productivity Organization (APO), held at Taipei, Republic of China from 22-26 June.

Recognizing the success of ABI-ICRISAT in agribusiness incubation globally, Kiran K Sharma, Head, ABI-ICRISAT was invited as international expert for the study mission. About 22 participants representing nine member countries of APO (Republic of China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam) participated in the study mission.

During the inaugural session held at the National Chung Hsing University, Taichung, Taiwan, Kiran Sharma made a detailed presentation on agri-business incubation and activities of ABI-ICRISAT enlightening the participants on global agribusiness incubation.

Experiences of ABI-ICRISAT infused great interest among the participants. The participants also gave presentations on the status of agribusiness incubation in their respective countries. R Bhubesh Kumar, Assistant Manager, ABI-ICRISAT presented a paper on the cobusiness incubation activities of ABI-ICRISAT. During the study mission, participants were taken to various business incubators in the country.

Agri-business incubation is yet to get a fillip in Taiwan. A number of participant countries, including Philippines and Vietnam expressed interest in partnering with ABI-ICRISAT.
The AgriBusiness Incubator at ICRISAT (ABI-ICRISAT) organized the first review meeting of its Seed Business Incubation program on 28 July after one year of it’s launch. Around 20 entrepreneurs from Kurnool, Kadapa, Chitoor and Anantapur districts of Andhra Pradesh state attended the meeting at Patancheru. Kiran Sharma welcomed the entrepreneurs, and participants expressed their happiness with the incubation support extended by ICRISAT in the last one year.

Mr Subbarao from the program implementing agency, Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI), briefed the participants on the overall progress of the initiative. ICRISAT’s SN Nigam, PM Gaur and Rakesh Srivastava were invited for technical sessions to interact with the entrepreneurs. The scientists guided them in addressing challenges faced by the program and helped them to prepare for the current season.

The entrepreneurs spoke about issues such as quality of foundation seeds, more intensive field visits, technical feedback, soil and micronutrient tests, subsidy on seeds and new variety seeds. Speaking to the farmers, Nigam said that farmers and the entrepreneurs need not look for subsidy and gave suggestions on various models of seedbusiness process. Adding to this, Gaur clarified doubts of farmers in controlling pest and diseases of chickpea.

Srivastava briefed them on intercropping and on precautions to be taken to protect the crop. Kiran Sharma informed the entrepreneurs that the first year of operations was a learning phase for all and that ABI-ICRISAT along with the scientist will be supporting this program for next year. Later, external expert, Dr Srihari from Bayer joined the discussion and gave his advice to the entrepreneurs. He appreciated the Seed Business Ventures program being conducted by ABI-ICRISAT and AAI.

The Seed Ventures include groundnut, chickpea, pigeonpea and paddy crops. After the successful launch of the seed business incubation program in 2008, around 36 entrepreneurs
from Andhra Pradesh (AP) and 25 from Tamil Nadu (TN) have benefitted. The total area under seed business ventures in AP was 1600 acres last year. The main varieties that were commercialized through this program include groundnut (ICGV 91114, K6 and TAG24), pigeonpea (LRG41) and chickpea (JG11 and JAK I7918). Mr Mallikarjuna, an entrepreneur from Devarkonda village in Kurnool, said that he got an additional benefit of around Rs 50,000 from this seed incubation program and could now cultivate new varieties. Kiran Sharma appreciated the entrepreneur who achieved success through this program and thanked all the participants for making it a success.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT has added one more feather to its cap by launching a Co-Business Incubator at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), at Coimbatore, under the Directorate of Agri-Business Development. The Co-Business Incubator-TNAU was officially launched during a function organized at the university on 7 August.

This will be the first agribusiness incubator located at an agricultural university in the country. Dr P Subbian, Registrar, TNAU, welcomed the gathering and spoke about how the agribusiness incubator has been established in association with ABI-ICRISAT.

Dr Annuar Mohd Saffar, President, Asian Association of Business Incubation, inaugurated the agribusiness incubator. He highlighted the need to adopt high-end innovations in agriculture in light of population growth, and the fact that these technologies often do not reach farmers.

“Incubation enhances domestic and export marketability of agro-commodity through quality standards, which will benefit the farmers economically,” Dr Saffar said. “I’m glad the incubation initiative of ICRISAT is moving forward with new, bigger and co-incubation partners,” he added, while expressing confidence that the TNAU incubator would help in commercialization of potential technologies in an effective manner.

Dr Kiran K Sharma, Head, ABI, highlighted the uniqueness of agribusiness incubation and the importance of cobsiness incubation in addressing the challenges of agriculture by benefiting everybody. He added that entrepreneurs will be benefited by regionalized service, complementary support in the area of technology, business development, access to infrastructure and financial resources.

Dr P Murugesan Boopathi, Vice-Chancellor, TNAU, said, “We need a platform to incubate the technologies to test their performance, and market acceptability and viability, before scaling up to larger commercial projects. This incubator will offer a platform for farmers and
entrepreneurs to study the potential of technologies developed in the university and also
to check for its market relevance.” He expressed the hope that the incubator would bring
forth strong and dynamic agribusiness sustainability and contribute to growth in agricultural
production and employment.

Giving the keynote address at the launch, Dr Julian Webb, InfoDev Asia Facilitator, World Bank,
said business incubators in the world needed to become relevant to address poverty, food
security, malnutrition and climate change.

He added that new forms of agriculture are required in the face of climate change. Therefore,
business incubators are required for farmers and new entrepreneurial ventures.

Mr RMP Jawahar, President of Indian STEPs and Business Incubators Association,
congratulated ICRISAT and TNAU on this trailblazing initiative, which is unique in the country,
During the launch meeting, the Vice-Chancellor of TNAU, Dr Muruges Boopathi, issued
membership certificates to the incubatees. An exhibition of products and services of the
incubatees was also arranged.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI-ICRISAT) of the Agri-Science Park at ICRISAT conducted a one-day camp on 13 August at Patancheru in which 70 innovators and entrepreneurs from various parts of Andhra Pradesh participated. Inaugurating the camp, Director General William Dar encouraged the group to pursue their mission and stressed the need to take innovative technologies to the commercialization stage.

He likewise highlighted the leadership of ABI-ICRISAT in agribusiness incubation nationally and internationally through its awards and accomplishments. Emphasizing ICRISAT’s vision of improving the well-being of the poor, Dr Dar said that ICRISAT helps poor farmers not only through its R&D initiatives, but also through public-private partnerships.

He urged the entrepreneurs and innovators to come forward to help poor farmers through their technological intervention and market linkages.

The camp was organized to identify innovations in the industry and to obtain support for them through the Technopreneur Promotion Program (TePP) of the Department of Science and Industrial Research (DSIR), Government of India. The second purpose of the camp was to identify potential agri-business ventures for incubation at ABI-ICRISAT.

Welcoming the guests, Kiran Sharma, Head of ABI-ICRISAT, highlighted the support being extended by DSIR for innovation systems in India. He appreciated their recognition of ABI-ICRISAT as an outreach center for TePP.

He also described the TePP program, the various funding options available to the innovators and the programs that ABI offers in its incubation center for the benefit of entrepreneurs.

Dr Ramesh Chouhan, MD, Terahertz Technologies, spoke about the need of the common people to innovate and help other innovators to take their technology forward. He said that the Indian innovation system needs to be uplifted to reach the top position globally. The
Government of India is supportive, and institutes such as ICRISAT are extending their support to help the innovators and entrepreneurs through their novel initiatives, he added. Dr BN Sarkar, Scientist-E, DSIR, appreciated ICRISAT’s efforts in organizing the camp. He said the overwhelming participation in the camp will encourage other innovators to come forward with their ideas on agribusiness.

The other guests and resource persons included Brig. P Ganesham, VSM (Retd), Honeybee-AP, National Innovation Foundation; Mr Durga Prasad, MD, Vaishnavi Biopower; Mr Anil Kumar, MD, Astrel Genome Ltd and Dr DSK Rao, Global IT and Innovation consultant.

Two concurrent sessions were conducted - the first one, led by SM Karuppanchetty, was on innovation stream and the other, led by S Aravazhi, was on new agri-business opportunities. The TePP Monitoring Committee chaired by Dr Chouhan, included Dr DSK Rao, Brig. Ganesam, Mr Durga Prasad, Mr Anil Kumar and SM Karuppanchetty.

The committee evaluated 15 innovations at the camp and approved TePP funding for 9 innovations. The list included innovations such as cooking oil spray, an IC engine that runs purely on castor oil and a multi-vitamin growth promoter.

The funding applied here is called TePP TS. The new agribusiness opportunity stream consisted of participants who wanted to start a new agribusiness venture with support from ABI. The venture included food processing, tissue culture, seed ventures, social enterprises and farm ventures. Overall, the response from participants was immense.

They were enthusiastic about starting new agri-business ventures that could be supported by ABI-ICRISAT and were keen on obtaining financial assistance through the TePP initiative.
ABI participates in India Innovation Growth Programme

The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) of ICRISAT has showcased its innovations at the inauguration-cum-technology Expo of the Department of science and Technology–Lockheed Martin India Innovation Growth Programme 2009.

The program was held on 31 August at Hyderabad. The Department of Science and Technology, Government of India (GOI), Lockheed Martin Corporation, Indo-US S & T Forum, FICCI and the IC2 Institute, University of Texas at Austin have jointly launched the initiative. Kanna Lakshmi Narayana, the Minister of Major Industries, Commerce & Export Promotion and Food Processing, Government of Andhra Pradesh, formally inaugurated the Expo.

ABI displayed its innovators of the Technopreneur Promotion Program (TePP) of the DSIR, GOI and the technologies that were commercialized through ABI. Karuppanchetty and Aravazhi briefed the visitors on ICRISAT and its initiatives through the Agri-Science Park (ASP) that included business.

Incubation and technology commercialization and other components. The showcased innovations of TePP included groundnut cooking spray of Rami Reddy, Biofer growth promoter of Anil Reddy, and the castor oil run IC engine of Mustan Wali.

A large number of participants, visited the ICRISAT pavilion and showed interest in helping to commercialize some of the innovations. Dr Ray O Johnson, Lockheed Martin Senior Vice-President and Chief Technology Officer, Mr HK Mittal, Advisor & Head, National Science & Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board (NSTEDB), Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India and the mentor of ABIICRISAT, Dr Arabinda Mitra, Executive Director, Indo – US S&T Forum, Mr Len Denton, Programme Manager, IC2 Institute, were also present.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) arranged the visit of a five member team from Uganda’s Mekerere University, comprising Johnny Mugisha, Byaruhanga Yusuf Byenkya, Jakana Dan, Mawanda Robert Joseph and Mugula Jovin Kamugisha, from 13 to 16 October. The main objective of their visit was to have exposure on the business incubation and agri-business services in India.

The team also visited incubators at Science & Technology Entrepreneurs Park, Noida, Foundation for Innovation and technology transfer at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and Business Planning Development at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute.

At Patancheru, the Ugandan delegation was greeted by DDG-R Dave Hoisington, who highlighted the strong relationship between ICRISAT and Mekerere University in Africa in the areas such as the HOPE project and HarvestPlus. KK Sharma and SM Karuppanchetty explained the activities of the Agri-Business Incubator to the group.
The Malla Reddy Group of Institutes along with Honey Bee network Andhra Chapter organized an event on Social Entrepreneurship on 21 October at their Kompally campus in Medchal, near Hyderabad. Anil K Gupta, Professor, Indian Institute of Management– Ahmedabad and Vice-Chairperson, National Innovation Foundation, was the Chief Guest, and SM Karuppanchetty was the Guest of Honor.

While Gupta spoke on Entrepreneurship – a Social Responsibility, Karuppanchetty addressed the students on the topic of Innovation and entrepreneurship for inclusive growth through business incubation.

The event had a participation of over 200 management and engineering students, who were exposed to various opportunities and challenges in entrepreneurship and business incubation. Besides, some of the successful ABI incubates and innovators of the TePP program, such as Sheikh Mastan Vali, exhibited their models along with the innovators of Grass Roots Innovation Network.
Kiran K Sharma, Principal Scientist at the Genetic Transformation Laboratory and Head of Agri-Business Incubator (ABI), participated in the 3rd annual infoDev Global Forum on Innovation & Entrepreneurship in Florianopolis, Brazil from 26 to 30 October. He delivered a speech on Sustainable agriculture and food production.

InfoDev is a major global forum created by the World Bank for innovation, incubation and entrepreneurship. ABI ICRISAT had successfully held the second Global Forum in Hyderabad in 2006.

The event was organized by the Information for Development Program (infoDev), in partnership with the Brazilian Association of Incubators and IT Parks and the Brazilian Service of Support for Micro and Small Enterprises.

The conference focused on innovation and technology entrepreneurship, financing small and medium enterprises and start-ups, new sectors such as clean technology, agribusiness and mobile applications.

More than 300 experts from many countries participated. InfoDev promotes entrepreneurship and innovation in developing countries to solve global food and climate crises as well as to provide economic opportunities for women and young entrepreneurs.
The International Cooperation and Development Fund (TaiwanICDF) organized a workshop on Agri-business Strategy and Management from 22 October to 4 November in Taiwan. The TaiwanICDF’s goal is to strengthen international cooperation and improve foreign relations by promoting economic development, social progress and the welfare of people in partner nations. Aravazhi Selvaraj, Deputy Manager, Agri-Business Incubator represented ICRISAT and India in the workshop.

This workshop was aimed at sharing Taiwan’s experience in agri-business development with other countries.

The workshop included 25 participants from 21 countries mainly from Asia, the Caribbean, Central America, Middle-East, Africa and Latin America. The two week program included sessions on issues such as globalization and Taiwan’s agricultural development strategy, agricultural financial policy, agricultural product marketing and agribusiness management.

The participants visited the Council of Agriculture - Executive Yuan, Taipei’s Agricultural Products Marketing Corporation, Taoyuan District Agricultural Research & Extension Station, orchards and garden farms, Singang Township Farmers’ Association, and Singang Agribusiness Corporation. Visits were also made to semi-governmental institutions and outstanding enterprises.
ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubator receives Villgro award

Happenings No. 1394  24 December 2009

The Agri-Business Incubator ABI@ICRISAT has been conferred with the ‘Best Incubator Award 2009’ by the Villgro Foundation at its annual event ‘Unconvention’ in Chennai, held from 10 to 12 December. The event included a conference, innovation fair, business plan competition and awards. It was attended by over 350 high profile delegates.

Paul Polak, Founder and President, International Development Enterprise, USA acted as the Chief Guest and handed over the award to SM Karuppanchetty, Deputy COO and Senior Manager, ABI.

The award comprises a certificate, a memento and a cash prize of Rs 50,000. Paul Basil, CEO and Founder of Villgro said, “This award is a fitting tribute to the spirit that proudly toils for a better future for the rural poor. It is recognition of the effort to champion a cause with far-reaching societal impact. Villgro salutes the valiant accomplishments that proclaim in one voice: it’s possible.”

Karuppanchetty thanked Villgro for choosing ABI@ICRISAT for the award and said, “This award is unique since it is in synchronization with our vision and goal of helping the poor through innovation, incubation and impact on livelihood. It’s just the beginning and we have a long way to go in supporting entrepreneurs, innovators, farming and rural community.”

While thanking Director General Dr William Dar and Kiran Sharma, Head-ABI for their leadership and guidance, he dedicated the award to Team ABI and its clients and partners. The other nominees for the incubator award include Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (IIM-Ahmedabad), N S Raghavan Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (IIM-Bangalore), Mitcon Biotechnology Park, Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIT-Mumbai), PSG - Science & Technology Entrepreneurial Park, and Vellore Institute of Technology– Technology Business Incubator.
The Agri-Business Incubator conducted one day camp at ICRISAT on 19 December to identify potential entrepreneurs in Agri-Business for its Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) incubation scheme to extend the incubation support.

Recently, ABI has been selected by Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise as one of the incubators to implement their scheme Support for Entrepreneurial and Managerial Development of SME through Incubators.

Under the scheme potential entrepreneurs will be selected and given financial assistance in the form of grants to develop their innovative ideas and technologies into a small-scale viable venture with support from the incubator.

The scheme provides early stage funding for nurturing innovative business ideas that could be commercialized. Around 70 participants attended the camp, wherein 25 innovative business ventures were screened.

ABI formed a technical committee comprising Kannan, Advisor on Venture Capital Funding from Chennai, Logananathan from WWF, Kiran Sharma and Karuppanchetty for evaluation of the proposals. Eleven proposals were selected for the incubation support scheme. Some of the innovations include Kisan Mitra e-card, hydraulic agro digger, stevioroid, Electric Tractor and Quail Farming.
ICRISAT participated and showcased the Agri-Science Park (ASP), Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) and Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) at the Kisan-2009 exhibition held in Pune from 14 to 18 December. Kisan-2009 is one of the largest Indian agricultural exhibitions organized by Kisan Forum Pvt. Ltd.

Aravazhi Selvaraj and Luke Talari represented ABI at the exhibition. More than 500 people visited ICRISAT’s stall and showed interest in ASP and its components.

They were keen on ABI initiatives such as seed, farm, agri-biotech and biofuel ventures. The exhibition has generated business leads and proved to be a good platform for incubating new ventures in Maharashtra state.

The seed business venture currently being operated in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu was of interest to many farmers and similar programs were expected to be initiated in Maharashtra for the benefit of farmers as well as entrepreneurs.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) in association with the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) conducted a training program for 20 potential women entrepreneurs on 4 January at Patancheru.

The women who were attending the 6-week training program on entrepreneurship development organized by the ministry were graduates and post-graduates in agricultural biotechnology. SM Karuppan Chetty and S Aravazhi of ABI gave sessions on potential business opportunities and agricultural biotechnology business.

They also explained about the incubation support available at ABI@ICRISAT. The participants showed interest in micro propagation (tissue culture), food processing, and seed ventures. They also visited the ABI facilities, including the biotechnology laboratories, and offices of ABI’s clients.

The group was led by Kiran Kumar, Assistant Director MSME and Padma Bhushan Raju, Industrial Promotion Officer at the District Industrial Center-Sangareddy, Andhra Pradesh.
Encouraging scientists to forge partnerships and innovate for social and economic upliftment, Director General William Dar called for a paradigm shift in bio-innovations. He said this in his valedictory address to the seventh consecutive edition of BioAsia 2010, at the Hyderabad International Convention Centre on 6 February.

Inaugurated by K Rosaiah, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, BioAsia 2010 attracted more than 4,000 delegates that included entrepreneurs, senior executives of leading biotechnology companies, eminent scientists from R&D institutions and universities, investors and other industry experts to explore global business tie-ups.

The four-day forum on global bio business was organized by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, Federation of Asian Biotech Associations (FABA), University of Hyderabad and the All India Biotech Association.

The forum was supported by 12 organizations, including ICRISAT and the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India. Stressing the need for using scientific tools to mitigate adverse effects of climate change, Dr Dar said, “Biotechnology has already delivered improved crops, and there is greater promise in harnessing genetic and molecular processes for humanity much more for the poor.

In addition, advances in information and communication technology are facilitating countries’ participation in science innovation.”

Calling for greater investments in research and development for economic growth, Dr Dar said that increasing the profile of science and technology in developing countries would help policymakers understand how science innovations can help reduce poverty. During the
occasion Dr Dar also released two publications, Grant Thorton’s report on funding options for drug discovery companies and *Biotech under public and private partnership model*. KK Sharma, Principal Scientist (Cell & Molecular Biology) was the convener of the conferences on the agri-biotech track.

He also presented a lecture on the *Role of public-private partnerships in overcoming the challenges of the development and commercialization of biotech crop and chaired the sessions on Biotech Crops: Development & Commercialization Challenges and Biosafety Regulations on Biotech Crops in India and Intellectual Property Rights*. “It is important to discuss the potential of this field, so that researchers get to know the needs of entrepreneurs and can help provide more cutting edge solutions,” he said.

The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT also took part in the exhibition that showcased modern inventions and success stories. ABI’s stall attracted numerous scientists and biotech students who posed several queries on the incubation facilities at ICRISAT.

SM Karuppanchetty, Deputy COO of ABI, said he was delighted to see young innovators come up with diverse applications of biotech. On the sidelines of the conference, Abdul Rahman Ilyas, COO and Rudraraju Purushotham of Agri-Science Park@ICRISAT participated in the focused B2B meeting organized by the Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

KK Sharma with participants of the agri-biotech track.
ICRISAT participates in ISBA 2010 annual conference

Happenings No. 1402 19 February 2010

Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT (ABI) participated in the fourth annual conference cum exhibition of the Indian Science and Technology Entrepreneurs’ Parks and Business Incubators Association (ISBA) 2010 held in New Delhi from 8 to 10 February. The focal theme of the conference was **Innovation through incubation: way forward for sustained inclusive growth.**

Prithviraj Chavan, Minister of state for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences inaugurated the three-day conference and said, “Incubation is the best vehicle for innovation, which can play a significant role in achieving inclusive growth. There is much greater potential left to be harnessed to bring technologies to the market and convert our young technopreneurs to become job creators instead of job seekers”.

T Ramasami, Secretary Department of Science and Technology and SK Brahmachari, Secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research also addressed the participants. RMP Jawahar, President, ISBA, Rajendra Jagdale, Secretary General, ISBA and Arun Nigavekar, Mentor Academia-R&D Workshop, ISBA were also present. SM Karuppanchetty, accompanied by Rama Sunderraj, attended the conference and made a presentation on **Seed Business Incubation - Promoting Sustainable Social Enterprises.**

The exhibition gave a unique opportunity to people to witness some of the novel technologies and products in areas ranging from crime detection, hazard mitigation, herbal pesticides, value added products made from forest wastes and bio-diagnostics. Around 200 national and international delegates besides a large number of visitors from academic organizations and investors participated in the exhibition. ABI participated in the exhibition and showcased its newly created Network of Business Incubators (NIABI), which is supported by ICAR-NAIP.
The ISBA-2010 also hosted the second ISBA innovation and entrepreneurship award. Union minister Prithviraj Chavan gave the national award for Outstanding TBI 2010 (Technology Business Incubators) to Vellore Institute of Technology. He also gave away ISBA 2010 Awards to nine outstanding incubatee companies under different categories.

An incubatee of ABI, M/s Matrix Agri-Sciences Pvt. Ltd received the Best Start-up Entrepreneur award. The award has been given in recognition of establishing and running its business successfully with ABI support. V Siva Prasad, Chairman and Managing Director, thanked ISBA and ICRISAT for supporting their venture through incubation.

The first annual conference of ISBA was held at ICRISAT-Patancheru in February 2007. Supported by the Department of Science and Technology of Government of India, the conference has gained substantial momentum and is now a recognized event in the global incubation industry.

ABI strengthens South-South collaboration

Happenings No. 1404 5 March 2010

Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT strengthened the South-South collaboration between its clients M/s Seedworks India Pvt. Ltd. & Mozambique’s Mocfer Industrias Alimentares (MIA). On 1 March, Balaji Nukal, Managing Director and ASN Reddy, COO, Sanjit Aradhye, Manager Biotechnology, and Jakir Hussain of Seedworks India had a meeting with Bernard Fung, Antonio Jorge, Ademola Adesina, Maria Estrela and Susana Pais of MIA and Innotech Advisers Ltd. of UK. This discussion drew upon the successful trials of hybrid rice by Carlos Dominguez in Mozambique in 2008, facilitated by ABI through a collaborative project with MIA.

ABI trains entrepreneurs in agribusiness

Happenings No. 1405 12 March 2010

The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT in association with the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) conducted a training program for 15 entrepreneurs on 10 March at Patancheru. The participants attending the 6-week training program on entrepreneurship development organized by the ministry were graduates and post-graduates in biotechnology.

SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi of ABI gave sessions on potential business opportunities and agricultural biotechnology business. They also explained the incubation support available at ABI. The participants showed interest in micro propagation (tissue culture), food biofertilizers, and seed ventures. They also visited the ABI facilities, including the biotechnology laboratories and offices of ABI’s clients. The group was organized by Kiran Kumar, Assistant Director MSME.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT conducted the fourth Agri-Business Innovators Camp on 22 February at Patancheru, to identify innovative technologies and products. As we know, ABI has been entrusted by Technopreneur Promotion Program (TePP) of Government of India Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) to identify, promote and commercialize innovative technologies in India.

Twenty innovators from various parts of Andhra Pradesh attended the camp and presented technologies for various types of funding assistance.

The TePP screening committee, comprising Brigadier P Ganesham, VSM (Retd.), Honeybee AP, National Innovation Foundation; Pratap Singh, Scientist C of DSIR; DSK Rao, Global IT & Innovation Consultant; J Durga Prasad, Managing Director, Vaishnavi Biopower; Sanjith Aradhya, Manager, Biotechnology, SeedWorks India Pvt. Ltd.; Kiran Sharma, SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi, scrutinized the proposals and gave recommendations to the innovators.

Some of the innovations presented to the committee included enhanced liquid biofertilizer, probiotic poultry feed, cocolife, banana fibre machine, and a low cost power tiller.

Kiran Sharma and SM Karuppanchetty interacted with the participants and assured innovators and DSIR of support services and cooperation in operating the TePP program successfully at ICRISAT.
The Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT organized a seminar on *Best Practices for Agri Start-ups on IPR & Business Management* on 26 March at Patancheru. The seminar was held under the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) on mentoring and handholding of Business Planning and Development (BPD) units of the national agricultural research systems.

SM Karuppanchetty, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, ABI, delivered the keynote address. Karthikeyan Iyer, Founder Director, Crafitti Consulting Private Limited, Bangalore delivered a lecture on *Ideas, Inventions, Innovation and Intellectual Property: Overview, Strategy and Implications*.

Twenty-five entrepreneurs and innovators participated and benefitted from the program. S Ayyappan, Director General, Indian Council of Agriculture Research graced the occasion and interacted with the participants, which was highly motivating for all present. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks by S Aravazhi.

The second part of the program was an online seminar organized on 29 March, where S Aravazhi introduced the resource person, Raghavendra Prasad, Chief Executive Officer, Wifin Technology. The seminar was webcast online for the representatives of the Business Processing and Development Units across India and had a participation of about 16 viewers. The seminar was followed by a question and answers session in which Prasad clarified the doubts of the viewers.

Both these programs were recorded for the ready reference of NAIP. The first half of the program was webcast after the online seminar on 29 March for the benefit of the BPD representatives who could not participate in the seminar. The online seminar initiatives of ABI have received good feedback from across the BPD community.
A seed processing plant under the Seed Business Incubation (SBI) initiative was inaugurated at Uravakonda in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh on 31 March. The plant is run by the Uravakonda farmers in partnership with Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT and Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI).

This is a first-of-its-kind unit in the country where ICRISAT and a private organization have come forward to establish an innovative public-private partnership-based seed system. The open pollinated seeds/varieties (OPS) under the brand name of ‘Mana Seeds’ were also launched on the same day. The plant was inaugurated by the progressive farmers of Uravakonda in the presence of Prasanna Rajesh, Scientist from the Agricultural Research Station, Kadiri, Abdul Kareem of Rural Development Trust, Anantapur, SM Karuppanchetty of ABI, and R Kishore, Director of AAAI. Nearly 300 farmers and seed business entrepreneurs participated in this program.

This rural entrepreneurship program helps farmers get new varieties and quality seeds on time. Almost Rs 30 lakh (about $62,500) was spent by both AAAI and ICRISAT to establish the plant. It will supply OPS of groundnut, chickpea, pigeonpea and paddy, benefiting as many as 2000 farmers with the production of seeds and seven new high yielding varieties.

‘Mana’ brand was introduced through SBI and used by the farmers of Anantapur, Chittoor, Kadapa and Kurnool. There are about 25 entrepreneurs in these districts who have been working with ICRISAT and AAAI for the past two years. Farmers who were formed as Farmers’ Interest Group will have access to the plant facility and the technical and marketing support by paying a nominal fee or user charges for the seed they process. The launch program saw a very good response to the pre-season booking of ICGV 91114 (groundnut) and JG–11 (chickpea).

“It is an effort of two years that have yielded results now. It has ‘for the farmer’ and ‘by the farmer’ approaches, addressing the demand and supply gap of OP seeds through an innovative and sustainable seed system,” said SM Karuppanchetty. SBI will also help the farmers in getting certification from the authorities governing quality control and marketing.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI)-ICRISAT has laid a new pathway to commercialize technology through the co-business incubator at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore. A new Cry gene discovered by TNAU has been taken up by Bioseed Research India Pvt Ltd, for product development and commercialization.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between TNAU and Bioseed Research India Pvt Ltd on 6 April at the university. According to this agreement, TNAU and Bioseed will take up co-product development of commercial crop hybrids using the new gene. Muruges Boopathi, Vice-Chancellor, TNAU appreciated the efforts of ABI-ICRISAT and ABI-TNAU in achieving this milestone. He also noted that the hybrids and varieties released by TNAU exhibit better performance and needed to be commercialized through private companies like Bioseed.

Paresh Kumar Verma, Director (Research), Bioseed Research, thanked the management of the university for providing a new platform for commercially exploiting the technologies available with the university. He also said that Bioseed will initiate steps to involve itself in commercializing the hybrids and varieties of TNAU through a public private partnership.
Speaking at the event, Kiran K Sharma, Head, ABI, said that ABI-ICRISAT will work towards commercializing technologies developed by the university and to strengthen the relationship between the two institutes to complement each other in achieving many such milestones.

DS Parihar of Bioseed; P Subbian, Registrar; R Samiyappan, Director, Centre for Plant Molecular Biology; R Ganesan, Director-Agri-Business Development; V Udayasuriyan, Professor and Head, Department of Plant Molecular Biology and Biotechnology of TNAU and R Bhubesh Kumar, Assistant Manager, ABI-ICRISAT were also present.

This new platform on co-business incubation pioneered by ABI-ICRISAT is expected to enhance technology commercialization entrepreneurship and impact on farm livelihoods.
ABI incubates entrepreneurs under MSME scheme

Happenings No. 1411

ABI at ICRISAT has been selected by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Government of India, as one of the incubators to implement their scheme Support for Entrepreneurial and Managerial Development of SME through Incubators.

Under the scheme, 10 potential entrepreneurs were selected and given a grant to develop their innovative ideas and technologies into smallscale viable ventures with support from the incubator.

The scheme provides early stage funds (around $14,027) for nurturing innovative business ideas, which could be commercialized in a year. It also seeks to promote networking and forging of linkages with other constituents of the innovation chain for the commercialization of their developments.

Of the ten proposals submitted to MSME, eight were approved for an overall funding of Rs 46 lakhs (around $4.6 million). Sunita Chhibba, Additional Development Commissioner & Economic Advisor, Office of the Development Commissioner (MSME), visited Patancheru on 17 April. She was accompanied by D Chandra Sekhar, Director, and NT Naidu, Deputy Director, MSME, Hyderabad.

The team also visited the incubator facilities. On behalf of Dr William Dar, Peter J Ninnes, Director, Resource Planning and Marketing, welcomed MSME officials and explained the support provided to entrepreneurs through the incubator.

SM Karuppanchetty gave an overview of Agri- Business Incubator activities and the progress made in the MSME incubation scheme. Sunita Chhibba held discussions with the entrepreneurs on their planned ventures.
The entrepreneurs include Murali Krishna Mutyala (Jytra Engineering Services Pvt. Ltd), VVLN Prasad (Solax Bio Sciences), D Rupesh Kumar planning contract farming of quails, Suresh Suryadevara developing a cotton pickercum-compacter, Y Narayana Rao working on the concept of M3 (Milk, Methane, Manure), B Rami Reddy (BR Cooking Spray Pvt. Ltd), Gangineni Subba Rao (Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India) promoting Seed Business Ventures and Raghavendra Prasad (Wifin technologies Pvt. Ltd). ICRISAT signed incubation agreements with these eight entrepreneurs.

Impressed by the activities of ICRISAT in the semi-arid tropics, Chhibba said she expected more entrepreneurs to be supported by ICRISAT in the future. To implement the scheme Support for Entrepreneurial and Managerial Development of SME through Incubators, the MSME team also met prospective incubators located in and around Hyderabad such as Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Osmania University, ICICI Knowledge Park, Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of Andhra Pradesh and Indian Institute of Chemical Technology.
Agri-Business Incubator (ABI), ICRISAT participated in a 3-day Agribusiness Knowledge Workshop organized at the National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), Hyderabad from 22 to 24 April. The purpose of the workshop was to harness the synergies of the stakeholders across the agricultural value chain by sharing knowledge.

Around 40 participants from across the country, including farmer organizations, agri-input companies, agribusiness professionals, agri-finance institutions, food processors, infrastructure companies, logistics providers, policy advisors from central and state governments, ICRISAT, quality control institutions, retail chains, government organizations such as Food Corporation of India, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, Small Industries Development Bank of India and North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited participated in the workshop. The workshop paved the way for the Agribusiness Knowledge Centre (AKC) at NAARM.

The center will provide a favorable ecosystem that will nurture and facilitate value addition, business development and growth among the stakeholders across the agricultural supply chain. The participants presented an overview of their companies’ offer in the value chain, what they expect from the value chain and the challenges they face in this process. The idea was to dwell on the processes based on the five principles of trust and cooperation, governance, market power, innovation and knowledge, and intervention points.

SM Karuppanchetty and Aravazhi Selvaraj attended the program. Karuppanchetty gave a presentation on the role that ABI at ICRISAT can play in the knowledge center. Fifteen out of the 40 organizations will be provided with offices at the proposed Agri-business Knowledge Centre at NAARM in the first phase. Plans are on to ramp it up to house 500 organizations in the future depending on the feedback on phase-I.
ICRISAT trains ICAR Incubator Business Managers

A training-cum-capacity building program was organized by ABI of ICRISAT at Patancheru for the managers of Business Planning and Development (BPD) units of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institutes and state agricultural universities as part of the ICAR-National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) on Mentoring and Handholding of BPD Units of NARS from 13 to 15 May. This event was to train business managers in the operations and management of business incubators.

The program was attended by 10 BPD managers from the participating institutions, including the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (New Delhi), Indian Veterinary Research Institute (Izzatnagar), Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (Cochin), National Institute of Research on Jute and Allied Fiber Technology (Kolkata), Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technology (Mumbai), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (Coimbatore), Birsa Agricultural University (Ranchi), CCS Haryana Agricultural University (Hisar), Anand Agricultural University (Anand) and Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya (Jabalpur).

Director General Dr William Dar in his address appreciated the initiatives of the BPD managers who share a common cause of helping resource-poor farmers through small and medium-level entrepreneurship. Dr Dar emphasized the need for commercialization of agri-technologies of the national agricultural research system (NARS) partners to reach the poor farmers in a timely manner.

He also underscored that the BPDs or Agri-Business Incubators are the ideal platforms for effective technology transfer and the creation of jobs. Additionally, he acknowledged the work of all the managers, partners and successful entrepreneurs of the newly-formed Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI).
KK Sharma stressed the importance of the successful operation of the BPD units to create a momentum in the country and bring in remarkable changes in NARS as a catalyzing agent. SM Karuppanchetty spoke on the NIABI action plan, reporting pattern, financial management and the sustainability aspects of the project.

Addressing the managers on ‘Marketing of Business Incubator and Technology Commercialization’, he enumerated the various aspects of institutional marketing and marketing strategies for technology transfer, including soft landing services and their opportunities in agribusiness.

Aravazhi Selvaraj spoke on the ‘Organizing and Operating Strategy of Incubator’ and described various elements of operations management and their role in managing an incubator. He presented various models of business incubation and talked about operational models. One of the sessions, organized by Shiva Kumar, Principal Consultant – Envision Sattyaalayah, was on ‘Motivation, Communication and Team Building’.

The highly interactive session focused on building trust. Resource persons from companies such as Villgro, Bioseed, SkyQuest, and Reuters Market Light discussed their incubation experience and business proposals on potential collaboration with NIABI.
Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI), an incubatee of Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT, received the Emerging Enterprise Sankalp 2010 Award in the agriculture, food and rural business sector category. Earlier, AAI had also won the special Villgro Innovation Award in the agribusiness space for 2009. The Sankalp 2010 Awards were announced in a grand awards ceremony at Mumbai on 5 May by a jury of prominent investors, funders and experts. The awards ceremony was attended by over 500 delegates, including government representatives, venture capitalists, social business incubators, business leaders, experts and social entrepreneurs.

G Subba Rao, COO of AAI received the Sankalp 2010 Award along with a cash prize of one lakh rupees (>2000). He thanked ICRISAT for supporting AAI in its entrepreneurial endeavors and for scaling new heights in agribusiness. Director General Dr William Dar congratulated Subba Rao and his team for this achievement and assured them of technical support in similar future endeavors, which support resource-poor farmers. AAI received this award for their seed business venture initiative, which is operated in partnership with ABI-ICRISAT in four districts of Rayalseema, Andhra Pradesh. AAI has supported 25 entrepreneurs through this venture and catered to seed production of prominent varieties of chickpea, pigeonpea, groundnut and paddy.

AAI started its entrepreneurial journey with incubation support from ABI-ICRISAT in 2004. ABI-ICRISAT facilitated AAI innovations and provided agri-technology backstops, thereby bringing in a total system development. Guided by a ‘nothing is impossible’ outlook, AAI has been serving the farming community since 2004. With the help of agri-knowledge centers (AKC) it transfers the latest agricultural techniques, success stories, market news, demonstrations and new inventions through trained human resource. AKC handhold farmers from seed to seed. Also, it made a mark in organic farming to bring in a more sustainable development in these areas.
Agri-Business Incubator-ICRISAT was part of the national meet on Technological Innovations in Agriculture organized by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)-National Agricultural Innovations Project (NAIP) on 21 and 22 May at New Delhi, and showcased its new initiative, the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI).

The meet was part of the World Bank review of NAIP and its various components. The event was inaugurated by Dr K Kasturirangan, Member, Planning Commission, Government of India, and presided over by Dr S Ayyappan, Director General ICAR, and Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (also Vice-Chairman of our Governing Board) in the presence of the World Bank Task Team led by PS Sidhu.

An exhibition-cum-seminar was organized where NAIP innovations were showcased. Kiran Sharma made a presentation on the NIABI initiative of ABI-ICRISAT mentioning the need for incubation, the success of ABI-ICRISAT and the progress made in various business incubators/ Business Planning and Development (BPD) units of ICAR-NAIP.

This initiative of ICRISAT was appreciated and received well by the participants and the World Bank Task Team. Grahame Dixie, Co-Task Team Leader had discussions with Kiran Sharma on the operational model of NIABI and spoke with RV Vyas, Professor & Principal Investigator, Anand Agricultural University BPD unit and Bhubes Kumar, Business Manager, Tamil Nadu Agricultural BPD unit on the issues and challenges facing BPD units. It was agreed that there is need for a mechanism to adapt the NAIP-ICAR potential technologies for business through an institutional intervention such as NIABI.
The Ohio-based National Business Incubation Association (NBIA) is the world’s leading organization that advances business incubation and entrepreneurship. Each year, it provides thousands of professionals with information, education, advocacy and networking resources to bring excellence to the process of assisting early stage companies. NBIA serves more than 1,900 members in over 60 nations.

NBIA held an International Conference on Business Incubation from 16 to 19 May in Orlando, Florida, USA marking its 25th anniversary. The event featured sessions on the future of the industry, international issues and basics of incubator management, strategies for helping clients, various funding sources and much more. Over 500 incubation and economic development professionals from over 40 countries gathered in Orlando to learn, share ideas and network.

Highlights of the conference: Celebration of NBIA’s 25th anniversary at the opening reception, tours to the Disney Entrepreneur Center and the University of Central Florida Business Incubation Program, keynote addresses by Jerry Ross, executive director of the Disney Entrepreneur Center, and Alan Ladwig, Deputy Associate Administrator for Public Outreach in the Office of Public Affairs at NASA headquarters, a panel of global incubation leaders discussing the challenges and opportunities facing the industry and NBIA’s 2010 annual awards presentation.

SM Karuppanchetty, Deputy COO, Agri-Science Park@ICRISAT & Senior Manager, ABI-ICRISAT took part in the conference, particularly in the rural and international forums. ABI-ICRISAT presented its competence in the niche space of agri-business and its significance in poverty reduction. During the conference he met NBIA President & CEO David Monkman, who was impressed by the new initiative of Networks of Indian Agri-Business Incubators. Mr Monkman expressed his willingness to participate in its events and strengthen it globally.
Damodar Raja Narsimha, the Minister for Marketing and Warehousing, Government of Andhra Pradesh, was as enthusiastic as the farmers in finding out about ICRISAT at the AgriTech 2010 exhibition at the Acharya NG Ranga Agriculture University (ANGRAU) campus in Rajendranagar, Hyderabad this week.

The four-day AgriTech 2010 event, a combination of exhibition and conferences, was organized by the Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development and supported by the Government of AP and the Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry from 15 to 18 June.

The Minister formally inaugurated the event on 15 June along with Abdul Hassan Mir, Agriculture Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, and P Raghava Reddy, Vice-Chancellor of ANGRAU. He visited the ICRISAT stall and discussed at length with ICRISAT’s G Ravi Kumar about our high yielding varieties.

He was very keen about the pigeonpea hybrid *Pushkal* and was happy to note that the hybrid yields 35% higher than its traditional varieties. He was also enthusiastic about the high yielding groundnut varieties, particularly ICGV 9214, which is drought resistant. The farmers
from neighboring Rangareddy, Mahbubnagar and Medak districts thronged the ICRISAT stall in large numbers. Around 3000 farmers and students from the campus visited during the event. The watershed replica, hybrid and high yielding varieties of mandate crops, posters on the global themes, Agri-Business Incubator, Biotechnology and watersheds were the main attractions. The other stalls showcased farm innovations, micro-irrigation and cold storage equipment, crop insurance, tractors, harvesters and threshers.
ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubator had participated in a seminar organized by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) on *Global Agri business Incubation (GABI) fortifying innovation and capacity strengthening framework* on 21 May at Washington DC. GABI is an initiative of ABI-ICRISAT, to form a network of agri-business incubators worldwide on a co-business incubation platform.

SM Karuppanchetty highlighted the quintessential Innovative Agri System that can facilitate market oriented research, technology commercialization and impact on livelihoods of the resource poor farmers through agripreneurship.

The session gave deep insights to the CGIAR scientists on the growing clout of innovation in agriculture and its impact on the farming community. The presentation was well received by IFPRI, especially since the ensuing interaction explored partnerships and cooperation within the GABI Initiative.

IFPRI is one of the 15 Centers supported by CGIAR working towards the challenges in achieving sustainable food systems in the world to realize its mission – *Providing policy solutions that reduce poverty and end malnutrition and hunger*.

It had restructured in 2003 and in 2004, when a new division focusing on innovation and capacity strengthening in national agricultural research and knowledge systems became a part of the institute.
ABI extends financial assistance to entrepreneurs

Happenings No. 1420
25 June 2010

The Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT provided financial assistance to two small and medium farm entrepreneurs and a farmer’s federation from its Seed Grants Fund Scheme *Seed Support for Start-ups in Incubators* of the Technology Development Board, Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, through its co-business Incubation partner the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU).

The beneficiaries include two small enterprises in Coimbatore, the IAC Agro Inputs and the Emral Tuneline Autotech Ind, and the Kazhi Kadai Madai Farmers Federation from Nagapattinam district.

IAC Agro Inputs is involved in the development of India specific Sugarcane Harvester. Emral Tuneline Autotech Industry- a small enterprise in Coimbatore owned by MP Rajkumar is involved in Mobile Based Irrigation Automation System. The product developed by this firm can help farmers to switch-on or switch-off their farm pumps while sitting in their homes, through their mobile phones.

The advanced version of the same product can help farmers in scheduling irrigation for their farms. Kazhi Kadai Madai Farmers Federation, operating in Thiruvengadu village is involved in the implementation of a unique program called the Seed Business Incubation. Under this program, the farmer turned seed entrepreneur can produce seeds with the guidance of the Agri-Business Incubator and market the seeds under the brand *PUDHAN* (name of planet Mercury in Tamil).
On 29 June ABI-ICRISAT gave potential entrepreneurs from the Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC), Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU), Hyderabad, an orientation to potential agribusiness ventures. G Ravi Kumar, Senior Visitors Services Officer, briefed the participants about ICRISAT’s activities and took them on a tour of the institute’s facilities.

Seventeen participants from Engineering, Sciences and Management streams gained valuable insights into setting up agri-business enterprises. SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi apprised the participants of ABI activities that promote innovative ideas.

They also talked about the incubation support available to prospective entrepreneurs. Examples of enterprises promoted by ABI were discussed. Rami Reddy B, Managing Director, BR Cooking Sprays Pvt. Ltd, an ABI-supported incubatee shared his experiences and travails of managing his enterprise successfully.

The Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University is organizing a 4-Week Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) sponsored by the National Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Development Board, New Delhi from 14 June to 10 July. The students’ visit to ABI was part of this program.
Dr Bangali Baboo, National Director, National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) - Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi, visited ICRISAT-Patancheru on 6 July. NAIP is a World Bank-aided project of ICAR that provides technological support to farmers by developing new strategies, technologies and innovative solutions. ICAR through NAIP aims to develop Research and Development (R&D) systems and create new ways of doing business in agriculture and allied fields. It also aims to increase crop productivity, alleviate poverty and raise nutritional, livelihood and income security.

It promotes more than 188 projects involving approximately 600 institutions and $300 million. ICRISAT is looking after three main projects and three sub-projects of NAIP worth $7 million. The National Director’s visit was facilitated by our Management Group, OIC DG’s Office Peter Ninnes and Director-Finance Rajesh Agrawal, and was coordinated by Agri-Business Incubator-ICRISAT. Rajesh Agrawal welcomed Dr Baboo and Manager Visitors and Travel Service, MM Sharma talked about ICRISAT activities. The dignitary showed keen interest in the ongoing NAIP projects at ICRISAT.

SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi gave a detailed presentation on Handholding and Mentoring of Business Processing and Development (BPD) projects. Belum Reddy along with A Ashok Kumar and Ch Ravinder Reddy discussed the Sweet Sorghum Ethanol Value Chain project. Dr Bangali Baboo appreciated the overall performance and impact of NAIP projects at ICRISAT. On behalf of the Institute, Peter Ninnes felicitated the National Director with a memento and assured him of ICRISAT’s continued support.
The Agri-Business Incubator’s Co-Business Incubator, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), has reached another milestone in promoting entrepreneurship in agriculture and allied sectors by launching the Business Planning and Development (BPD) Entrepreneurial hub at the Tamil Nadu Rice Research Institute (TRRI), at Aduthurai on 22 July. About 80 participants from the district attended the launch program. The entrepreneurial hub at TRRI will cater to the needs of the entrepreneurs in the central region of the state.

Professor Praveen (Agronomy), TRRI, welcomed the participants and guests. In the inaugural address, T Jeyaraj, Director, TRRI, stressed on the importance of marketing in agri-business. R Ganesan, Director-Agri-Business Development and Principal Investigator, National Agricultural Innovations Project-BPD, said that farmers can be successful entrepreneurs if they are taught business management through various capacity building programs.

SM Karuppan Chetty, Senior Manager, Agri-Business Incubator at ICRISAT talked about the importance of developing entrepreneurial skills.
The Seed Business Incubation (SBI) program of the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI-ICRISAT) for promoting rural seed ventures in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu through public, private and people partnerships approach is successfully catering to around 65 entrepreneurs.

Further, a new batch of 16 entrepreneurs was selected on 28 August by experts from ICRISAT and Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI) a partner of ABI. In all, 24 potential entrepreneurs from Anantapur, Kurnool, Mahabubnagar and Kadapa districts of Andhra Pradesh took part in the screening process.

The panel consisted of SM Karuppan Chetty and Jonathan Philroy from ABI, D Yadagiri of Groundnut Breeding and K Suresh of Chickpea Breeding, TN Reddy, External Consultant from the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management, G Subbarao and Rajendra Prasad of AAI. After due diligence and screening, the panel successfully selected 16 potential entrepreneurs.

ABI plans to induct these candidates and incubate them in its seed business incubation program before the *rabi* season through a structured training program. This initiative is expected to benefit the farmers in terms of quality seed material, access to markets and better prices.
As part of its Seed Business Incubation (SBI) program, the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) at ICRISAT together with Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI) conducted a two-day training program for the third batch of entrepreneurs of seed business ventures (SBV) on 6 and 7 September at Patancheru.

The SBI program was developed to meet the resource needs of poor farmers through selected entrepreneurs, which would in turn facilitate the development of an integrated, cost effective and self sustainable seed business system that is capable of generating, producing and distributing improved seed varieties of ICRISAT’s mandate crops, national and state agricultural research systems (NARS & SARS) crops such as groundnut, chickpea and pigeonpea, and farmer-preferred varieties of paddy. Among the eleven entrepreneurs, five were from the previous batch and six from the new batch.

The participants were trained by resource personnel in seed production, seed business and seed certification on groundnut, pigeonpea, chickpea and paddy crops. The resource persons were drawn from ICRISAT, Directorate of Rice Research (DRR) and AAI.

Resource persons from ICRISAT who undertook capacity building of entrepreneurs on seed production of groundnut, pigeonpea and chickpea were Yadagiri (groundnut), KB Saxena (pigeonpea) and BV Rao (chickpea), respectively. The participants were also exposed to standing demonstration plots of groundnut comprising all the released, pre-released and check varieties.

On the second day, participants were trained on Seed production and Certification of paddy crop and suitable varieties for Rayalseema region of Andhra Pradesh, by Dr LV SubbaRao, Directorate of Rice Research (DRR-ICAR) and Sri P Narendra from Andhra Pradesh State Seed Certification Agency (APSSCA).
Sri VV Rajendra Prasad, COO-Seed systems, AAI, gave insights on the concept of ongoing seed business ventures, the role of entrepreneurs in the seed business venture, SWOT Analysis since inception, do’s and don’ts, and the need to invest intellectual and financial resources for self sustainability, towards enhanced development of the rural farming community.

The entrepreneurs also shared their experiences and views on seed business with an ICRISAT team comprising SN Nigam, PM Gaur and Kiran Sharma.

In this venture, entrepreneurs will place indents for crop and variety seeds. The area to be brought under seed production during rabi season 2010-11 was also discussed. These initiatives will be supported by AAI in facilitating the seed material with the cooperation of ICRISAT, NARS, SARS and other state seed organizations. Further, the seed certification and the processing will be facilitated for the entrepreneurs.

The entrepreneurs expressed their appreciation of the evaluation process and training, and resolved to implement the SBV program. At the end of the program, trainees were presented with SBV certificates. SM Karuppanchetty proposed a vote of thanks.
The first agribusiness development camp of the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) of the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI), ICRISAT was held at the Business Planning and Development (BPD) unit of the Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Viswa Vidyalaya (JNKVV), Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh on 4 September.

The event saw participants from various segments such as entrepreneurs, farmers, industrialists, scientists and students of agriculture and agribusiness management. The camp was primarily aimed at promoting agri-business ventures, especially those on seed technologies, bio-fertilizers and medicinal and aromatic plants among the potential agricultural entrepreneurs or “agripreneurs” of the region through the business incubation services of the BPD at JNKVV.

NIABI aims at creating a synergy among the 10 BPDs spread across the country and looks to facilitate the commercialization of innovative agro-technologies through agri-business developments and technology transfer among the centers, thereby benefiting the farmers of the country.

The program included technical sessions on technologies ready for commercialization, interactive sessions between prospective incubatees and scientists, and an exhibition to highlight the technologies and other developments at JNKVV.

The Honorable Vice-Chancellor of JNKVV, Dr Gautam Kalloo, was the Chief Guest of the event. Dr SK Rao, Principal Investigator (PI), BPD gave a presentation on the business opportunities available at JNKVV under Seed business, Bio-fertilizers and Medicinal and Aromatic plants, which are ready for incubation.

Successful agri-business entrepreneurs such as Vijay Sannata, CEO, JP Agritech Pvt Ltd and Mr Krishna of Hari OM Seeds were present at the camp and shared their experiences about the business hurdles they had to overcome to be successful entrepreneurs.
The participants were also taken to the exhibition site and were shown all the technologies discussed by JNKVV. Scientists working in different fields clarified the doubts of the agripreneurs. After the visit, the participants were segmented based on their area of interest and provided with details about the process of joining the incubator.

Fifteen agripreneurs joined the incubator, of which eight were for seed business, three each for bio-fertilizers and medicinal plants while one had joined for developing a new venture. Further discussions elaborated on the modus operandi of the incubator and tentative action plans were prepared. A certificate of registration was also given to each registered incubatee.

SM Karuppanchetty congratulated the incubatee for becoming a part of the entrepreneurial revolution. It was also heartening to note that the 15 incubatees were a mix of youth and experience. On the one hand, we had a young, agriculture graduate (who was in his final year) and on the other, we had an agripreneur from Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

The first Letter of Intent of the BPD for medicinal and aromatic plants was signed between the PI of the BPD and M/s Green House Agro Products.

Overall, the program had a total of 237 participants of which 81 were entrepreneurs, 113 were scientists, staff and media, while the rest were students of agriculture and agri-business management. The BPD collected registration fee of Rs 15,000 and membership fee for the BPD of Rs 57,500. Expected business mobilized for the BPD is Rs 200,000 ($4444.00).
ABI-ICRISAT, as a part of its NAIP Project Handholding and mentoring of BPD Units of NARS, kick-started the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) Mentors’ Orientation Program with a seminar on Best Practices of Agri-business on 28 September.

Director General William Dar and Dr VR Muthu (CEO, Idhayam Group of Companies) were the chief guests at the function. SN Nigam, Principal Scientist-Groundnut breeding, Kiran Sharma, Principal Scientist-Biotechnology and Head – ABI, were also present.

Seventy participants, including mentors, entrepreneurs, and Business Planning and Development (BPD) Managers from Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technologies, National Institute for Research on Jute and Allied Fiber Technologies, Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya, were present.

The Mentorship program aims at supporting our entrepreneurs and incubators at the technical and business front. The program was conceptualized taking into consideration the mentoring needs of the 10 business incubators (BPD units) across the country.

The mentors base is a mix of expertise from nine major domain areas (agriculture, horticulture, agri-input, agri-processing, incubation, dairy, fisheries, biotechnology, agri-engineering) and 6 functional areas (marketing, consultancy, business, fund rising, quality control, legal/IPR).

S Aravazhi gave a brief presentation on the entire project and NIABI, while SM Karuppanchetty gave insights on NIABI Mentorship program initiation and process from the trigger point up to the selection of final mentors.

Director General William Dar gave the keynote address and spoke about the need and impact of modern agro food systems for direct and indirect growth and poverty
reduction in developing countries. He also highlighted the escalating need for innovation, entrepreneurship and technology commercialization felt by the stakeholders in agriculture R&D, and how agri-business incubators can pursue this need.

He said that the ICRISAT Governing Board had appraised the PPP initiatives of ICRISAT, especially ABI, and suggested that it should be integrated as a strategy of ICRISAT for 2020. He added that other such initiatives may be taken up under NIABI that would help the entrepreneurs commercialize their technologies and benefit the farmers.

The session was taken forward by Mr VR Muthu, CEO, Idhayam Group of Companies, who presented a seminar on Best Practices of Agri-business. Mr Muthu spoke about the importance of business mantras through historic Sanskrit slokas. The seminar was informative and the enthusiasm of the audience was evident during the question and answer session.

In the post-lunch session, Karuppanchetty presented on Working modalities of mentorship program (Operational system, Mentorship Agreements, Membership feedback system). The session was shared by Mr Raghavendra Prasad, who explained the practicalities in “Online management of mentorship program”.

The program ended with a one-to-one interaction (mentor, mentees and BPD managers). This provided the participants the opportunity to put forward their views, needs and expectations about the program. For the first time, as many as 19 agreements were signed by the BPD managers with mentors during this session.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) of the Agri-Science Park @ ICRISAT (ASP) participated in the prestigious twin conference *Asia Pacific Incubation Network Conference and 2010 Small Business Development Conference* from 12 to 15 September at Cairns, Queensland, Australia.

SM Karuppanchetty represented ABI and made a presentation at the International Business Incubation forum of the Association of Agri-Business Incubators (AABI) conference.

Three key Australian associations representing business incubation, support and training organizations, Business Innovation and Incubation Australia (BIIA), Business Enterprise Centers Australia (BEC Australia) and the National NEIS Association (NNA) were host associations for the annual national conference.

In addition, for the first time they were joined by the Small Enterprise Association of Australia and New Zealand (SEAANZ), offering an opportunity for both the academic and practitioner arms of the business assistance community to mix and gain insight into business in Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region.

The conference aimed to further professional development and promote best practice across the industry, and presented inspiring speakers at the forefront of industry as well as a range of practitioners. It provided a platform for collaboration and partnership of incubators, small businesses and practitioners.

The 2010 conference also included the 15th AABI General Assembly, thereby including delegates who actively practice business incubation throughout the Asia-Pacific Region. Karuppanchetty represented ICRISAT and India in the AABI General Assembly.

The delegates discussed issues such as accepting AABI New Association Members, progress and future developments of AABI, AABI Journal, Dr Horiba Entrepreneur Award, AABI Incubator Award.
Dr Madhav Lal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Government of India, and his team of five members from MSME (Hyderabad) visited ICRISAT and Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) on 13 October. SM Karuppanchetty of ABI-ICRISAT addressed the group and gave a presentation on *MSME Incubation Scheme-Clients Profile and Progress*.

During the presentation, Karuppanchetty talked about the process of screening and selection of the MSME clients at ABI-ICRISAT and the level of MSME funding availed by the incubatees. Later, he presented details of the MSME fund utilization status and progress of each client individually. Six MSME clients were also present for the meeting: Mr Subba Rao (Aakruthi Agricultural Associates), Mr Rami Reddy (BR Cooking Sprays), Mr Raghavendra Prasad (Wifin Technologies), Mr Murali Krishna (Jytra Engineering), Mr Suresh Suryadevara (Individual Entrepreneur) and Mr VVLN Prasad (Solax Bio Sciences). As a part of this presentation, the various challenges faced by the clients were put forward to MSME officials.

Dr Madhav Lal was satisfied with the level of progress shown by the clients and he said that the MSME team at Hyderabad would support a few clients on technical requirements related to designing and engineering. He also extended his support to clients facing problems regarding statutory clearances.

Karuppanchetty elaborated on how ABI-ICRISAT supported the MSME clients at the technical and business front. He also put forward two new proposals for funding from MSME and two pending proposals of Business Planning and Development Units before MSME officials for consent. He requested Dr Madhav Lal for his support in registering with the MSME Cluster Development Programme (MSME- CDP) and Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).

The session was encouraging for ABI and its clients as Dr Madhav Lal was satisfied with the MSME Scheme progress at ABI, and ensured his support in future endeavors.
More than 40 participants from 16 countries across the world, including leaders, professionals, industrialists, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and institutions in the field of agribusiness, incubators, agricultural research, funding agencies and related stakeholders gathered for the inaugural meeting of the Agribusiness Community of Practice (CoP) of infoDev at Golconda Resorts, Hyderabad, towards developing a work plan for infoDev’s Agribusiness CoP for 2010-12.

Information for Development (infoDev) is a global partnership program in the World Bank Group of International Development Agencies to achieve economic growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction. The Agribusiness CoP is a strategic component of infoDev’s new agribusiness entrepreneurship program that works towards developing a good practice assessment and training program on agribusiness incubation.

The meeting was jointly organized by ICRISAT and coordinated by our Agri-Business Incubator (ABI). Delivering the welcome address, Director General William Dar spoke about ICRISAT’s contribution towards small and marginal farmers of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, and elaborated on ICRISAT’s Strategic Plan 2020 and the Inclusive, Market Oriented Development (IMOD) program framework. In this regard, he said, “Modernizing the agricultural system is a strong engine for direct and indirect growth and poverty reduction in developing economies.”

He further spoke about the role of ABI in creating competitive agribusiness enterprises, and said that there was a need to share successful agribusiness models to face the challenges of agribusiness development in developing countries.

He added that ICRISAT was seeking infoDev’s co-operation to establish a model incubation center in Africa, and concluded that together they can fulfill the mission of eliminating poverty and improving the livelihoods of the farming community.

Ms Valerie D’Costa, infoDev Program Manager, gave a video greeting, which was followed by a presentation on the Trends in the global agribusiness markets and potential for...
entrepreneurship by Mr VR Kaundinya, Managing Director of Advanta India Limited. Mr Kaundinya elaborated upon the technologies and opportunities in emerging markets that can have a bearing on the agribusiness industry.

Mr Steve Giddings, Agribusiness Technical Lead of infoDev presented on The Agribusiness Community of Practice – Identify, Share, Scale, which gave the participants a clearer idea about the purpose of the CoP meeting at Hyderabad and how incubators can help in supporting the entrepreneurs during their initial years.


From the industry perspective, Mr Jagadish Sunkad from Carborundum Universal Limited, India, discussed about Kauvery, which is based on the Pusa Hydrogel technology developed by IARI.

The main focus areas of the workshop were on understanding the key challenges and opportunities that an agribusiness incubator faces in a developing country. The discussions were initiated by case studies of successful agribusiness incubator models and ventures.

Mr Paul Basil, CEO of Villgro; Dr NT Yaduraju, National Coordinator of the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP); and SM Karuppanchetty, Senior Manager, ABI-ICRISAT presented on the support programs for agribusiness SMEs and overcoming challenges.

The workshop concluded with the announcement of the Hyderabad Declaration, which detailed the four action areas: Access to finance; Introduction to new markets; Policy/Raising awareness/New models of agribusiness; and Capacity building.

Mr Pekka Puustinen, Deputy Director General (Dept for the Americas & Asia, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland) was the Chief Guest for the Valedictory Session. In his address, Mr Puustinen said, “Our financing support will further increase in coming years for agribusiness through ICRISAT, as Finland is now keen on more funding for agri-business in developing countries.”

Dr Dar announced that a Global Agribusiness Incubation Conference will be held at ICRISAT-Patancheru from 7 to 9 February, 2011, where implementation of the CoP will also be reviewed. A press conference was organized as part of the closing session to announce the Declaration.
Nutritional Security Emphasized at Agribusiness Development Meet

Happenings No. 1440 12 November 2010

The Agri-Business Incubator (also known as Business Planning and Development Unit) at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), which is a joint initiative of ICRISAT and TNAU, conducted an agri-business development meet at Coimbatore on 2 November.

The main aim of the meet was to identify potential entrepreneurs for providing them incubation support and to commercialize the technologies of TNAU.

Director General William Dar, Kiran Sharma, SN Nigam, SM Karuppanchetty and S Aravazhi represented ICRISAT at the event.

Inaugurating the event, Dr Dar said, “Nutritional security should form an integral part of food security to overcome the malnourishment that 42 percent of the country’s children face. We have been successful in bringing about abundance in rice, wheat and corn through the Green Revolution.

But, this has only met our calorie requirement.” Pointing out that the production of larger cereals to smaller cereals was in the ratio of 12:1, he indicated that the imbalance needs to be addressed.

Dr Dar urged for increased investment in the production of smaller nutritional cereals. “Introduction of good delivery systems should aid in bringing them to the fore. Agri-business incubation is one such system,” he added.
Dr Dar urged for increased investment in the production of smaller nutritional cereals. “Introduction of good delivery systems should aid in bringing them to the fore. Agribusiness incubation is one such system,” he added.

ICRISAT through its Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) platform is in partnership with 10 institutions in agribusiness incubation. Terming TNAU as the best among the lot, Dr Dar urged more institutions and organizations to enter into the public-private partnership mode, as such commercialization of technologies could bring in a definite change in the farming system and would create opportunities and prosperity for the smallholder farmers of the country.

Elaborating on ICRISAT’s Strategy to 2020 on “Inclusive Market-Oriented Development,” Dr Dar said that this would bring about prosperity through a dynamic progression from subsistence to market-oriented agriculture.

Team ICRISAT held discussions with TNAU on its various partnership programs and visited the TNAU departments and facilities.

The event had participation of more than 100 entrepreneurs from across the state. The participants were later grouped under broader themes of seed venture, farm venture, farm implement venture, food processing and innovative venture. Group sessions and individual discussions with the entrepreneurs were conducted to assess the needs of the entrepreneurs and match it with the TNAU services. An exhibition was organized wherein the current groups of the TNAU incubator displayed their products and services to the participants. Ten entrepreneurs signed up for incubation support on the spot by paying the preliminary registration fee and becoming part of the TNAU incubation system.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI)-ICRISAT participated in the fifth edition of the TiE-ISB Connect, the annual networking event for entrepreneurs and investors, jointly organized by the TiE Hyderabad Chapter and the Indian School of Business (ISB) on 29 and 30 October at Hyderabad. The theme for this year was *Transforming India: The Entrepreneurship Route*. Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Dr K Rosaiah was the Chief Guest.

Director General William Dar participated in the panel discussion on Research to Market, which included Mr Anupam Saronwala (IBM Research), Dr Taslimarif Saiyed (C-CAMP, NCBS), Mr Nitin Deshmukh, (CEO, Kotak PE) and Dr Krishna Tanuku (ISB).

Dr Dar highlighted ICRISAT’s work and the relevancy of its efforts in the context of innovative research commercialization. He said, “ICRISAT has been operational for more than 38 years as one of the 15 centers of the CGIAR. In India, 60-70 percent of the population depends on agriculture for livelihood. The power of innovation and inclusive growth strategies need to be unleashed to feed the estimated 9.1 billion population of the world in 2050.”

Further, he spoke about ABI-ICRISAT, which “has been working towards this direction of promoting inclusive development through market oriented approaches.” He said that ABI had instituted an innovation system and incubation program supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India under which, till date, more than 100 ventures have been mentored, supported and incubated.

He said that ICRISAT had also recently set up a network of 10 incubators at institutes funded by ICAR. He highlighted the need for large scale public, private and people partnerships to create effective innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, policies, infrastructure, skills, know-how and access to finance. Responding to one of the queries of the participants, Dr Dar indicated that the Silicon Valley model is replicable in the Indian context and cited the example of the Genome Valley initiative of the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

More than 100 people visited the ABI stall at the event. ABI was able to generate 32 leads for technology commercialization through the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators initiative.
Sri A Mallikarjuna, an entrepreneur working with Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI), one of the clients of the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI), was conferred with the Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy (NVA) Fellowship at a function held at the University of Mumbai on 26 November.

Instituted by the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) in 2005, the award carries a citation that recognizes the service specific abilities possessed by individual social workers and their commitment to the progress of the village. NVA Fellows are socially committed grassroots experts in different thematic areas such as agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, health, education and disaster management.

Sri Mallikarjuna was nominated by AAI for his experience and knowledge in seed production and spreading new varieties of groundnut, chickpea and pigeonpea under the Seed Business Venture (SBV) of ABI-ICRISAT and spearheaded by AAI in southern Andhra Pradesh. He was selected to the final list following a peer review meeting held by MSSRF at Mahabubnagar on 19 October.

More than 1,223 NVA Fellows were selected for this year’s awards from across the country. It also featured 31 NVA Fellows from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Chile, Philippines, Kenya and Nigeria to name a few. Sri Mallikarjuna along with Sri Rajendra Prasad, COO of AAI, was then invited to the 7th Convocation of the NVA Awards at Mumbai.

The event consisted of a three-day participatory workshop, where, facilitated by moderators, the participants discussed and shared their field of expertise and achievements on the subjects of agriculture, fisheries, micro-enterprises, biodiversity, social awareness, health and tribal development.
The Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) organized a one-day camp at ICRISAT-Patancheru to identify innovators and facilitate funding for their innovative ideas through its Technopreneur Promotion Program (TePP) and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) schemes, on 25 November.

Following the advertisement released on 21 November, ABI received 80 enquiries and shortlisted 40 innovators for the camp. A panel of experts from the TePP Monitoring Committee (TMC) was invited for evaluation of the proposals. The Panel was chaired by Brig. Ganesham, VSM (Retd.), Honeybee AP, National Innovation Foundation and the members present were Dr J Durga Prasad, Vaishnavi Biopower (P) Ltd, Hyderabad; Dr Dwarkesh Parihar, Chief Scientist, Bioseed Research India Pvt. Ltd; and Dr PS Raju, Scientist from NSTEDB, Dept. of Science & Technology, Govt. of India. SM Karuppanchetty, S Aravazhi and Jonathan Philroy from ABI were also present.

Aravazhi gave a brief introduction about the committee members. Further, a video on ABI and its activities was shown to the participants. Aravazhi also spoke on eligibility criteria, funding amount and project management of the TePP and MSME programs.

The 2nd meeting of the Managing Committee of the MSME incubation scheme was also held to review and recommend on the MSME incubation scheme for the clients of ABI. The committee consisted of Rajesh Agrawal, Director-Finance, M Prabhakar Reddy, Head, FETS, Mr Choudhary from MSME, and Kiran Sharma and SM Karuppanchetty of ABI.

Kiran Sharma welcomed the members and Karuppanchetty presented the progress of incubation of the eight incubatees supported through the MSME scheme. The committee also approved the outcome and progress against the funds utilized and advised for balance funds to be released from MSME for incubated ventures.

The TMC evaluated 22 innovations and approved TePP TS funding (upto Rs 75,000) for 2 innovations, recommended 4 proposals for TPF1 (upto Rs 15 lakhs) and found 12 unsuitable for funding. Nine of the innovations that were not suitable for funding under TePP were reviewed by the Managing Committee of the MSME incubation scheme and 1 innovation was selected for the MSME.
Agri-Business Incubator (ABI-ICRISAT) participated in the Villgro Unconvention on 3 and 4 December at Chennai, India. Along with ABI, its co-business incubation partners Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) and Anand Agricultural University (AAU) participated.

The two-day event saw a confluence of social entrepreneurs, investors, incubators, ecosystem players, and a miscellaneous set of people either connected with the social enterprise sector or aspiring to know what it is. Villgro’s primary function is to identify innovations that impact the rural population and devise go-to-market strategies, thereby creating a viable product or service and market out of the innovation. More than 200 delegates participated in the event.

Villgro Unconvention, an annual platform that celebrates social entrepreneurship has four distinct sections—Wantrapreneur (business plan competition for startups), Innohub (showcase of social innovations), the Summit (panel discussions and workshops), and Investor Forum (connecting entrepreneurs to investors).

Villgro Awards in seven categories (lifetime achievement, social enterprise, investor, incubator, grassroot innovator, media and journalist) identifies the social enterprise network that contributed immensely to social entrepreneurship in the previous year.

SM Karuppanchetty of ABI-ICRISAT presented on Incubation: opportunities, challenges and models of nurturing start-up social businesses. During this session he brought out the benefits of social entrepreneurship and its key role in rural upliftment.

The other participants at the session were Ms Lakshmi Vaidyanathan, Senior Vice President, Rural Technology Business Incubator (RTBI); Mr Richard Alderson, Director-UnLtd India; Dr Ashok Das, Consultant, Climate Technology Program- Info Dev; Mr Rajeev Aggarwal, Director, Centre for Innovations and Technology Transfer, Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST).
ABI-ICRISAT and its co-business incubation partners promoted Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) during the exhibition and facilitated its clients for business development, partnership and capacity building of managers.

Technology commercialization was facilitated for Anand Agricultural University (AAU) and business development for Kazhi Kadaimadai Farmers Federation.

The event also created a space for discussion on *InfoDev Community of Practice (CoP)- Access to Finance*. Mr Paul Basil, Villgro and Karuppanchetty set the ball rolling. They highlighted the objectives of the meeting, which were to find the key challenges that entrepreneurs face in accessing finance, information, database; and ways to form a stronger community.

Ten lead funding institutions participated and shared their experiences. The key outcome that emerged from the meeting was that there is a very strong need for networking and partnering among the various stakeholders in the agri-space.
A group of 10 scientists from Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (CCSHAU) visited ICRISAT and Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) on 17 December. Their visit was coordinated by Ms Kalpana Shastry from National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), Hyderabad.

ABI facilitated a business orientation meeting for the group in addition to six women entrepreneurs from the Confederation of Women Entrepreneurship (COWE), Hyderabad seeking new opportunities in agri-business. Following a visit to the Sat Venture facilitated by G Ravikumar, SM Karuppanchetty and Anitha facilitated their visit to ABI.

Karuppanchetty spoke about ABI and its current projects. He explained how an agri-business incubator can play a key role in technology commercialization through entrepreneurship. They also learned about how the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) plays a role in mentoring and leveraging success. The session also discussed the success stories of budding agripreneurs.

The visit also provided an opportunity for the scientists from CCSHAU to discuss and demonstrate their technologies – the Milk Urea Detection kit; processed food, such as ready to eat (RTE) parathas; and biotechnology products such as tissue culture of ornamental plants.
Agri-Business Incubator (ABI-ICRISAT) conducted a capacity building program on Evaluation, Valuation and Business plan development of technologies from 20 to 24 December at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore.

The training program was attended by 40 participants from 10 Business Planning and Development (BPD) units - Business Managers, Project Investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs. Dr Sanjeev Saxena, Principal Scientist, (Policy & IPR), Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) was also present for the entire session.

Dr Siva Subramaniam, Director, Agri-Business Development, TNAU, welcomed the participants and wished them a successful training. On the first day, S Aravazhi gave a presentation on “Need for evaluation, valuation and business plan development of technology-listing”. The session was very interactive.

Various models for technology valuation were explained. During the course of the training program, he also presented on commercial valuation of technologies, business plan of technologies and an exercise on smart report preparation.

Mr Karthikeyan, a consultant from Crafitti, presented “Prioritizing Ideas at ICRISAT with the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP)”. He facilitated technology selection for each of the BPDs using a structured decision making process, the Analytical Hierarchy Process, which was preliminarily done using a set of generic criteria.

The training program was an opportunity for two of the successful entrepreneurs from BPD, TNAU – Mr Rajkumar and Mrs Poongothai – to share the success stories of their innovations, “Automated Irrigation System” and “Homemade Snack Foods from minor millets”, and their “agripreneurial” journey with BPD, TNAU.

Surya Mani Tripathy, a resource person from ICRISAT, presented on Intellectual Property (IP) Valuation of the technology. He spoke about the commercial exploitation of technology and how intellectual property strategies are formulated from a broad perspective to support
business and R&D strategies, and the steps in IP management. The session was taken forward with the concept of IP Valuation and Technology transfer. He also conducted a session on “Effective Negotiation Skills”. The participants were given a case study and were asked to give a live performance on negotiation.

Mr Gurukripa, a consultant, presented “Preparation of bankable project report (financial)”. He brought out insights from the entrepreneur’s perspective on how to gear up for bringing innovation into the market. In this context, he explained various business models, accumulation of capital for investment and how to strike a balance between value and risk.

As a concluding exercise the BPD units were asked to shortlist their ICAR-Zonal Technology Management (ZTM) BPD technologies based on the standardized tool developed. This exercise gave an idea of how to shortlist the technologies. Each ZTM-BPD unit’s output was presented to the participants and the resource persons Dr Saxena and Dr Kalpana Sastry, Head, ARSMP Division, NAARM, ICAR.

The organizers also launched the website of the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) during the training program and Mr Raghavendra Prasad, CEO of Wifin Technologies, an incubatee of ABI-ICRISAT, presented on the online operations and website user interface.

On the concluding day, Dr Siva Subramaniam gave the vote of thanks. The session was graced by Dr Subbian, Registrar, TNAU and Dr Agrawal, National Coordinator-NAIP, who gave away certificates of participation. Dr Saxena and SM Karuppanchetty also made presentations during the session. The training program concluded with a Review and Monitoring session for all the BPDs.
The annual agricultural fair of the Kisan (farmer) Forum of Maharashtra, KISAN 2010, was held in Pune from 15-19 December, 2010. ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) participated in the event and promoted the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) to facilitate commercialization of the agro technologies of its NARS partner institutions to potential agripreneurs.

The five-day mela (fair), hosting stalls of 386 companies/organizations, received more than 200,000 visitors. Though the majority of the visitors were farmers, NIABI attracted a good number of young entrepreneurs who were interested in setting up agribusiness ventures. Around 230 people showed interest in NIABI technologies and the support that ABI could offer to potential agripreneurs.

The exhibition was mainly of agro machinery companies, banks, government institutions, marketing portals and many other private players from the field of agriculture including participants from China and Israel as well.

NIABI partner institution in the Network, the Business Planning and Development (BPD) unit of CIRCOT also participated in the event for two days. Since Maharashtra is a cotton-growing belt, NIABI received many enquiries on technologies related to cotton and CIRCOT was able to generate nearly 23 leads out of the enquiries. The Seed Business Venture of ABI-ICRISAT also got a considerable number of enquiries.

The queries and list of potential incubatees have been passed onto the respective BPD units for further action. During the event, more than 3000 people visited the NIABI stall. The mela helped in generating awareness about the concept behind NIABI and the role of ABI-ICRISAT.

Thanks to Villgro and volunteers from Pune University, Faculty of Management, Pune, who also assisted ABI in the exhibition.
ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubator participated in the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) Expo 2011 from 22 to 23 January at the exhibition hall of the National Small Industries Corporation, Hyderabad.

Personnel from more than 100 manufacturing and servicing units, functioning under various schemes of the MSME, thronged the two-day national vendor development program cum industrial exhibition.

The Agri-Business Incubator is one of the partnering institutions of MSME under the Support for Entrepreneurial and Managerial Development of SMEs through Incubators program. The program aims to promote and support innovative ideas and technology in the agricultural domain through financial and technical assistance of the MSME.

At present, eight clients of ABI-ICRISAT are funded under this scheme, which caters to a range of items from mobile-based agro applications to cooking oil sprays to a hydraulic digger.

Apart from promoting the concept and its operations, ABI-ICRISAT also promoted the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators and its activities. ICRISAT Seed Business Venture generated a lot of interest among the visitors and all leads on the venture were immediately routed through to the ABI client, M/s Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India.

The Expo was a good opportunity for ABI-ICRISAT clients to attract buyers for their products, which helped them to get exposure to the market and build confidence in their ventures.

During the two-day Expo, over 350 people visited the stall and thirteen leads generated at the Expo are being processed and sent to the respective partner incubators for follow-up.
For the first time ever, ICRISAT will host a three-day Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubation Conference (NIABI 2011), from 8 to 10 March at Patancheru. The mission of the NIABI is to enhance agribusiness development and impacts on agriculture through business incubation.

Co-sponsored by the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) and ICRISAT, NIABI 2011 aims to create global awareness, build competencies on agribusiness incubation among entrepreneurs, and establish global partnerships.

Likewise, it will promote start-up agribusiness ventures for the benefit of farmers by establishing agribusiness incubators. In addition, it also aims to enhance the capacity of at least 60 incubator managers and enlighten policy makers and funding agencies on the roadmap for funding and support for the NIABI network.

An exhibition featuring startup ventures will also be held throughout the conference. Participation at NIABI 2011 will be by agricultural entrepreneurs, agribusiness incubators, agricultural research institutions, funding agencies, venture capitalists, entrepreneurship development organizations and government organizations from various countries.

The conference will highlight panel discussions by eminent speakers, experts, agricultural entrepreneurs and investors including networking opportunities with global leaders in agribusiness incubation and funding agencies.

Emphasizing the importance of the conference, Director General William Dar said, “The conference will serve as a platform for outlining the process and sharing experiences in incubating agribusiness ventures for agricultural development.

It will also help promote agricultural entrepreneurs and their innovations through partnerships, technology exchange, business development and funding. We expect important outcomes from the conference such as capacity building for agricultural entrepreneurs.”

The conference will also mark the launching of the Global Agribusiness Incubation Network (GABI), which will be spearheaded by ICRISAT and ICAR. More details can be found on www.niabi.in
The two-day NIABI 2011: Global Agri-Business Incubation Conference hosted by ICRISAT-Patancheru successfully concluded on Wednesday, 09 March 2011. As affirmed by over 170 participants from India and other countries, the conference strengthened the capacities of agri-business incubators by networking with policymakers and funding agencies for policy and financial support.

Co-sponsored by the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) and ICRISAT, NIABI 2011 aimed to create global awareness, build competencies on agribusiness incubation among entrepreneurs, and establish global partnerships. The conference included 10 sessions, 45 speakers from 10 countries, and an agri-exhibition of 10 Business Planning and Development (BPD) units under the NIABI, along with 6 other startup ventures.

Opening the event at the Ralph Cummings Auditorium, Director General William Dar expressed the urgent need to address major challenges currently facing agriculture. According to him, the surge in food prices, climate change, shrinking farm holdings, rising production costs, and political turmoil in oil-producing countries are converging to create a “perfect storm,” which is once again placing the world on the verge of crisis.

Dr Dar stressed that innovative products, processes and concepts by entrepreneurs and their integration into existing agricultural systems is the pathway to true inclusive agricultural growth.
In his inaugural address, Dr S Ayyappan, Director General of ICAR, touched on various issues facing agriculture, and called for “bringing a ‘profit-prestige partnership’ model to farming through innovation and entrepreneurship to encourage the youth to venture into agriculture.” He added that ICAR would create an agri-innovation foundation by the end of this year to provide a platform to enable faster spread of innovations and connectivity to markets.

In commemoration of the 100th International Women’s Day, a special interactive session for women agri-preneurs was held on March 09. The session focused on success stories and entrepreneurial opportunities for women in agriculture and allied sectors.

Speaking at the valedictory session, the Honorable Minister for Revenue, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Shri N Raghuveera Reddy stressed the importance of the “agribusiness approach as a new step in promoting agriculture.” He added that though India is self-sustainable in agriculture now, the country may again have to face the challenge of food security due to shrinking land holdings and climate change, as well as people moving out of agriculture. “Agribusiness can be the answer to this issue,” he emphasized.

The Business Planning and Development (BPD) unit of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU-BPD) was awarded the Best Agribusiness Incubator Award for successfully facilitating a research program with Bioseed Research India Pvt Ltd. The Best Agribusiness Incubatee Award was given to Mr Rajkumar of M/S Emral Tune Line Systems.

Mr Rajkumar, an electrical engineer, has ventured into developing a mobile-based irrigation system. This invention enables the user to operate an irrigation pump using a mobile phone from any part of the country. The conference also marked the launching of the Global Agribusiness Incubation Network (GABI), spearheaded by ICRISAT and ICAR.
Anuradha Acharya, founder and CEO of Ocimum Biosolutions, India, shares her success story during the session on women entrepreneurship in agriculture.

(Below) Minister for Revenue Raghuveera Reddy delivers his valedictory address stressing the importance of the “agribusiness approach as a new step in promoting agriculture.”

(Above) Viewing of the agri-exhibition by the Minister and Dr Dar.

(Left) The Minister along with Dr Dar, present the Best Agribusiness Incubator Award to TNAU-BPD.
Laying down the foundation for inclusive market-oriented development (IMOD) that will spur innovation, growth and prosperity in the drylands, the new Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) building was inaugurated today, 18 March at ICRISAT-Patancheru. Governing Board Chair Nigel Poole, together with Board Member Deborah Delmer, Mrs Betty Dar, Director General William Dar and AIP-CEO Kiran Sharma, led the inauguration ceremony attended by over a hundred staff, guests and AIP team and clients.

“This is the fruit of our hard labor, forward looking and thinking out of the box, as well as our commitment to enhance public-private partnership to promote our products and innovations and help provide the poor with goods and services to participate in IMOD,” said Dr Dar in his inaugural message. He also expressed his appreciation to the Government of Andhra Pradesh for partnering with ICRISAT to cover the agri-science component of the Genome Valley initiative, and for investing in the establishment of the then Agri-Science Park, now AIP.

In his address as chief guest, Dr Poole “thanked the Government of Andhra Pradesh for coming up with the vision of an agri-science park aimed to enhance agri-enterprise development and the well-being of the farmers.” He stressed that mutual vision, respect and appreciation of what each party can bring to the table are vital for public-private partnership to work. “When we work together, we can succeed,” he added.

AIP envisions to enhance the prosperity of farmers through agribusiness development with public-private-people partnerships. The building has a total floor area of 1737 sq m including built-up area of 1144 sq m. It has an administrative office, and facilities like conference room, laboratory and office space for clients and partners.

AIP is composed of three flagship components which include: Agribusiness Incubation (ABI) Program, Innovation and Partnership (INP) Program and NutriPlus Knowledge (NPK) Program. These initiatives will work towards pursuing ICRISAT’s vision of a prosperous and resilient dryland tropics.
Two Business Plans, based on ABI-ICRISAT case studies, won prizes at the Mind 2 Market (M2M) contest held at the Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad, on 21 March. The event was organized by ICRISAT in partnership with Wadhwani Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (WCED).

Contestants of M2M, an open innovation platform where ideas meet their implementers, consisted of students, professionals, innovators and entrepreneurs.

The platform required contestants to discover an innovation, unravel the market, define the customer, think ‘out of the box’ and identify the right business model that will enable its successful commercial exploitation.

Of the three prize-winning business plans, two were based on ABI-ICRISAT case studies: the Beej Bazaar – Empowering Indian farmers to sell his seeds and Sweet Sorghum.

The winning teams were Unnati from the National Institute of Industrial Engineering (NITIE) for their case on Sweet Sorghum, North East Star from the
Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Shillong for their case on Beej Bazaar and Sharp Minds from Welingkar Institute of Management Development and Research for their case on improved cooking stoves. The winners were each awarded ₹ 25,000.

The jury comprising SM Karuppanchetty, COO, ABI-ICRISAT, Dr Krishna Tanuku (Ex-Director, WCED, ISB), Mr Venkatram Vasantavada (Director sales, Pioneer Hybrid International Ltd.) and Mr Anand Nandkumar (ISB) sat through three rounds adjudging impactful innovations from over 100 teams from top Indian B-schools.
Aiming to improve information services to the farming community, ABI-ICRISAT participated in a workshop on Mobile Phone Value-added Services for Improving Soil Health of Farmers on 26 March at Sirkazhi, Tamilnadu. The event was conducted by Ekgaon Technologies, an agri-information and advisory services company based in New Delhi.

Ekgaon Technologies is currently working on an action research project along with Kazhi Kadaimandai Farmers Federation (KKFF) on the project titled “Nutrient Management Decision Support System for Livelihood Security of Farmers” to identify the effectiveness of agro-advisory services. KKFF is one of the implementing partners of ABI-ICRISAT’s Seed Business Ventures (SBV) program in Tamilnadu.

Representing ABI-ICRISAT, S Aravazhi shared strategic inputs during the workshop’s thematic group discussions, and moderated the policy group session on Requirements for the Growth of Indian Agriculture & Small Farmers.

The workshop is part of Ekgaon’s efforts to promote technologies on open standards and tools and to enable community-owned and affordable information management systems. The activity highlighted various issues faced by Rural India in terms of access to agricultural information and how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can help in providing crop value chain advisory and information services to the farming community.
The ICRISAT Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) participated in the Krishi-Dhan 2011 in Mumbai from 28-30 April. Krishi-Dhan 2011 was organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), a not-for-profit research organization headed by Dr RK Pachauri, a Nobel laureate. The ABI-hosted NIABI partner, the Business Planning and Development, (BPD) Unit of the Central Research Institute of Cotton Technologies (CIRCOT), also participated in the activity.

Krishi-Dhan is a first of its kind initiative of the agriculture sector committed to sustainable development. It is unique from other agro-expo platforms due to its focus on transforming youth into agripreneurs, a goal shared by ABI-ICRISAT. It was formally launched by Shri Chaggan Bhujbal, Hon’ble Minister of Tourism & Public Works (Excluding Public Undertakings), Government of Maharashtra.

The central theme of the event was “Green-to- Evergreen” with the intention of introducing ecofriendly and energy-efficient concepts to ensure sustainable agriculture. The thematic areas included integration of renewable energy and energy efficiency, agri-tourism, finance consultation and modern agri-technologies. The thematic exhibition, international conference, panel discussions involving youth in agriculture, innovative special sessions, presentation competition on “Agribusiness Plan” and poster presentation on thematic areas were the highlights of Krishi-Dhan 2011. Aravazhi from ABI-ICRISAT and Dr Shyam Pal of CIRCOT participated in the exhibition.

The three-day event with 200 participants saw 20 enquiries generated on farm ventures by ABIICRISAT and 10 enquiries by BPD-CIRCOT. Other participating organizations during the expo were those involved in providing service/products like elite germplasm, hybrid seeds, irrigation technologies, fertilizers, field inputs, postharvest technologies, food processing machinery, food technology, research organizations, incubation centers, biotech parks and food parks.
ABI-ICRISAT strongly believes in developing and promoting rural seed business ventures at village level through public, private and people partnerships (PPPP) in order to bridge the demand-supply gap of open pollinated quality seeds.

Towards this objective, the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program on 17 May conducted interviews to select the 4th batch of seed business venture (SBV) entrepreneurs. SBV is an initiative of Aakruthi Agricultural Associates of India (AAI), an implementing partner of the SBV program in the Rayalseema region of Andhra Pradesh.

Around 10 applicants from 5 Andhra Pradesh districts, Kurnool, Mahaboobnagar, Anantapur, YSR district of Kadapa and Nizamabad attended the program held at the Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP).

The selection process was preceded by a program in which ABI-ICRISAT gave the entrepreneurs insights into the functioning of the seed business ventures program and its benefits to the farming community.

A total of six entrepreneurs were selected, for whom a training program is scheduled on 23-24 May at ICRISAT-Patancheru. The SBV program currently hosts 110 entrepreneurs (65 from Tamil Nadu and 45 from Andhra Pradesh).
ICRISAT’S innovative approaches in improving the lives of the dryland poor were showcased at the 4th Global Forum on Innovation & Technology Entrepreneurship organized by infoDev-World Bank in Helsinki, Finland, on 30 May to 3 June.

This biennial event meant to exchange know-how, establish partnerships and develop innovative approaches, was participated in by AIP’s Kiran Sharma and Karuppanchetty, along with the Agri-Business Incubation’s (ABI) co-business incubation partners from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (Dr Sivasubramaniam, Director; Dr SD Sivakumar, Co-PI; and Mr Bhubesh Kumar, Business Manager).

A case study on ICRISAT’s ABI program was presented, along with case studies from seven other agribusiness incubators across the world. Karuppanchetty and Bhubesh also took part in a two-day program focusing on training incubator managers in innovation and technology entrepreneurship and best agribusiness management practices.
A Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Fair and discussions on the Community of Practice (CoP) forthcoming initiatives in scaling up agribusiness incubators in developing and underdeveloped countries and enhancing the ecosystem for agribusiness entrepreneurs were part of the event, in which about 500 delegates from 90 countries representing entrepreneurs, business incubator managers, policymakers and investors took part.

Incidentally, the Hyderabad-based Nandan BioMatrix, a former client of AIP-ICRISAT, was chosen among the Top 50 global firms for rapid commercialization support by the World Bank.
ICRISAT shared its models on engaging the private sector to accelerate the adoption and impact of research innovations during the stakeholders’ meeting on Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) in the Oilseeds Business.

Organized by the Directorate of Oilseeds Research (DOR), the meeting was held on 14 June at Rajendranagar, Hyderabad, and was attended by over 30 delegates from the seed, biofuel and bio-products industry, processing companies, the academe and NGOs.

ICRISAT was represented in the meeting by Karuppanchetty and Purushotham from the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program.

During his presentation on Technology commercialization initiatives @ ABI-ICRISAT, Karuppanchetty highlighted ABI’s various incubation models and partnership opportunities through co-business incubation.

DOR Director Vara Prasad also presented the Directorate’s programs and activities, and expressed interest in collaborating with ICRISAT in commercializing DOR technologies through the various PPP modes of ABI.
At a recently held workshop on Agricultural Experiential Learning Program stakeholders’ meet organized by the Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University (ANGRAU) at Rajendranagar, ICRISAT shared its co-business incubation model with over 50 delegates from the seed, fertilizer, agricultural machinery and bio-products industries, processing companies, academia and NGOs.

The workshop was meant to accelerate adoption and impact of research innovations to enhance agribusiness enterprise development and technology commercialization.

ICRISAT was represented by Karuppanchetty, Purushotham and Saikat Datta Mazumdar from the Agribusiness Innovation Platform (AIP). In his presentation on technology commercialization initiatives at ABI-ICRISAT, Karuppanchetty highlighted various incubation models, particularly the co-business incubation model with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU).

The program was presided over by Dr Yellamanda Reddy, Dean of Agriculture, ANGRAU, who expressed interest in collaborating with ICRISAT in commercializing ANGRAU technologies through the co-business incubation model and in engaging graduate students on hands-on experience in agribusiness and technology commercialization as part of the Agricultural Experiential Learning Program.
The food and agribusiness sector faces numerous challenges, calling for knowledge sharing, developing innovative strategies and exchange of resources.

Against this backdrop, Cornell University, USA and the Sathguru Management Consultants, India organized a two-module “Food & Agribusiness Management Program (AMP 2011)” in Chennai, India (20-24 June) and New York, USA (6-14 July).

The program was designed to fill in gaps in the experience of executives as they seek to augment their professional roles and prepare for new and competitive ones in the agriculture and food industry.

As part of the NAIP-Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI), Mr Aravazhi from ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubator and staff from the Business Planning & Development (BPD) Units – Dr PG Patil from the Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technologies (CIRCOT), Dr Sunil Nahatkar from Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya (JNKVV), Dr RV Vyas from Anand Agricultural University (AAU) and Dr BN Singh from Birsa Agricultural University (BAU) participated in the training program.

The program served as a platform for NIABI to exhibit ICAR technologies as well as initiate discussions with US companies to help them enter the Indian market through soft-landing support from NIABI.
Ms Susan Noble, Executive Director, Food Technology Farm, Cornell University, was impressed with the Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) of ICRISAT, especially its AIB program, and explored the possibility of setting up an agribusiness incubator in their facility to help start-ups.

Twenty four high-level policy planners, food industry CEOs, academic faculty and heads of government organizations from India and abroad attended the course, which included eminent trainers from Sathguru, Cornell University and industry and was focused on cross-cultural and cross-enterprise learning through case studies, panel discussions, brainstorming sessions and debates with the public sector, private sector, NGO and academic representatives of the Integrated Food Chain.

The Chennai module focused on global food systems and regulations, novel process technologies, food marketing, consumer trends, IPR and supply chain management.

The US module highlighted the current food security crisis and mitigation strategies, opportunities in the food market, competitive advantages for bioenergy, strategies for product development, and exposure visits to various facilities.
Going full steam ahead with its objective of fostering agro-enterprises, the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) Program of the Agribusiness Innovation Platform @ ICRISAT (AIP) conducted an agribusiness innovation camp on 29 July to select proposals from innovators/entrepreneurs and explore opportunities for commercializing innovations in agribusiness.

AIP-ABI has emerged as a champion in nurturing and incubating technologies and enterprises, and is now a model for facilitating the creation of competitive agribusiness enterprises through technology development and commercialization.

Inaugurating the camp, DG William Dar said, “There is a need to create a sustainable, inclusive, resilient, profitable and healthy agricultural sector to reduce the vulnerability of smallholder farmers to the ‘perfect storm’ faced by the world.

ICRISAT’s new strategic approach to 2020, IMOD or Inclusive Market-Oriented Development is a dynamic progression from subsistence towards market-oriented agriculture.”

Dr Dar further emphasized the urgency for entrepreneurs to develop innovative products, processes and concepts and integrate them into existing agricultural systems in order to lead to a sustainable and inclusive agricultural growth. “Such an approach calls for agriculture to be viewed as a ‘venture’ rather than a livelihood option. However, every venture has risks associated with it. This is where business incubators play a vital role,” he added.

The process of selecting the innovations began when 100 innovators responded to an advertisement regarding the camp, from which 50 were screened to participate. The selected
innovations will be funded for prototype development and commercialization under the TePP-DSIR programme of the Government of India. Mr Aravazhi of ABI gave the participants a briefing on the eligibility, funding, and project management details of the TePP program.

The TePP Monitoring Committee chaired by Dr JR Rao of NAARM-ICAR evaluated 15 innovations and approved seven proposals for Micro Techno-preneurship Support (TS) (up to ₹75,000 or US$1,700) and TePP Project Fund (TPF) (up to ₹15 lakhs or US$33,700).

Among the interesting innovations recommended were a rice transplanter, power weeder, and extraction of compounds responsible for controlling glucose and commercialization of Ganoderma lucidum (Reishi lingzhi mushroom), solar crop harvesting robot, cattle pregnancy detection kit, sensor for studying soil characteristics for agriculture automation, and biofuel production from agrowaste.

Also present during the occasion were: Dr J Durga Prasad, Vaishnavi Biopower (P) Ltd; Dr Sanjith Aradhya, SeedWorks India Pvt Ltd; Dr Vijaya Lakshmi, CDAC, Hyderabad; and Mr SM Karuppanchetty, Dr Saikat Datta Mazumdar, Mr Aravazhi and Mr Jonathan Philroy of ABI-AIP.

Agribusiness innovation camp participants
ICRISAT participated in the International Agricultural Trade Event ‘Agri-Intex 2011’ held from 28 to 31 July at the Coimbatore District Small Industries Association (CODISSIA) Trade Fair Complex, Coimbatore, at which its Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) program was showcased.

The event was jointly organized by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) and CODISSIA and inaugurated by Dr P Murugesu Boopathy, Vice-Chancellor, TNAU. Dr S Ayyappan, Secretary (DARE) & Director General, ICAR was the chief guest for the valedictory meet.

Agri-Intex is an International Expo in South India that exhibits cutting-edge technologies which are fuelling the new revolution in agriculture and its allied practices, especially in the areas of irrigation technology and farm mechanization.

The event served as a platform to promote activities of the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of AIP-ICRISAT and its partner institutions or Business Planning and Development Units (BPDs) under the Network of India Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI).

A NIABI stall was set up at the venue, which was represented by SM Karuppanchetty of ABI-ICRISAT. Many prospective entrepreneurs were identified for incubation services under different BPD units during the event.

Dr Ayyappan visited the pavilions of NIABI and the BPD unit of TNAU and interacted with the incubatees. More than 300 agro-companies participated in the event.
An agribusiness development camp was held at the National Institute of Research on Jute and Allied Fibre Technology (NIRJAFT), Kolkata, on 11 August, jointly conducted by the Zonal Technology Management-Business Planning and Development (ZTM-BPD) unit of NIRJAFT and the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) Program of ICRISAT.

NIRJAFT’s ZTM-BPD is a co-business incubation partner of ABI-ICRISAT through the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) of the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP).

The camp was conducted to identify and promote agribusiness ventures with high potential developed by NIRJAFT and 16 Central Research Institutes in the East Zone and support agri-entrepreneurs with innovative ideas.

Welcoming the participants, NIRJAFT Director Dr KK Satapathy elaborated on the objectives of the camp and related modalities. The Vice Chancellor of West Bengal University of Animal & Fishery Sciences, Prof Chandrasekhar Chakrabarty, was the Chief Guest.

In his address during the opening session, NAIP National Director Dr Bangali Baboo commended ABI-ICRISAT for making NIABI a supportive network for promoting agribusiness in the country. ABI-ICRISAT was represented by SM Karuppanchetty, COO, ABI-ICRISAT and Jonathan Philroy.

Attended by about 140 people including 67 entrepreneurs, scientists, resource people, media representatives and support staff, the camp had interactive sessions on jute technologies, agribusiness, farm business and agri-innovations, with discussions on the technicalities and business potential of the technologies on offer.
The session detailed the services being offered through business incubation. The event also had an agri-exhibition showcasing technologies on seeds and planting materials, fisheries, farm engineering, dairy, animal husbandry, post-harvest technologies and management.

They represented four theme areas from ABI-ICRISAT, Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (CIFA), Central Research Institute for Jute and Allied Fibres (CRIJAF), Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI), Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI), Central Rice Research Institute (CRRI), National Research Centre (NRC) on Yak, NRC on Pig, NRC on Mithun and NRC on Litchi.

Of the 14 participants who were interested in taking up various technologies, three made spot registrations with ZTM-BPD to utilize its services, from which a revenue of Rs 4 lakhs is expected to be generated.

The three were given certificates of registration. Seven participants registered for agro-technologies, four took up farm business ventures, two agribusiness innovations and one jute technology.

In his closing remarks, Dr KK Satapathy appreciated ABI-ICRISAT’s efforts in planning and conducting the camp and ensuring the targets were achieved.
ICRISAT’s Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) was showcased at the Bharath Utsav - 2011 held on 18-24 August at the PG College of Science grounds, Saifabad, Hyderabad. The event was jointly organized by the Rural Action for Integrity and Social Education (RAISE) and the Andhra Pradesh Council of Science & Technology (APCOST).

As many as 200 organizations like the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Defence Research & Development Organization (DRDO), Indian Air Force (IAF), National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) and private industries took part in the exhibition.

The exhibition served as an opportunity for ICRISAT to promote its Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives, as well as the activities, products and services of its flagship programs under AIP – the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program, NutriPlus Knowledge Program and Innovation & Partnership Program – to the student community.

Bharath Utsav - 2011 is a unique program celebrating success stories of India in the fields of science, technology, industry and management in order to inspire and ignite young students’ minds to innovate.
It wasn’t in vain that the late Steve Jobs, a great innovator and an entrepreneur, during his commencement speech at Stanford University in 2005 pronounced “Stay hungry. Stay foolish.” This was reinforced at the seminar on “Inspiring Agribusiness Start-ups” under the NIABI Best Practices Seminar Series on Entrepreneurship & Innovation organized by the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program at ICRISAT Patancheru on 12 October.

The NIABI seminar series is intended to serve as a platform for budding entrepreneurs to have the opportunity to listen to and learn from the successful entrepreneurial journey of others to start-up ventures/entrepreneurs in agriculture.

Welcoming the participants of the seminar, KK Sharma, Principal Scientist (Biotechnology) and CEO, Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) at ICRISAT explained that the objective behind the seminar is to inspire agribusiness start-ups through examples.

SM Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of ABI-ICRISAT, introduced the three speakers who shared the secrets of their success and provided insights into identifying business opportunities, setting them up and dealing with the challenges of a business venture.

Dinabhandu Sahoo, a scientist from the Department of Botany at the Delhi University, in his presentation “Algae – changing the world” described how he transformed the lives of the fishing community in Chilka Lake, Odisha by introducing seaweed cultivation adopting a community-based development approach.

His profitable ‘farm the ocean’ technique kick-started a Blue Revolution along the country’s eastern coastline.
Have a passion for what you do; start slowly, not on a mass scale; do a thorough research; be hands-on as an entrepreneur; and be ready to travel a lot to identify new opportunities – these are Samar Gupta’s mantra for successful start-ups.

A liberal arts major and third generation businessman, he took on the reins of Trikaya Agriculture, a family business growing and selling exotic fruits and vegetables like dragon fruit, broccoli, iceberg lettuce and many others under Indian climatic conditions. Spread over eight farms (from Pune to Ooty) and an aggregate of 225 acres, his venture generates an annual turnover of Rs 8.5 crores (US$ 1.7 million).

The third speaker, Satyajit Singh, was an IAS aspirant who had his own distribution network. Life changed when he stumbled upon makhana (fox nut) and went on to set up Shakthi Sudha Industries that manufactures value-added products from makhana.

He described how by working through efficient backward and forward linkages, he was able to transform the livelihood of families engaged in producing makhana. Offering them better procurement rates (and eliminating middlemen), providing training to improve productivity, and minimizing risks and ensuring sustainable income generation, he helped ensure a steady supply of raw materials for his firm.

The seminar was broadcast via videoconference to co-business incubation partners of ABI – Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) at Cochin, Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Viswa Vidyalaya (JNKVV) at Jabalpur, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) at Coimbatore and Anand Agricultural University (AAU), Anand.
ICRISAT’s Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) explored South-South collaboration and funding opportunities to enhance the number of agribusiness incubators in Africa at the EMRC AgriBusiness Forum held on 16-19 October a Johannesburg.

The event was aimed at strengthening the agri-food sector in the continent by encouraging partnerships with the private sector, and exchanging best practices and attracting investments.

The AIP team composed of KK Sharma, SM Karuppanchetty and AR Ilyas participated in the forum along with a contingent of 15 leaders from India and Africa representing NAIP-ICAR BPDs and Universities, Business and Research in Agricultural Innovation-Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa-Agribusiness Innovation Incubator Consortia (UniBRAIN-FARA AICC).

The session on Exploring opportunities for agribusiness in African agriculture and Indian Initiatives was led by KK Sharma, CEO, AIP and Bangali Baboo of NAIP-ICAR, and moderated by Ralph Kaufman of UniBRAIN.

Dr Sharma spoke on ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program, the NIABI working model and its pathway towards establishing a strategic alliance to initiate a Global Agri Business Incubation Network (GABI).

Dr Baboo, on the other hand, discussed various strategic interventions and synergistic areas of the Indo-Africa collaboration in incubator modality.

To strengthen South-South collaboration, delegates from NIABI, India had discussions with delegates from UniBRAIN-FARA Africa to develop a framework for engagement.
Soft-landing and technology sharing opportunities between India and Africa were explored through an exhibit on AIP and UniBRAIN. ICRISAT also facilitated about 45 meetings between NAIP officials and business delegates from Africa and agriculture ministers from Rwanda and Uganda to explore opportunities for collaboration on global agribusiness incubation.

ABI-ICRISAT also facilitated visits to Furntech Incubator and Timbali Technology Incubator, Nelsprit.
ICRISAT shared its models on engaging the private sector to accelerate the adoption and impact of research innovations at a seminar on Agribusiness Incubation on 28 October, organized by the Directorate of Rice Research (DRR), Rajendranagar, Hyderabad.

ICRISAT was represented by Karuppanchetty, COO, Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of AIP, whose presentation highlighted ABI’s incubation models, partnership opportunities through cobusiness incubation, and seed business incubation Karuppanchetty (2nd from right) at the DRR seminar activities. ABI client B Rami Reddy of B R Cooking Sprays shared his experiences as an incubatee.

The program was chaired by Project Director BC Viraktamath and Crop Improvement Principal Scientist N Shobha Rani. The seminar was attended by more than 40 scientists, heads of departments and technology management team.
The National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), Hyderabad organized a training program for a group of 10 NARS senior executives on 4 November at ICRISAT-Patancheru. Participants were given an orientation on the innovative institutional systems of the Agribusiness Innovation Platform (AIP), with a briefing on the Agribusiness Incubation (ABI) program presented by Karuppanchetty and that of the Nutriplus Knowledge Program (NKP) by Saikat Datta Mazumdar. B Hanumanth Rao, IP Manager, conducted a session on management of intellectual property at CG Centers. The participants also visited the AIP offices, laboratories and the genebank.
Agricultural entrepreneurship has a vast potential to improve the productivity and income of the farm sector, leading to improved livelihoods, enhanced food and nutritional security, and inclusive and sustainable agricultural development.

The promotion of entrepreneurship through agribusiness incubation facilitates job creation and helps share technological innovations from the research and development (R&D) sector with smallholder farming communities.

Aiming to promote agribusiness ventures in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) through value-chain based agribusiness incubators, ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program under its Agribusiness Innovation Platform (AIP) organized a training program on “Strengthening the capacity of UniBRAIN – Agribusiness Innovation Incubation Consortia (AIIC) members” on 21-24 November at ICRISAT-Patancheru.

The training program primarily aimed to strengthen the capacity of AIIC members in incubator planning and management, in view of UniBRAIN’s plan to set up an African Business Incubators Network (AFBIN) similar to the Network of Indian Agri Business Incubators (NIABI) of India.

The training was focused on incubator management, planning for incubation operations, client selection, setting up systems and processes, and other key aspects of setting up successful business incubators to promote entrepreneurship in sub-Saharan Africa.

In his keynote address, Director General William Dar highlighted the need for entrepreneurship development through small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the agricultural sector which can be addressed through agribusiness incubation.
“Agribusiness incubation plays a direct role in ensuring food security and poverty reduction,” he stressed. As most agribusiness incubators operate in rural areas, there is a direct impact on creating employment opportunities and income generation for the rural poor, he added.

Dr Dar also chaired the session on “Discussion on leadership and host institute integration” during the training.

Twenty six participants from Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Universities, Business Agricultural Innovation (UniBRAIN), Pan African Agribusiness and Agro Industry Consortium (PanAAC), Agro forestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE), Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in East and Central Africa (ASARECA), Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour laRecherche et le Développement Agricoles (CORAF) and SADC joined the training program at Patancheru, which had 30 resource persons from infoDev, ISBA, STC, Trec-STEP, Technopark, Villgro, etc. who provided and shared their vast and rich experiences in agriculture and agribusiness.

The training will continue at the Business Planning and Development (BPD) units of the Tamil Nadu and Research in Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore and Ooty.

UniBRAIN is a program of FARA supported by the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DANIDA). It is facilitated by a team of partner institutions comprising FARA Networking Support Function for Capacity Strengthening (FARA-NSF4) and its associated sub-regional organizations – ASARECA, CORAF, Centre for Coordinating Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Africa (CCARDESA), African Network for Agriculture, ANAFE, PanAAC, and ICRISAT Agri-Business Incubator (ABI).
SM Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer, Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) Program of ICRISAT’s Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) delivered a lecture on “Technology Incubation and ZTM & BPD Experience of NARS” at the 6th National Conference on Krishi Vignan Kendras (KVKs) jointly organized by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya (KNKVV) on 3-5 December at JNKVV, Jabalpur.

The theme of the conference was “Preparing farmers for secondary agriculture”, with a view to giving secondary agriculture a boost to reduce post-harvest losses and allow farmers to get better returns from their harvest, create new job opportunities to retain rural youth in agriculture, and improve processing technologies to follow changing consumption patterns.

Presentations were also made by the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) Business Planning & Development Units (BPDs) of ICAR: Archana Suman (ICAR), Dr Puneet Kumar (Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izatnagar), Dr RP Nachane (Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technology, Mumbai), Dr Leela Edwin (Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin), Dr D Nag (National Institute of Research on Jute and Allied Fiber Technology, Kolkata) and Dr SK Rao (JNKVV, Jabalpur).

About 600 Krishi Vignan Kendras attended the conference which had over 1200 delegates deliberating on six themes. Among the key dignitaries who attended was Union Minister for Agriculture Sharad Pawar.
ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program participated in the five-day fair KISAN 2011 held at the International Exhibition Grounds in Pune from 14-18 December to promote the activities of the Agribusiness & Innovation Platform (AIP), Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) and the 2nd Global Agri-Business Conference to be held on 6-8 February in New Delhi.

The fair hosted 200 stalls and received more than 160,000 visitors. ICRISAT’s stall attracted a good number of young entrepreneurs interested in setting up agribusiness ventures. Around 260 people showed interest in NARS technologies and the support that ABI and NIABI offer to potential agripreneurs.

The exhibition saw participation by agro-machinery companies, government institutions marketing portals and many other private players from the field of agriculture, including participants from China and Israel. Student volunteers from Pune University’s Faculty of Management supported ABI-ICRISAT in conveying the incubation concept in the local language. ICRISAT was represented by Jonathan Philroy and Talari Luke.

ABI partner institutions in NIABI, the Business Planning and Development (BPD) units of the Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technology (CIRCOT), Mumbai; Anand Agricultural University (AAU), Anand; and Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Viswa Vidyalaya (JNKVV), Jabalpur also participated in the event. Since Maharashtra is a cotton-growing area, many enquiries centered on technologies related to cotton. CIRCOT was able to generate nearly 13 leads out of the enquiries. The Seed Business Venture (SBV) of ABI-ICRISAT also got a considerable number of enquiries.
Underlining the critical role of entrepreneurship as a catalyst for agricultural and economic growth, the 2nd Global agri-business incubation conference of the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) will be held on 6-8 February at ICAR, New Delhi.

Dubbed as NIABI 2012, the conference is being jointly organized by ICRISAT, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), and the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP). This second edition of the conference will feature a more inclusive approach to revamping the agricultural system by focusing on the intricacies of incubating agri start-ups, and in nurturing innovations and promoting agro-technologies to boost the agribusiness sector.

NIABI 2012 was announced at a media conference in New Delhi on 16 January, attended by Director General William Dar; ICAR Director General Dr S Ayyappan; Dr Bangali Baboo, National Director,NAIP; and Dr KK Sharma, Chief Executive Officer, ICRISAT’s Agribusiness & Innovation Platform (AIP). Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, the former President of India, will be the chief guest at the opening session of the conference.

The event will see agri-innovators, agri-startups, funding agencies, research institutes and policymakers participating in nine thematic sessions and two round table discussions on policy and donor funding to promote agribusiness and incubation. NIABI 2012 will also feature a session on agribusiness opportunities in other countries, especially in Africa and EU, an Investor-Startup forum for select agri-startup companies to pitch their case before a panel of investors, venture capitalists and funding agencies; and an Agri-Tech exhibition showcasing technologies of NIABI partners.

NIABI was set up in 2009 to harness the potential of entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector by nurturing agri start-ups to improve the livelihood of the millions that depend on the sector, and enhance the food and nutritional security and economic growth of the country. Today, it boasts of 10 Business Planning and Development (BPD) units coordinated by ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program and 54 technologies that have been commercialized generating revenue worth US$10 million.
ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program has joined hands with the Small Farmers Agri-business Consortium (SFAC) to promote the latter’s venture capital scheme for agribusiness development across the country. As part of this effort, ABI through the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) of ICAR-NAIP conducted the first SFAC Agribusiness Camp on 7 January at Hotel Green Park, Visakhapatnam.

Delivering the keynote address, SFAC Director Ashok Pillai elaborated on funding opportunities in agribusiness through SFAC.

The camp also included a presentation on agribusiness opportunities through CIFT BPD by Dr B Madhusudana Rao of the Visakhapatnam Research Centre, Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT); a talk on agribusiness opportunities through the 10 Business Planning and Development (BPD) units of NIABI by Karuppanchetty, COO of ABI; and on the need to encourage young people into agriculture by Udayabhaskar, Assistant General Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

ABI incubatees Rami Reddy of BR cooking sprays and Narayan Rao of Hiranmayee Infra Ltd shared their experiences as entrepreneurs. Kongara Ramesh, recipient of the Farmer Scientist Award spoke on entrepreneurship and innovations.

The camp was attended by about 120 entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs and a good number of banks (SBI, NABARD, Canara Bank, Bank of India and ICICI). A panel composed of bankers, Ashok Pillai, Karuppanchetty, B Rami Reddy and NIABI’s mentor Gopala Krishna screened agribusiness proposals, out of which seven were identified for the SFAC venture capital scheme.
As a follow-up activity to promote the venture capital scheme of the Small Farmers’ Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program conducted two more agribusiness camps at the Business Planning and Development (BPD) units of Birsa Agricultural University (BAU), Kanke, Ranchi and the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Izatnagar on 21 January.

ICRISAT was represented by Mr SM Karuppanchetty, COO, ABI at the agribusiness camp in BAU, and by Mr Aravazhi, Deputy Manager, ABI at the activity in IVRI. The camp at BAU was attended by 81 entrepreneurs and 7 bankers. The panel evaluated 15 proposals and recommended 12 proposals under the SFAC scheme.

At IVRI, 127 participants from different fields attended including 75 entrepreneurs, 11 representatives from national and private banks and 2 from insurance companies, and the rest from the scientific staff of IVRI, Izatnagar and CARI, Izatnagar. The panel evaluated 14 proposals and recommended 3 proposals under the scheme.
Highlighting the crucial role of entrepreneurship as a catalyst for agricultural and economic development, the 2nd Global Agri-Business Incubation Conference of the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) 2012 concluded successfully in New Delhi on 8 February 2012. Jointly organized by the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) and ICRISAT, the three-day conference aimed to create global awareness, build competencies on agribusiness incubation among entrepreneurs, and establish partnerships among agribusiness sectors worldwide.

In his address as Chief Guest at the inaugural session, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India, spoke on the need for a “vibrant agricultural development through innovations and inclusive growth” for India to become an economically developed nation by 2020. This, he added, is possible through product diversification, with focus on better technology, sound entrepreneurship, infrastructure development, and market understanding.

“Worldwide, business incubators are now gaining recognition as vital to agricultural and industrial agribusiness sectors, where technology serves as a precursor for improving the economic, social and environmental conditions especially of rural communities,” said ICRISAT Director General William Dar in his message during the conference.

“India should lead the rest of the world with its vast experience in commercializing farming technology. Networking with farmers and enterprises will be the core of this success,” he added. With NIABI as the model, several incubators across Africa will be set up through ICRISAT’s partnership with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA).
In a special roundtable session chaired by Dr Dar on India’s recent initiatives on South-South collaboration through the Indo-African Summit on Agribusiness, a joint declaration was signed by NIABI and FARA UniBRAIN towards intensifying partnership in technology transfer and commercialization of agri based products between India and Africa.

In his remarks during the closing session, NAIP Director Dr Bangali Baboo said that the conference has opened up new avenues of opportunities for the scaling up of NIABI’s initiatives in commercializing technologies and supporting entrepreneurs.

The conference was attended by more than 200 agri-preneurs, scientists, agri-companies, policymakers, farmers and funding agencies from India, as well as representatives from Malaysia, Philippines and six African nations. A roadmap to revitalize agriculture and allied sectors through agribusiness was developed during the conference, serving as a platform to popularize new and better livelihood opportunities and to strengthen the global agribusiness incubator network.

NIABI was set up in 2009 to harness the potential of agricultural entrepreneurship to improve the livelihood of millions that depend on India’s agriculture sector and to contribute to the nation’s overall economic growth.

Today, it boasts of 10 Business Planning and Development (BPD) units coordinated by ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program and 54 technologies that have been commercialized generating revenue worth USD10 million. The next global NIABI conference will be held at the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), Cochin, Kerala in February 2013.
The world’s population will grow from almost 7 billion now to over 9 billion in 2050. The daunting question is – will there be enough food to go around?

In his book Feeding the Forgotten Poor, Director General William Dar raises the question of how the world is going to feed the poor, recounting the events of his own life and career that shaped his commitment to and vision of a hunger-free world.

The book was launched by former President of India Dr APJ Abdul Kalam at the inaugural session of the NIABI 2012 on 6 February where he was the Chief Guest.

In the book’s Foreword, Dr Kalam wrote: “The book reveals perspectives to grow and provide food to the people wherever they live on Earth, backed by Dr Dar’s own experiences in multiple countries. I am particularly impressed with the Chapter Innovate, Grow and Prosper where he deals with strategic science and dynamic development.”

The book, co-written by Arun Tiwari, is divided into four parts: (1) Soil and Roots, (2) Stems, Leaves and Fruits, (3) Skin of the Earth, and (4) Growth and Prosperity, corresponding to Dr Dar’s rise from national to regional and international agricultural research-for-development.

The book, which was also unveiled at ICRISAT-Patancheru by the DG along with a showing of the video on 9 February, is published by Orient Black Swan and will soon be available at major bookstores in India.
The famous ‘Madurai malli’ (jasmine) will soon be promoted as a global commodity jointly by the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) and ICRISAT.

A comprehensive field study in Madurai District of Tamil Nadu done by TNAU and the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) Program of ICRISAT has put forward a set of recommendations to promote Madurai malli in both the domestic and international markets. Primarily, the plan calls for the development of an incubator for Madurai malli similar to the Timbali incubator for gerbera in South Africa.

SM Karuppanchetty, COO, ABI-ICRISAT, presented his team’s survey findings to Madurai District Collector U Sagayam and others at the Madurai Jasmine Stakeholder’s meeting held at the Agricultural College and Research Institute.

According to him, the area under jasmine production in Madurai district is 1,220 hectares yielding nearly 10,000 tons per year. If Madurai malli has to catch up in the global market, the skills of garland makers have to be enhanced, he added.

“This study will aid government authorities in developing policies and providing a strategic framework for the establishment of a Madurai Malli Incubator (MMI) and Madurai Malli Development Council (MMDC) to promote entrepreneurs in the jasmine industry,” the survey report said.
The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of ICRISAT’s Agribusiness Innovation Platform (AIP) in association with the Small Farmers Agri-business Consortium (SFAC), is seeking to promote SFAC’s venture capital scheme for agri-business development. As part of this effort, ABI has conducted 10 agri-business camps across the country through ICAR-NAIP’s Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI).

In addition to the five camps held in January, another three were held in February. The camp at the National Institute of Research on Jute and Allied Fibre Technology (NIRJAFT), held in Kolkata on 13 February was inaugurated by M Raji Gayan, General Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

SM Karuppanchetty, COO, ICRISAT-ABI made a presentation on incubation and funding opportunities for setting up agribusinesses. The camp which was attended by 31 entrepreneurs, 3 bankers, 4 DIC members and 18 NGOs, evaluated 14 proposals and recommended 6 under the scheme.

The camp at Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (CCSHAU), Hisar was held on 22 February. Aravazhi Selvaraj, Deputy Manager, ICRISAT-ABI, made a presentation at this camp which was attended by over 140 entrepreneurs and 3 bankers. Twenty proposals were evaluated and 4 were recommended under the scheme.

The camp at the Central Institute for Research on Cotton Technology (CIRCOT), Nagpur, on 28 February was attended by 70 entrepreneurs and 3 bankers. Jonathan Philroy, Assistant Manager, ICRISAT-ABI represented the Institute at this event. The panel evaluated three proposals, all recommended under the scheme.
The Agri-Business Incubation program (ABI) of ICRISAT’s Agribusiness Innovation Platform (AIP) participated in ISBA 2012 held at Pune on 17-19 March, organized by the Science and Technology Park of University of Pune. It was the sixth annual conference of the Indian Science and Technology Entrepreneurs Parks (STEPs) and Business Incubator Association (ISBA).

ISBA promotes business incubation activities in the country through exchange of information, sharing of experience, and networking assistance among Indian business incubators, STEPs and other organizations engaged in the promotion of start-up enterprises.

The conference was attended by about 70 incubator managers; over 100 incubatee companies, CEOs and support organizations; and about 50 international participants from Asia, Africa, Brazil, Europe and USA.

Inaugurating the conference through video conference, Dr Sam Pitroda, Advisor to the Prime Minister of India, Public Information, Infrastructure and Innovation, stressed that “technologies being developed in our research centers need to be affordable to be scalable and thereby sustainable, and so that they can reach the masses.”

ISBA 2012 had 12 sessions on topics such as innovation, entrepreneurs and incubation, funding opportunities, role of academia in industry, design & branding, benchmarking Indian incubators, etc. An Investor-Startup forum was also held.

ICRISAT was represented by Mr Karuppanchetty, COO and Mr Jonathan Philroy, Assistant Manager of ABI. Mr Karuppanchetty coordinated a session on “Incubation: International experiences, support programs” and made a presentation on “Business incubation: A tool for empowering people.”
As part of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)-sponsored international training program on “Promoting Innovation and Entrepreneurship” through Incubation organized by the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), a group of 41 participants from Asia and Africa visited the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of ICRISAT’s Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) on 23 March.

The program designed for professionals promoting innovations through planned entrepreneurship interventions, aims at capacity building of business incubation managers in incubator practices, identifying support mechanisms for incubators, technology commercialization, and devising financing strategies for clients. Mr Karuppanchetty, Mr Saikat Datta Mazumdar and Mr S Aravazhi served as speakers during the training.
ICRISAT shared its experiences and lessons learnt in India while promoting technology commercialization and agripreneurship through agribusiness incubation at an international workshop on agribusiness promotion held on 8-10 April in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Organized jointly by the Project for Agriculture Commercialization and Trade (PACT), the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the World Bank Group, the workshop with the theme “Bringing together technologies, innovations and information for growth and sustainability of agribusiness” aimed at promoting the agriculture sector for the growth and sustainability of agribusinesses.

Addressing the gathering, chief guest Prime Minister of Nepal Dr Baburam Bhattarai said, “My government will double investment in the sector in the next fiscal year to transform it from a subsistence to a commercial sector.” Commercialization of agriculture will attract youth and create mass employment which will ultimately help the economy, he added.

Representing ICRISAT, Mr Karuppanchetty of the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program shared his experiences of promoting technology commercialization and agripreneurship through agribusiness incubation, focusing on policy interventions in the areas of education, innovation, risk mitigation, promotion, and access to markets in the agribusiness sector.

During his visit to the Commercial Agriculture Development Program (CADP), Biratnagar, organized by the InfoDev-World Bank to initiate an agribusiness incubator at Nepal, Mr Karuppanchetty held discussions on various successful value chain-based business incubation models in other countries.
During the workshop, participants from Nepal, India, Bhutan, Indonesia, the Netherlands and the US brainstormed on key issues such as removal of trade barriers to facilitate regional and international trade, identifying critical elements in accelerating public-private partnership in agribusiness, and creating markets for Nepal’s niche green products.

About 200 agriculture commercialization experts and stakeholders from Nepal participated in the workshop.

Speaking about ICRISAT’s experiences in technology commercialization.
As part of the ICAR-NAIP project on ‘Handholding and mentoring of BPD units of NARS’ of the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of AIP-ICRISAT, a one-day camp on agribusiness incubation was jointly organized by the National Institute for Research on Jute & Allied Fibre Technology (NIRJAFT), Directorate of Water Management (DWM) and ICRISAT at DWM, Bhubaneswar on 2 May. The camp’s objective was to commercialize technologies developed in the East Zone of the Zonal Technology Management (ZTM) Centre and Business Planning and Development (BPD) Unit, NIRJAFT and provide incubation support to agribusiness entrepreneurs in the region.

Dr Debasis Nag, Principal Investigator & Head of the ZTM-BPD Unit of NIRJAFT (Kolkata) briefed the participants about the opportunities and technologies available in his unit for commercialization from the zone which comprises 16 Regional Research Stations of ICAR. Chief Guest Dr Ashwani Kumar, Director-DWM, said such camps would boost the morale of entrepreneurs in the Eastern Zone who are in real need of incubation services and technical and business support from such events that link researchers to entrepreneurs.

Addressing the entrepreneurs as a special guest, Mr S Aravazhi, Deputy Manager - ABI, highlighted the impact created by the nine other BPD Units of the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) in terms of technology commercialization and entrepreneurship development and mentioned various success stories across the nation. Mr KK Gupta, Chief General Manager, NABARD (Bhubaneswar) briefed the audience on funding opportunities from his organization.

As part of the camp, a screening committee evaluated potential and eligible entrepreneurs to enroll as ZTM-BPD NIRJAFT members to avail incubation services. Of the 80 entrepreneurs who participated in the event, 20 were evaluated. A total of 7 start-up entrepreneurs and 4 SMEs were enrolled as members of ZTM-BPD NIRJAFT with 10 technology commercialization deals along with incubation support. Potential entrepreneurs can register with AIP-ICRISAT for a similar camp being organized by NIRJAFT in Ranchi on 18 May.
ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program has partnered with the Universities Business and Research in Agricultural Innovation (UniBRAIN) of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in setting up six Agribusiness Innovation Incubator Consortium (AIIC) in five African countries through an initiative of the Africa Commission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. Each AIIC consists of a university, a business, and a research partner.

UniBRAIN will support the AIIC in business planning, management, and governance of the incubator and training of its staff, involving refining each AIIC’s business plan and sensitizing the leaders of the institutes in the consortium about agribusiness incubation and the roles of each institute in ensuring the incubator’s success.

The first port of call in this endeavour was the Agri-Business Incubation Trust (AgBIT) of Zambia, proposed as a value chain incubator on fruits and vegetables. ABI-ICRISAT’s preliminary field study helped in refining the business plan.

A sensitization meeting on 24 April provided guidance on incubation management. The meeting led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among consortium members to register AgBIT as a legal entity.

In Ghana, Creating Champions in Livestock Agribusiness (CCLEAr) of the Centre for Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), the incubator supporting entrepreneurship in livestock, came next.

Dr Rahul Srivastava assisted ABI-ICRISAT in developing the plans and operations for the incubator. The sensitization meeting was conducted at Accra on 30 April by Mr SM Karuppanchetty and Dr Srivastava.

AfriBanana Products Ltd (ABP), Kyambago University’s agribusiness incubator in Uganda focuses on enhancing banana production and banana by-products through value addition.
and trade. Mr Bhubesh Kumar, Business Manager of the Agribusiness Incubator of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) did the market work and refined the business plan. The sensitization meeting on 4 May was conducted by Mr Karuppanchetty and Mr Kumar.

The business plan refinement activities of the consortium for enhancing the University Responsiveness to Agribusiness Development (CURAD) incubator of Makerere University, Uganda, was conducted by Mr Karuppanchetty and Ms Anitha Nadipalli, in partnership with Dr George of Pan-African Agribusiness and Agro-Industry Consortium (PanAAC). The sensitization meeting was held on 7 May with all key stakeholders of CURAD.

Similar activities will be held at two more incubators in Kenya and Mali in the coming weeks.
ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program in partnership with the Universities Business and Research in Agricultural Innovation (UniBRAIN) of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) is setting up six Agribusiness Innovation Incubator Consortium (AIIC) in five African countries through the initiative of the Africa Commission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark. Each AIIC consists of a university, a business and a research partner.

UniBRAIN and ABI-ICRISAT will support the AIIC in business planning, management, and governance of the incubator and training of its staff, including refining of each AIIC business plan and sensitizing the leaders of the institutes in the consortium about agribusiness incubation.

On 29 June, ABI-ICRISAT’s Mr Karuppanchetty and Mr Aravazhi visited the West African Agribusiness Resource Incubator (WAARI), Mali, to carry out a preliminary field study and refine the business plan along with all its partners.

The sensitization meeting was attended by Dr Bonny Ntare of ICRISAT, Mali; Mr Ibrahim Togola of the Agro Industrie Development SA (AID-SA); Mr M’Pie Bengali of Institut d’Economie Rural (IER); Ashley Heacock of AID-SA; and Mr Fafri Samake of the Rural Polytechnic Institute (IPR/IFRA).
The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of the Agribusiness & Innovation Platform (AIP) conducted an Agribusiness mela (meeting) on 2 August at Patancheru, primarily to promote agribusiness ventures and provide a platform for the sharing and exchange of ideas and innovations in availing incubation services and funding assistance.

A key highlight of the meeting was the presence of Hyderabad Angels, an investor community in the city, who has partnered with ABI, along with the Technology Development Board (TDB) of the Department of Science & Technology and the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) in promoting agribusiness ventures.

In his opening address, KK Sharma, AIP Chief Executive Officer discussed the role of ABI in promoting agribusiness ventures and in nurturing innovations. The activity was attended by Dr SunderLal Goswami, Director of the National Academy of Agricultural Research Management; Dr PS Raju from TDB; and Mr Shirish Reddi of Hyderabad Angels.

SM Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer of ABI, spoke about the program and the day’s activities, while ABI clients, Mr Ramesh Kongara, Mr Vijayakumar and Mr Pradeep shared their innovations and experiences in availing support from ICRISAT’s ABI.

The event had 63 registered participants. Thirteen proposals were screened of which seven were selected for funding. Nine agribusiness proposals were also selected for incubation support through the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) for technology commercialization from the Business Planning and Development Units (BPDs) being mentored by ABI.
The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of ICRISAT’s Agribusiness Innovation Platform (AIP) participated in a three-day agribusiness exhibition, Agritech India 2012, on 25-27 August in Bangalore.

The exhibition presented successful cases of overcoming technical constraints in enhancing crop production and productivity due to farmers’ lack of access to technologies and inputs, logistics and marketing. The event attracted participants from 300 companies across 20 countries.

ICRISAT-ABI participated by showcasing farm engineering technologies of the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI). Mr Ashok Kumar Murarka, Chairperson, Commercial Agriculture Alliance, Nepal, expressed interest in collaborating with ICRISAT in facilitating NIABI technologies in Nepal.

The exhibition offered insights into farm mechanization, pre- and post-harvest management of food crops, food processing, and marketing and retailing. It also presented cases of transforming farmers into rural agri-preneurs by adopting cutting-edge technologies to enable them to compete in the global markets.
The second consultative meeting on ‘Madurai Malli’ Growers Development was held at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) -Agricultural College and Research Institute, Madurai on 23 August.

Attended by jasmine growers and university experts, floriculture officials, and ABI ICRISAT’s SM Karuppanchetty and Siva Kumar, an action plan was developed to address issues and concerns, from production to export, in tapping domestic and global jasmine markets.

To implement the action plan, a special incubator and market development council will be set up by the Agricultural College and Research Institute, along with producers/companies, within the Mattuthavani flower market and the jasmine growing areas with support from the District Administration.

GK Arun Sundar Dayalan, Additional Collector, Madurai district, attended the meeting and expressed support to the initiative. An allocation of Rs. 75 lakh (US$133868) has been proposed, of which Rs 30 lakh (US$53547) would come from the district administration under the Collector’s Innovation Fund.
As part of the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) Seminar Series on Best Practices in Entrepreneurship and Innovation, ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program organized a half-day seminar on Funding opportunities for start-ups in social enterprises on 10 September.

Eleven ABI clients participated in the seminar held at the Telepresence Room, while 20 agribusiness incubators of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), Anand Agricultural University (AAU) and Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Viswa Vidyalaya (JNKVV), joined via video conference.

The speakers, Ms Ritu Verma from Ankur Capital and Mr Saurabh Lahoti from Ennovent, discussed funding modalities and effective ways of pitching a prospective venture before venture capitalists (VCs) for funding support. SM Karuppanchetty, COO-ABI and S Aravazhi, Manager-ABI organized the seminar.
The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of ICRISAT participated in the Hyderabad Tech Expo jointly organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) with the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India; the Lockheed Martin Corporation; the Indo-US S&T Forum and the IC2 Institute, University of Texas on 26 September.

The expo was held to showcase innovators selected through the DST-Lockheed Martin India Innovation Growth Programme (IIGP), launched in 2007 to identify technologies with commercial potential and transform laboratory knowledge into commercial products, services and processes.

Mr SM Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer of ABI-ICRISAT delivered a talk on Incubating Innovations for Inclusive Growth, as part of the lecture series organized for innovators during the Expo. He discussed the role of business incubators in nurturing innovators and their ideas. The clients of ABI-ICRISAT also got a platform to showcase their innovations at the ABI Exhibit Stall in the Expo.
As part of its handholding and mentoring project with the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) of ICAR, ICRISAT’s ABI conducted a training program on Business Incubation at the Technopark-Technology Business Incubator (T-TBI), Thiruvananthapuram on 18-21 September.

ABI developed and organized the program along with the Indian STEP & Business Incubators Association (ISBA), the Asia Pacific Incubator Network (APIN), and the Technopark. Twenty-two participants from the Network of Indian Agri- Business Incubators (NIABI) and ISBA community participated in the training.

Session topics included, among others: basics of business incubations; technology evaluation; Intellectual Property Rights & business incubation; funding for start-ups; and incubator client management.

Following the training program, participants visited the incubator at the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) and India’s first Telecom Business Incubator (Startup Village) at Kochi on 22 September.

A one-day review meeting of the incubators under NIABI was also held at Kochi. While appreciating ABI’s of the incubators, Dr PS Pandey, National Coordinator (Component I), NAIP, noted the need for further improvements, and announced that another 100 agribusiness incubators will be set up in the coming years which will bolster the network and help in promoting the agricultural sector in India.
Representing ICRISAT as the implementing agency of the project Food Processing Business Incubators (FPBIC) of India’s Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MFPI), Mr Karuppanchetty of ABI-ICRISAT visited Uganda on 7-13 October. The visit was conducted as part of the feasibility study for setting up FPBIC in the country.

He visited existing business incubators at the District Agriculture Training and Information Center (DATIC), National Agricultural Research Laboratory (NARL), Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI), Afri Banana Products Limited (ABP Ltd), and Consortium for Enhancing University Responsiveness to Agribusiness Development (CURAD). He also met the High Commissioner of India, Mr Sumendranath Ray and Mr Okaasai S Opolot, Director of Crop Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Uganda.

Observations from the study were presented to Mr Tress Bucyanayandi, Uganda’s Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry & Fisheries, and recommendations made to make NARL as host institution for the FPBIC.
ABI–ICRISAT organized the first Indian STEPs and Business Incubator’s Association (ISBA) Hyderabad Circle meeting at the Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) office on 1 November.

The meeting was attended by nine representatives from five ISBA incubator members in Hyderabad – the IKP Knowledge Park, Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (CIE) at IIIT-Hyderabad, Indian School of Business, Technology Business Incubator at BITS Pilani, and the University of Hyderabad.

Kiran Sharma, S Karuppanchetty, Aravazhi, Saikat Datta Mazumdar, and Jonathan Philroy represented AIP at the meeting. The delegates shared their experiences and discussed various opportunities for collaboration to promote incubation services in the region.

It was proposed in the meeting that Start-up Saturdays be conducted for all Hyderabad-based incubatees to be facilitated by IIIT-H. The next ISBA-Hyderabad Circle meeting will be conducted at the IKP Knowledge Park in January 2013.
The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of AIP-ICRISAT in association with the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) conducted Akanksha, a business plan competition for students of management institutes across India. The competition was held during Krishichanakya, the annual business festival of MANAGE on 3 November.

This was part of the promotional activities for the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) being mentored by ABI-ICRISAT. Unlike regular business plan competitions, students were asked to prepare business plans based on agro-technologies available under NIABI or on entrepreneur’s requirement, like value-added products of honey, probiotic dairy products, etc.

Over two rounds, six teams were shortlisted from a pool of 30 applicants to present their business plans at Akanksha. The final set of business plans focused on: probiotic-based frozen food products; jute-based packaging materials; off-season vegetable farming unit; integrated farming systems; value-added products from honey; and cutflower exports. Business managers of the incubators under NIABI provided the technical inputs and guidance in preparing the business plans.

The panel of judges was composed of ICRISAT’s Aravazhi Selvaraj and Jonathan Philroy; Sanjay Gadhalay from the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad; and Sanjay Kumar from Spencer’s Retail.

The team from the National Institute of Agricultural Marketing (NIAM), Jaipur which prepared a business plan on cutflower exports was chosen as the winner of the competition, while the team from Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies (JBIMS), Mumbai with the plan on probiotic-based dairy food products coming in second place.
Eighty-two entrepreneurs and innovators had the opportunity to showcase their ideas and innovations at the Agribusiness Mela (fair) conducted by ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program on 21 November at Patancheru.

The fair sought to promote agribusiness ventures, and share and exchange ideas and innovations in availing incubation services and funding assistance. Eight innovative proposals were screened by an expert panel, of which two were recommended for funding through the Technology Development Board (TDB) of the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India.

Participants were split into two groups. Under the idea and start-up funding track, business models/plans were pitched before an evaluation panel for funding assistance.

The other track provided participants an insight into starting their own agribusiness ventures through ready-to-commercialize agro-technologies available under the Indian National Agricultural Research System (NARS), farming ventures, and the food processing sector.

Following the discussions, 16 entrepreneurs have shown interest in starting their own ventures through technology commercialization, farm business and setting up food testing labs.

Among those who spoke during the fair were S Aravazhi of ABI, ABI client Sreeram Raavi, and PS Raju, formerly with TDB. JR Rao, Emeritus Scientist from the National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM) and Saikat Datta Mazumdar of NutriPlus Knowledge program also attended the mela.
The upcoming ASEAN integration could pave the way for greater collaboration and partnership among Southeast Asian countries, opening up new markets, regulating trade and breaking down barriers, and providing immense opportunities for agribusiness incubators to promote agricultural growth and support smallholder farmers.

The Thai-Business Incubators and Science Parks Association (Thai-BISPA), in association with the Asia-Pacific Incubation Network (APIN) and infoDev of the World Bank, organized a regional conference on “Co-incubation and the Opportunities for Food and Agriculture Start-up Businesses after the ASEAN Integration in 2015” in Bangkok, Thailand on 29 November.

In his inaugural address as guest of honor at the event, Director General William Dar spoke on creating opportunities for agri-business ventures in emerging markets, underlining the imperative for creating effective platforms for farmers to access the market, so that they can generate surplus cash that will help them to grow out of poverty.

“We need to develop agro-technologies that are more oriented towards the needs of the market and those which can be taken up by farmer entrepreneurs. ICRISAT through its Inclusive Market-Oriented Development (IMOD) approach has geared up to address this need,” he said.

“Accelerated agricultural growth can be achieved by moving agriculture and allied sectors from the traditional subsistence mode to a more market-linked mode. Agribusiness incubators
have a vital role to play in bringing about this transformation and in nurturing an ecosystem for entrepreneurship and innovation in the sector,” Dr Dar added.

The meeting evoked partnership interests from ASEAN countries to join the Global Agri-Business Incubation (GABI) Network initiated by ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program and from infoDev.

Participating in a panel discussion on Food and Agriculture Co-Incubation, SM Karuppanchetty and agribusiness incubator specialists’ from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, discussed co-business incubation opportunities, and modes and structures to nurture agribusiness development via soft landing and technology transfer among Southeast Asian countries.
Farmers’ access to advanced technologies and innovations spurs growth within the agriculture sector. On this premise, ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program took the opportunity to promote agricultural entrepreneurship and showcase agro-technologies that are ready for commercialization at KISAN 2012, the largest agri-exhibition in India, held on 12-16 December at Pune.

As part of its ongoing National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) on Handholding and mentoring of Business Planning and Development (BPD) units, ABI represented the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) at the event.

About 1500 people visited the ABI stall, from which 132 potential leads were generated for technology commercialization support. Some of the key leads were on training programs for goat farming, promoting precision farming, and seed production, as well as incubation services from NIABI.

At the event, NIABI’s clients had the chance to promote their ventures and products. Meanwhile, ABI’s clients namely, ORLAB System Pvt Ltd (on soil testing kits) and Spectrum Renewable Energy Pvt Ltd (on bio-fertilizer from sugarcane waste/byproducts), and the BPD unit of Anand Agricultural University’s client Kemrock Agri-Chem (on liquid bio-fertilizer), created awareness and generated sales and prospects for new dealers.

Over one hundred thousand visitors, mostly farmers and youth, visited the fair, where about 327 agro-companies from India and abroad showcased technologies on farm mechanization, pre- and post-harvest management of food crops, food processing, marketing and retailing.
Women entrepreneurs need to be encouraged, more so in the agricultural sector, where their share in employment is close to 40 percent. ICRISAT’s journey in promoting women entrepreneurship entered a new chapter with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of Andhra Pradesh (ALEAP) on 18 December.

Under the MoA, which was signed by Director General William Dar, ICRISAT’s Agribusiness Incubator Program (ABI) will extend its agribusiness incubation services to women entrepreneurs interested in setting up agribusiness ventures, as well as provide onsite business incubation consultancy to ALEAP staff in nurturing an ecosystem for agri-entrepreneurship development.

ALEAP was formed in 1993 by a group of successful women entrepreneurs of Hyderabad to train, guide, and support women to be economically independent, and guide them in converting their ideas into businesses. The group aims to work for the upliftment and empowerment of women by establishing small and medium enterprises. Over the past two decades, it has gathered around 3,750 members and has three industrial parks apart from Business Development Cells across the state.

Speaking at the 20th Formation Day celebrations of the Association, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Honorable ESL Narasimhan noted that encouraging entrepreneurship is the seed for the future of society and the economy, and lauded ALEAP for giving shape to the aspirations of many bold and innovative entrepreneurs. Empowering women by giving them a fair opportunity will help in the development of the society, he added.

In his remarks, Dr Kiran Sharma, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of ICRISAT’s Agribusiness and Innovation Platform, spoke about how the MoA would further the cause of empowering the lives of women in the agricultural sector, towards providing employment opportunities that are critical for poverty reduction.
A stakeholder’s conference was held to understand the needs of food business entrepreneurs and develop a business plan for setting up food processing business incubators at the National Agricultural Research Laboratories (NARL), Uganda on 18 December. The activity was part of the India-Africa forum summit, an initiative of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), Government of India (GoI), to establish Food Processing Business Incubation Centers (FPBIC).

Forty participants composed of representatives from the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Director and staff of NARL, food industry experts and consultants, and food business start-up entrepreneurs came together to strengthen the initiative.

They were divided into three groups – food business start-ups, professional/experts and government officials – and deliberated on the issues, challenges, and expected framework for establishing the FPBIC. Food business experts, government officials and consultants also provided suggestions on the stakeholders’ business plan.

The conference was chaired and inaugurated by Dr William Kyamuhangire, Associate Professor, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Makerere University. Mr Stephen A Biribonwa, Senior Agriculture Officer from Uganda’s Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, spoke on the India-Africa collaboration.

Mr SM Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer (COO), Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program, AIP-ICRISAT presented an overview of the FPBIC and explained the framework of the meeting to develop the business plan.
The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of AIP-ICRISAT conducted a one-day workshop for Mentors of the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) under the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) on ‘Handholding and Mentoring of BPD Units of NARS’ on 24 December at ICRISAT-Patancheru. The workshop was to facilitate mentoring arrangements for the NAIP-BPD units to facilitate funding for their entrepreneurs.

Mentors, business incubator managers and entrepreneurs deliberated on identifying areas of support required by the BPD units and entrepreneurs. The bankers guided the mentors and clients with information on funding. Modalities of engagement were worked out and 13 formal agreements were signed and exchanged among mentors and mentees.

Delivering the welcome address, Dr Kiran Sharma, CEO, AIP-ICRISAT gave a brief overview of NIABI’s activities over the last two years. Speaking on behalf of Director General William Dar, Dr CLL Gowda, Director, Research Program on Grain Legumes emphasized the crucial role of incubators in bringing different stakeholders together to accelerate the development of entrepreneurial companies through an array of business support resources and services.

Chief Guest, Dr Bangali Baboo, National Director, NAIP, spoke on the need to promote agri-business for the well-being of society and on making it commercially viable for job generation within the agriculture sector. He underlined the three key elements for successful handholding and mentoring of the BPDs, namely, analysis of the techno-economic viability of entrepreneurial ideas, generation of commercial data, and creation of effective and detailed project reports for clients by the BPD units.

Over 60 participants, including Principal Investigators (PIs) and business managers of NAIP BPD units, entrepreneurs of BPD units, mentors of NIABI, senior bankers and ICRISAT staff participated in the meeting. The event also saw the release of NIABI-Nexus, the bi-annual newsletter of NIABI, and the NIABI year planner for 2013 by Drs Baboo, Gowda and Sharma.
The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of ICRISAT’s Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) participated in the Universities, Business and Research in Agricultural Innovation (UniBRAIN) Partnership and Incubator Committee Meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya on 28-29 January.

Organized by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the meeting was attended by seven implementing partners and six incubators to deliberate on the implementation of various programs under the UniBRAIN Agribusiness Innovation Incubation Consortia (AIICs), discuss achievements in 2012, and set targets for January to June 2013.

SM Karuppanchetty, Divya Nancy G and Sangya Sharma represented ABI-ICRISAT as a UniBRAIN partner institution at the event.

SM Karuppanchetty gave a presentation on implementation phase review and activities, mentoring and guidance of the AIICs through direct visits and annual meetings, capacity building and skills development for managers and staff, Global Agribusiness Incubation (GABI) newsletter, and other activities undertaken in September-December 2012.

A revised monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework will be developed for ratification within two weeks of the meeting. Participants also had a Management Information and Collaboration System (MICS) training on 30 January-2 February.
The Bioseed Research India Pvt. Ltd, an incubatee of the Agribusiness Incubation (ABI) program of ICRISAT’s Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP), was awarded the ISBA 2012 Performance Award by the Indian Science and Technology Entrepreneurs’ Parks and Business Incubator Association (ISBA) on 8 February, at Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Bioseed, part of the DCM Shriram Group, does research on agricultural biotechnology to develop superior cotton hybrids. ICRISAT provides scientific support in the form of technology assistance in the use of molecular markers, gene marker identification, and genetic transformation.

The company also uses ABI-ICRISAT’s greenhouse space, biotechnology labs and agricultural land to test their material. Dr Dwarkesh Parihar received the award on behalf of Bioseed and Suneel Vemu represented ABI-ICRISAT at the event.

ICRISAT was the recipient of the Best Stall award in the international category at the four-day Rural Technology Mela (fair) 2013 organized by the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) at its Rural Technology Park (RTP) in Rajendranagar, Hyderabad during 21 – 24 February. The Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) participated in this event, in which over 200 exhibitors comprising national and international organizations participated. The mela served as a platform for demonstrating various technology models from the rural areas and to help technology developers, users and Self-Help Groups among others to take advantage of various rural technologies available in different parts of the country.
Eleven potential clients were selected for business incubation support in the areas of seed business, entrepreneurship, food business, farm venture and innovation during the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program’s Agribusiness Mela (fair) held at the ICRISAT headquarters on 11 March.

The selected companies will receive start-up assistance from ABI primarily in exploring opportunities in agri-business and technology commercialization. ABI will also guide the companies in promoting agribusiness ventures, sharing and exchange of ideas and innovations, and availing incubation services and funding assistance. About 62 participants exploring agri-business opportunities participated in the event.

In his opening address, Dr KK Sharma discussed the role of AIP in promoting start-ups and agribusiness ventures and in nurturing innovations. He also shared the journey of the ABI program in assisting other institutions set up similar incubators in various parts of the world.

Chief guest Dr AS Rao, former Advisor, Department of Science and Industrial Research (DSIR), GoI, spoke on the growing prospects in agribusiness and shared his personal experiences on the different approaches adopted by innovators and entrepreneurs and their business acumen.

The event included five parallel sessions on innovation, new ventures, food business, seed business and farm business. Among those who spoke on the occasion were SM Karuppanchetty; Saikat Datta Mazumdar (Business opportunities in the food sector); Aravazhi Selvaraj (Business opportunities in agribusiness offered through NIABI incubators); Siva Kumar (Farm ventures); and Harshavardhan Mane (seed business).

The key panelists of the proposal selection committee were Dr PS Raju, formerly with Technology Development Board (TDB); Dr JR Rao, Emeritus Scientist, National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM); and Dr Ganesh Pogula, Founder President, Pallesrujana.
As part of the implementation phase of the Universities, Business and Research in Agricultural Innovation (UniBRAIN) project, ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program conducted a week-long capacity building-cum-training program for staff of six Agribusiness Innovation Incubation Consortia (AIIC).

Eighteen participants from the consortia and five from ABI project partners took part in the program held in Kampala, Uganda on 18-23 March.

The program consisted of sessions on business incubator models, agribusiness module, client selection, financial management, preparation of effective business plans, and project management skills.

The courses were handled by infoDev certified trainers namely, Mr Jim Thaller, Mr Jonathan Philroy, Ms Louise de Klerk and Mr Aravazhi Selvaraj, and by the MTAC team composed of Dr George Tumwesiege, Mr Bernard Kintu and Mr Grace Musoke-Lwanga. UniBRAIN facility coordinator Mr Ralph von Kaufmann also guided the trainees in preparing for the upcoming DANIDA review.

Participants visited the Food Business Incubator of the Makerere University, the Mara Launchpad, and the National Agricultural Research Laboratory (NARL) of Uganda. Market visits were also organized for lessons in value-added products, and communication and team-building exercises conducted.

Discussions were also held between Mr SM Karuppanchetty, COO, ABI and Mr Kaufmann on the proposed business model for UniBRAIN.
That innovation and entrepreneurship are critical drivers of social and economic development was highlighted at the recent Innovations and Entrepreneurship Promotion Program held at the Entrepreneurship Development Institute (EDI), Ahmedabad, India.

Representing ICRISAT at the event, Mr SM Karuppanchety, COO, ABI program of AIP-ICRISAT emphasized that there is now a greater awareness among developing economies of the need to promote innovation and entrepreneurship. Hence, policymakers and other stakeholders are increasingly viewing business incubation as an important tool to enable competitive enterprises and create sustainable jobs.

He also spoke on initiating, planning and implementing business incubation activities to promote knowledge-based enterprises; assistance and support required to set up technology-based business ventures; and business incubator sustainability, among other areas.

The Program was aimed at preparing and training participants in the functional areas of business incubation by sharing the knowledge and experiences of Indian incubation managers and accelerating the process of promoting innovations and entrepreneurship in developing countries.

The participants included incubation managers, academia/professionals intending to set up incubation centers, business counselors, entrepreneurship trainer-motivators, business promotion officers, and staff of government organizations engaged in investment/business promotion.
ICRISAT’s Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) will be the knowledge partner for Seedtech Asia – 2014, an international event to promote seed and sustainable agriculture to be held in Hyderabad in 2014. This was decided during an agreement signing on 22 April between ICRISAT and Kenes Exhibitions Limited to jointly conduct the event.

The agreement highlights the cooperation and exchange and sharing of information in organizing the event. It also seeks to explore opportunities for organizing future events in Asia and Africa.

The Kenes Group represented by Mr Avi Rosner (Co-Managing Director), Ms Prema Zilberman and Ms Kangan Varma, discussed the future plan and strategy for the event with Dr KK Sharma, CEO, AIP. Dr Sharma also highlighted the need to link agricultural science with agribusiness to maximize the benefit of scientific research.

Kenes Exhibitions Limited is an Israel-based global scientific conference organizer, part of the Kenes Group which provides specialized and professional services for medical and scientific conferences.
Since its inception in 2009, the Network of Indian Agri-business Incubators (NIABI) has marked its presence by impacting innovations, entrepreneurs, and institutions. In the third edition of its annual conference, “Indian Agri-Business Incubation Conference: NIABI 2013” held on 26 April at the HITEX Exhibition Center in Hyderabad, the focus was on agro-technology commercialization with emphasis on business meetings (B2B) and deal finalization between entrepreneurs/industries and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

Conducted by ICRISAT through its Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program along with ICAR, NIABI 2013 was hosted as part of AGRITEX 2013, which brought together the farming community, agri-specialists and agri-service providers.

Describing the role incubators play in nurturing start-ups, Chief Guest Dr PS Pandey, National Coordinator, NAIP (ICAR) said, “Incubators play a crucial role in bringing different stakeholders together. By helping nurture innovations and entrepreneurship in agriculture, ABI is fulfilling ICRISAT’s mission of eliminating poverty and improving livelihoods.”

Dr Kiran K Sharma, CEO, AIP-ICRISAT in his welcome address, spoke about how growing global agri-business ventures are exploring new markets to achieve growth and develop their businesses. He stressed the need to create competitive agri-business enterprises through technology development and commercialization to benefit farmers in the semi-arid tropics.

NIABI 2013 also served as a platform for 52 ready-to-commercialize agro-technologies from six sectors – crops, horticulture, food technology, animal husbandry, cotton and jute fiber products and fisheries.
Agri-business incubators from NIABI presented their technologies, explained the process of technology transfer and listed the incubator services used in ensuring that the venture succeeds.

As part of the conference, 85 B2B meetings were conducted between incubator teams and industrialists and agri-business entrepreneurs for technology commercialization. Thirty-one technologies were commercialized from a pool of 82 shortlisted, high-impact technologies. The estimated value of the technology transfer is ₹ 3 crore ($0.56 million).

Over 120 participants took part in this event which provided innovators with an opportunity to explore and incubate their ideas through NIABI.
The NIABI National Awards for 2013 were presented during the inaugural of AGRITEX 2013 on 25 April by Mr Kanna Laxminarayana, Minister for Agriculture and Agriculture Technology Mission, Government of Andhra Pradesh.

The awards were instituted to recognize Business Planning & Development (BPD) Units of NIABI for their excellent performance and incubatees for their dedication in setting up successful agribusiness ventures.

The guests of honor at the event were Dr PS Pandey, National Coordinator, NAIP and Ms Joanna Kane-Potaka, Director, Strategic Marketing and Communication, ICRISAT, representing Dr Dar, Director General of ICRISAT.

The National Award for the Best Agribusiness Incubatee 2013 went to Kemrock Agritech Private Limited, an incubatee of the business incubator at Anand Agricultural University (AAU), Anand. The company played a major role in commercializing Anubhav liquid biofertilizer under the name Tapak Bund.

The National Award for the Best Agribusiness Incubator 2013 was awarded to the agribusiness incubator of the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), Cochin.
The Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program held an Agribusiness Investors Meet, a platform for idea presentation and funding assistance through the Technology Development Board (TDB) seed grant fund on 14 June at the Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP).

Mr SM Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer, AIP, introduced the participants to the program, elaborated on the services provided by ABI and explained the selection process, investment criterion and documentation required to avail of the Technology Development Board seed fund.

Mr Rahul Joshi, from Brand Capital (Times Group) made a presentation on the genesis of his organization, and the value creation abilities offered to entrepreneurs through branding and advertising by the group. Clients of ABI, Mr Sreeram Raavi, from Eruvaka Technologies, who had availed of the Technology Development Board seed fund and Mr Rami Reddy of BR Cooking Sprays shared their experiences with the participants.

Eighteen participants attended the meeting, of which seven innovators were found eligible for the screening round by a panel comprising of Dr PS Raju, Mr J Durga Prasad, Mr Rahul Joshi, Dr Nedumaran and Dr Saikat Datta Mazumdar.

The panel recommended three innovations to be evaluated by the Technology Development Board Seed Fund Committee for funding through the seed fund.
ICRISAT’s AIP and its approach to empowering farmers, innovators and students by fostering entrepreneurship in agriculture and allied sectors was showcased during the Farmers’ Day celebration at Annamalai University, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu on 17 April.

Representing AIP-ICRISAT, Mr SM Karuppanchetty stressed the increasing need for entrepreneurship in agriculture and allied sectors. He spoke on accessing technologies from the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators, clients and ABI partners; and ABI’s Farmers Producer Organization (FPO) in Khammam district, Andhra Pradesh.

The Farmers’ Day celebration focused on discussions on current trends in agriculture. Among the guests present were Dr R Kathiresan, Dean of Agriculture, Annamalai University; Mr Radhakrishnan, Joint Director of Agriculture (Cuddalore district); Dr Ka Elango, Assistant Director of Agriculture (Special Schemes - Cuddalore district); and Mr AS Nanna Badsha (Rasi Seeds).
As part of its handholding and mentoring project with the National Agricultural Innovation Project of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the Agri Business Incubator Program of AIP–ICRISAT together with the Tamilnadu Agricultural University, conducted a training on Business Incubation at the University in Coimbatore on 18-21 June. Asia Pacific Incubator Network (APIN) was the knowledge partner in this program.

With 10 Business Planning and Development (BPD) units having been handheld and mentored till now, and 12 new ones of ICAR institutions, the count of incubators aided by the Agri Business Incubator Program of AIP – ICRISAT has gone up to 22 for the financial year 2013-14.

Twenty-two participants from National Academy of Agricultural Research Management, Hyderabad; Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Bengaluru; The Central Institute of Post-Harvest Engineering and Technology, Ludhiana; National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal; Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering, Bhopal; Central Road Research Institute, Cuttack; Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod; Central Power Research Institute, Shimla; Indian Institute of Vegetable Research, Varanasi; Indian Institute of Spices Research, Calicut; Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture, Bhubaneswar; and Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture, Chennai took part in the training.

The topics discussed included the basics of business incubation, technology evaluation, Intellectual Property Rights and business incubation, funding for start-ups, and incubator client management.
The training program included two modules of InfoDev incubator management conducted by Mr. Julian Webb, InfoDev and Ms Preethi, NIT – Calicut; Skype calls, visit to the TNAU BPD facilities, and client interactions with resource persons from Wifin Technologies, ICRISAT, NAARM, Bioseed, Dr P Sivasubramaniam and Dr KN Selvaraj (TNAU).

The training resulted in sensitizing the participants to Agri-Business Incubators and opportunities for setting up agri business incubators in ICAR institutes.
Over 110 women entrepreneurs took part in a workshop on ‘Creating opportunities for women entrepreneurs in food processing business’ held at ALEAP Industrial Estate on 12 June. Organized by the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of ICRISAT as part of its partnership with the Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of Andhra Pradesh (ALEAP), the event served as a platform for enterprising women to explore business opportunities, explore ways to market food products (domestic and international), find potential buyers, and discover funding opportunities in the food processing sector.

While Dr Saikat Datta Mazumdar, Chief Operating Officer NutriPlus Knowledge Program, spoke on food processing technologies related to ICRISAT’s mandate crops, Mr Karuppanchetty elucidated on food processing technologies from the Indian National Agricultural Research Systems. Dr PS Raju, Officer Incharge - Business Development & IP Coordinator, Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology spoke on the funding opportunities available to women entrepreneurs in food processing.

Among the other topics discussed were products and buy-back models (Mrs Jaishree, Chief Financial Officer, Sresta Organics); and franchise models and opportunities for women entrepreneurs [Mr Samba Murthy, Head - Sales & Marketing and Mr P Brahmaiah, Head - Sales & Marketing (Dairy), Heritage Foods].

Eight entrepreneurs participated in the B2B sessions and showcased their products for buy-back arrangements with Sresta Organics. The ABI program received 25 Letters of Intent to avail of start-up support to set up food processing businesses.
More than 70 ready-to-commercialize agro-technologies from different sectors of agriculture were showcased and 58 agro-technologies were commercialized at the Agri-Tech Investors Meet held in New Delhi on 18-19 July.

Conducted by the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in collaboration with the Agri-Business Incubation (ABI) program of ICRISAT, the technology commercialization platform saw a gathering of 400 participants representing industry, agri-scientists, entrepreneurs, investors and incubator professionals in the quest to create a climate of entrepreneurship in agriculture.

Delivering the inaugural address, Dr S Ayyappan, Director General, ICAR emphasized that “Indian agriculture is full of challenges and opportunities. To accelerate agricultural growth, the way forward is to create a robust entrepreneurship climate within the sector.”

In his special address, Director General William Dar said, “By helping nurture innovations and entrepreneurship in agriculture through our ABI program, ICRISAT is fulfilling its mission to help eliminate poverty and improve livelihoods of smallholder farmers in the drylands. I am extremely happy that ICAR is enhancing this initiative and network further.”

Dr K Kasturirangan, Member (Science), Planning Commission of India who was Chief Guest during the closing session, urged scientists to do market-oriented research to enhance public-private-partnerships for a prosperous future for Indian agriculture. Dr Kiran K Sharma, CEO of ICRISAT’s Agribusiness and Innovation Platform, lauded ICAR’s role in bringing different stakeholders together, while Mr SM Karuppanchetty, COO of the ABI program presented the work and progress of India’s agribusiness incubators.
Eighty Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were exchanged at the meeting, the value of the technology transfer being US$ 0.578 million. The event also held 98 B2B (Business-to-Business) meetings involving scientists, industrialists and agri-business entrepreneurs for which 43 Letters of Interest (LOIs) were signed for technology commercialization.

The event had the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) as industry partner and the Indian School of Business (ISB) Munjal Institute for Global Manufacturing as knowledge partner.
Exploring agri-business opportunities for young entrepreneurs

With the intention of promoting youth in agribusiness, the Agri-Business Incubator (ABI) Program of AIP-ICRISAT organized a workshop on Agri-business opportunities for young entrepreneurs at Ratnapuri Institute of Technology, College of Polytechnic, Medak district, Andhra Pradesh on 6 September.

The event was part of ICRISAT’s partnership with the Vennela Educational Society (VES), in which AIP-ICRISAT will provide technical support in the production and cultivation of vegetables, hybrid pigeonpea seed, other crops, and dairy production for the Society’s agriculture curriculum.

The workshop was intended to develop and expose the participants to farm production, capacity building, financial and marketing skills and value addition under the guidance of agricultural and agribusiness experts, so that they can develop their own agri-enterprises.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer, ICRISAT-ABI, explained how the partnership would help students in exploring agribusiness opportunities and in availing better employment prospects. He underlined the need to tap into existing and emerging agribusiness opportunities and link the youth to technology and funding avenues, so that they could promote farming as a business and learn how to use the partnership as a trading, agribusiness information and agribusiness link platform.

Among those who spoke during the workshop were Mr Suneel Vemu (Agribusiness Development Associate) and Mr Harshvardhan Mane (Seed Business Officer) of ICRISAT-ABI. The workshop was attended by Dr VRR Datla, Secretary, Vennela Educational Society, its staff and more than 60 students.
Food Processing Business Incubation Centers to be set up in Angola and Ghana

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With food processing gaining importance in Africa’s economic growth, the Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) of ICRISAT is now facilitating the setting up of Food Processing Business Incubation Centers (FPBICs) in Angola and Ghana.

The initiative is part of the India Africa Forum Summit II (IAFS-II) under the auspices of India’s Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI). This bilateral project will establish state-of-the-art FPBICs with AIP-ICRISAT providing in-house training, hand-holding, mentoring and technical support to the staff deployed.

Under this initiative, Mr Aravazhi Selvaraj, Chief Operating Officer, Innovation and Partnership Program (IPP), AIP, along with Mr Suneel Kumar Arora, Deputy Secretary, MoFPI, joined the official Indian delegation led by Mr U Venkateswarlu, Joint Secretary of MoFPI, to Angola and Ghana on 4-11 September.

“The main focus of the FPBIC project is to help provide entrepreneurs with the technical know-how on the latest technologies and equipment used in food processing industries, and to provide scientific support in value addition processes and their know-how including infrastructure support for initiating and scaling-up their businesses,” explained Mr Aravazhi.

During the visit to Angola, the delegation along with Mr P Balachandran, Counsellor, Embassy of India in Angola, held extensive discussions with the Angolan Ministry of Agriculture and gave a detailed overview of the wide ranging initiatives in African countries under the IAFS-II.

In Ghana, the delegation held discussions with Dr N Karbo, Director, and Dr Emmanuel Adu, Deputy Director, CSIR-ARI (Counsel of Scientific and Industrial Research - Animal Research.
Institute), Dr Abdulai B Salifu, Director General, CSIR, and other senior officials.

Ghana’s Deputy Minister Dr Musheibu Mohammed-Alfa, Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation also briefed the delegation about the various initiatives being undertaken for the FPBIC program.

Under the technical guidance of ICRISAT, the delegation has identified a site in CSIR-ARI, Fafraha, Ghana, to house the FPBIC. At the end of the visit, the delegation had discussions and interactions with Mr K Jeeva Sagar, the High Commissioner of India to Ghana, who assured full support and cooperation in implementing the project.

The Indian delegation along with Dr N Karbo, Director, CSIR-ARI, Ghana.
The lack of good quality seed to resource-poor farmers of India remains a major constraint to crop production. In its efforts to explore opportunities in seed entrepreneurship, a training program on seed businesses was conducted at the ICRISAT headquarters on 30 September – 1 October for 30 rural entrepreneurs and farmers from Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

The training program resulted in seed companies such as Akola Soya and Cotton producer company based at Akola; a Sehore producer company based at Sehore; NABARD seed ventures program at Dewas; Manthan, an NGO from Bhopal; and Mythri, an NGO based at Ananthapur agreeing to seed business incubation terms of implementation.

Conducted by the Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (AIP) of ICRISAT, the training aimed to promote and enhance the capacity of farmers, farmer intermediaries and seed entrepreneurs in the seed production business. The training adopted a unique methodology involving technical and scientific inputs and sessions from scientists, subject matter experts and partners, along with field visits.

In his keynote address, Dr Kiran Sharma, Chief Executive Officer, AIP said, “One of the best approaches to address the issue of availability of good quality seed is to train progressive farmers in seed entrepreneurship which would involve tools and techniques in producing seeds. The program is an important step towards implementing and achieving ICRISAT’s strategy of Inclusive Market-Oriented Development (IMOD)”.

Mr SM Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer of the Agri Business Incubation (ABI) Program of AIP-ICRISAT spoke about the growing prospects in seed businesses. Sessions were conducted on seed production, variety identification, improved cultivation practices,
marketing, branding and seed quality control of sorghum, chickpea, pigeonpea, groundnut and soybean.

Mr Poomurugesan, Manager, Kazhi Kadamadai Farmers Federation Thiruvengadu (KKFF), Tamilnadu, and also a client and partner of the ABI of AIP exposed the participants to the program and system of seed business incubation.

From ICRISAT, Dr HD Upadhyaya, Head of Genebank and Principal Scientist, Groundnut Breeding; Dr P Srinivas Rao, Senior Scientist; Mr R Vijaykumar, Manager, Field Research Operations; and Mr B Venkatewara Rao, Manager, Field Research Operations also gave presentations during the training.

Some entrepreneurs from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are now planning to cultivate around 13 acres of land with the groundnut variety ICGV 91114 and chickpea JG-11 for which ABI-ICRISAT will supply the seed material.

The training was held as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Grain Legumes and on Dryland Cereals.
About 16 students and academicians from Africa had the opportunity to present their business ideas at a camp held on 11 October in Nairobi, Kenya. The camp aimed at promoting entrepreneurship among African students and creating a competitive agribusiness environment by scouting for innovations in agribusiness.

Called “Agbiz Idol Camp,” the event was conducted by ICRISAT’s Agri-Business Incubation (ABI-ICRISAT) Program as part of the Agri-Business Education Fair organized by the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education, and its partners under the Universities, Business and Research in Agricultural Innovation (UniBRAIN) initiative of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA).

Contestants were screened and evaluated under the two categories of entrepreneurs and academicians by a panel comprising of Mr Alex Ariho, UniBRAIN Facility Coordinator; Mr Ralph Von Kaufmann, former UniBRAIN Facility Coordinator; Mr SM Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer, ABI-ICRISAT; and representatives from the UniBRAIN Agribusiness Innovation Incubator Consortia.

Ms Irene W Gichingiri and Mr Goodhope Shombe won the awards in the entrepreneur category, while Dr Hortense Atta Diallo and Dr Niran Thompson were declared winners in the academician category. The winners were all felicitated by Mr Ariho and Dr Francoise Driver, University of Mauritius, with an award and a certificate of participation.

ABI-ICRISAT shall assist the entrepreneurs in building their business plans and their incubation will be facilitated under the Creating Competitive Livestock Entrepreneurs in Agribusiness, Ghana. As part of the Agri Business Education Fair, Mr Karuppanchetty shared best practices in handholding and mentoring business incubation centers under the Network of Indian Agri-Business Incubators (NIABI) and the Global Agri-Business Incubation (GABI) network.
Aiming to study ICRISAT’s Agribusiness and Innovation Platform (ICRISAT-AIP) operations and explore opportunities to jointly promote entrepreneurship in the African continent, a high-level delegation of Ministers from Africa visited the ICRISAT headquarters on 28 October.

The three-member delegation was composed of Mr Aston Peterson Kajara, Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Government of Uganda; Dr Musheibu Mohammed-Alfa, Deputy Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Economic Development, Government of Ghana; and Prof Karim M Maredia, Professor and Director, World Technology Access Program, Michigan State University, USA.

The ICRISAT-AIP team led by Dr Kiran K Sharma briefed the delegation on the Platform’s operations and activities in Africa. These activities involve handholding of Agri-Business Incubators under the Universities, Business and Research in Agricultural Innovation (UniBRAIN) – Forum of Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) project, and the setting up of Food Testing Laboratories and Food Processing Business Incubation Centers under the Indo-African Forum Summit.

Mr Kajara expressed appreciation of AIP’s public-private partnership model and assured to extend all the help required by ICRISAT in the effective implementation of projects in Uganda. He said his country would also support the provision of joint soft landing services to Indian agro-companies that wish to start operations in Uganda.
Dr Mohammed, on the other hand, expressed interest in partnering with AIP in setting up and exploring funding opportunities for a science park in Ghana. He is currently studying various working models in India, and assured support in exploring opportunities for collaboration with ICRISAT, beyond the scope of the current projects of UniBRAIN-FARA and India’s Ministry of Food Processing.

Both the Ministers agreed to jointly provide soft landing facilities for Indian seed companies so that local seed demand could be met and suitable crop varieties could be promoted in the region. Further, Prof Karim invited AIP to explore opportunities to closely work with the Michigan State University in promoting entrepreneurs in the area of food processing and nutrition in project mode.

The ministerial delegation was taken around the offices of the AIP incubatees by Chief Operating Officers Mr SM Karuppanchetty (ABI program); Mr S Aravazhi (Innovation and Partnership program) and Dr Saikat Datta Mazumdar (Nutriplus Knowledge program).
ICRISAT was awarded the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry FOOD 360° Award in the Best Incubator category at the third edition of FOOD 360° (International conference-cum-exhibition on Agribusiness and Food Processing) held on 6-7 November in Hyderabad, India.

In his message, Director General William D. Dar said, “We are pleased to be associated with this initiative as it is consistent with ICRISAT’s new strategic plan to 2020 which is based on the Inclusive Market-Oriented Development (IMOD) approach. Food processing is one of the most important links in the agricultural value chain that enables value addition. Enabling farmers to become part of this link by engaging them as entrepreneurs and through small- and medium-term enterprises (SMEs) can help in the development of a vibrant agrarian and rural economy.”

A knowledge report titled “Strategies and Support Mechanisms for Promoting Entrepreneurship in Food Processing Sector for IMOD” prepared by ICRISAT, the knowledge partner for the event, was released by Chief Guest Mr Siraj Hussain, Secretary, Ministry of Food Processing, Government of India.

Speaking on behalf of Dr Kiran Sharma, Chief Executive Officer, AIP, Dr Saikat Datta Mazumdar explained that the report aims at providing prospective entrepreneurs with an overview of the benefits of food business incubators, through successful case studies of food incubation ventures promoted through ICRISAT’s AIP, and that it would serve as a valuable guide for the next generation of entrepreneurs.
Mr S Aravazhi, COO, Innovation and Partnership program, delivered the keynote address during a session on “Mega Trends in Agri and Food Sectors”, in which he spoke on the opportunities in the food processing sector in the context of changing consumer food preferences, food technology developments, sustainability imperatives and policy framework.

Receiving the award from Mr PK Mohanty, Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh, were Mr SM Karuppanchetty, Chief Operating Officer (COO), Agribusiness Incubator program; Mr S Aravazhi; and Dr Saikat Datta Mazumdar, COO, NutriPlus Knowledge program of ICRISAT’s Agri Innovation Platform (AIP).

ICRISAT also took part in the exhibition, showcasing products and services related to agribusiness and food processing technologies.
Team ABI-ICRISAT (L to R)
Row 1: Director General William D. Dar; KK Sharma, CEO AIP-ICRISAT
Row 2: SM Karuppanchetty, S Aravazhi, Saikat Dattamazumdar
Row 3: Bhubesh, Jonathan Philroy, Harshvardhan Mane
Row 4: Suneel, Divya Nancy, Sangya Sharma
Row 5: Rama Sunderraj, Hymavathi, Pandurangaiah