

## **ICAR-CRRI, Cuttack, Odisha and ICAR- ATARI, Umiam, Meghalaya join hands to Build up a Robust Agri-Business Ecosystem in the Northeast Region of India**

*Cuttack, April 17, 2025:*

The ICAR-Central Rice Research Institute (CRRI), Cuttack, in collaboration with ICAR-ATARI, Umiam, Meghalaya, organized an Interactive Workshop on **“Strengthening Rural Agri-Business Incubation Initiatives in the Northeast Region”** at Cuttack on April 17, 2025.

The event witnessed the gracious presence of Dr. A.K. Mohanty, Director, ICAR-ATARI, Umiam, Meghalaya, as the Chief Guest, and Dr. M.J. Baig, Director, ICAR-CRRI, as the Chairperson of the workshop along with Dr. G.A.K. Kumar, Principal Investigator, ABI & VIKAS R-ABI and Head, Social Science Division of ICAR-CRRI as the Coordinator of the workshop.

The workshop brought together representatives from premier institutes such as ICAR-CHES RC, ICAR-CTCRI RC, ICAR-CIWA, ICAR-CIFA, Institute of Life Sciences (ILS), CSIR-IIMT, AIC Nalanda and successfully incubated startups under VIKAS R-ABI, ICAR-CRRI. These stakeholders convened to explore the avenues for enhanced collaboration and innovation-driven entrepreneurship development in the agri-business sector of Northeast India using the regional resources in line with their successful agri-ventures, which may pave the way for boosting the rural agriprenureship in Northeastern Hill region.

Setting the tune of the workshop, Dr. G.A.K. Kumar, Head, Social Science Division, ICAR-CRRI, Cuttack outlined the objectives of the workshop giving emphasizing the significance of building a robust incubation ecosystem tailored to the unique potential of the Northeastern region. Initially, Mr. Chinmaya Rout, Business Manager, VIKAS R-ABI, extended a warm welcome to the Chief Guest, Chairperson, and all attendees.

Subsequently, addressing the gatherings Dr. A.K. Mohanty, Director, ICAR-ATARI, Umiam accentuated the importance of the workshop in creating a vibrant and sustainable agri-business landscape and called upon to tap the untapped potentials of Northeastern hill agriculture for establishing a strong agri-business ecosystem with a win-win situation. Dr. M.J. Baig, Director, ICAR-CRRI, Cuttack called upon the assembled startups to engage actively in this noble initiative to and play a vital role in shaping a sustainable ABI ecosystem among the tribal youth to boost the hill agriculture.

In a key presentation, Dr. A.K. Mohanty shed light on the promising opportunities available in the Northeast region, such as the commercialization potential of unique and niche products like Sohiong fruit, Blue Berry, Blood Fruit, Naga King Chilli, Black Ginger, Black Turmeric, Mithun Churpi, Orchid, Persimmon, Tree Tomato etc.

The interactive session saw active participation from startups and incubators, who shared their expectations and collaborative offerings to strengthen the initiative further. During the discussion, Dr. A.K. Mohanty highlighted several innovative products and technologies developed by startups under VIKAS R-ABI and ABI, ICAR-CRRI, Cuttack, which he found to be highly suitable for the North-eastern market. Considering the region's consumer preferences and emerging market trends, he emphasized the potential of products such as dry fish and prawn mixtures, fish and animal feed formulated using Black Soldier Fly (BSF), **the**

Cowbit cattle health monitoring device, millet based valued added products and vacuum-fried chips made from locally grown vegetables. He encouraged startups to develop customized solutions tailored to the unique tastes and cultural preferences of the North-eastern region to enhance market adoption and impact. The meeting concluded with a formal vote of thanks delivered by Dr. B. Mondal, Principal Scientist, ICAR-CRRI, appreciating the insightful discussions and shared commitment towards rural agri-business development in the region. Dr. B. Mondal expressed his sincere appreciation to the ABI and VIKAS R-ABI teams for diligently organizing such an effective and valuable workshop.

