

ICAR-IARI & Western Sydney University set to Take Academic Collaboration to Newer Heights

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The Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi, hosted a high-level delegation from Western Sydney University (WSU), Australia, to explore deeper collaboration in agricultural education, research, and innovation. The visiting team, led by Prof. Ian Andersen, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), included Prof. Mark Tjoelker, Director, Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment (HIE); Dr. Nisha Rakesh, Head, International Strategy and Partnerships (Food and Environment); and Dr. Kopal Chaube, Lead, Research Collaborations and Partnerships (South Asia).

Welcoming the delegation, Dr. Ch. Srinivasa Rao, Director, IARI, underlined that India and Australia share similar agro-climatic conditions and cropping systems such as wheat and chickpea, as well as extensive coastlines that offer scope for joint research on coastal agriculture. He stressed that the most pressing contemporary challenges—soil degradation, water scarcity, nutrient deficiency, and climate change—require collaborative scientific responses. He also emphasized that developing skilled human resources is equally vital, urging partnership to create farmer- and consumer-centric solutions.

The key points of discussion included expansion of the ongoing Dual Degree Ph.D. Programme to Dual Undergraduate and Master's levels; faculty exchange and sabbatical opportunities in teaching and research; and synergy between Pusa LaunchPad and WSU LaunchPad to nurture student innovation and startups. Both sides explored strengthening research collaboration in areas such as sustainable resource management, climate resilience, and digital agriculture. Dr. Anupama Singh, Joint Director (Education), IARI, recalled the visit of Dr. Jen Dollin last year and urged that the world's No. 1 university in the Times Higher Education Global Impact Rankings for SDG implementation and India's No. 2 institution for SDG progress, IARI, should work closely for advancing sustainability-oriented education and innovation, joint skill enhancement programs/ courses.

The major outcomes of the discussion were a shared commitment to broaden dual degree programmes, initiate short- and long-term student exchanges, establish sabbatical faculty linkages, and strengthen joint incubation frameworks. Prof. Ian Andersen announced that WSU will launch its Noida Campus next year, which will bring both institutions geographically closer and enhance ease of collaboration. Dr. Nisha Rakesh added that the upcoming campus will also house a LaunchPad facility, enabling continuous innovation exchange between the two institutions. It was decided that both the sides will start working to crystallize collaborations for dual degree bachelors and masters' programs, agri-startup joint programs and employment opportunities for IARI students in Australia through WSU LaunchPad.

The delegation also visited the Nanaji Deshmukh Plant Phenomics Centre and the National Phytotron Facility, expressing appreciation for IARI's world-class infrastructure and research excellence. The visit concluded with mutual reaffirmation to jointly advance sustainable agriculture, climate-resilient technologies, and globally relevant education models—strengthening Indo-Australian cooperation for a more food-secure and sustainable future.



Source: ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi