

DBT's Biotech KISAN Scheme

Biotech-Krishi Innovation Science Application Network (Biotech-KISAN) is a Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology's initiative to empower farmers, especially women farmers. DBT's Biotech-KISAN Scheme aims to understand the problems faced by farmers and offer simple solutions to such problems. It is pan India scheme that has a hub and spoke model which stimulates entrepreneurship and innovation among farmers.



Biotech KISAN Hub

The Biotech- KISAN hubs are expected to fulfill the technological needs of farmers, generate agriculture and bio-resource related jobs, better livelihood opportunities and make certain biotechnological benefits reach to small and marginal farmers of the country. The scheme has also has a unique feature to identify and promote local farm leadership involved in developing science based farming practices and facilitate transfer of knowledge.

Other major objective of the Biotech-KISAN hubs is to support eco-friendly biofertilizers and bio-pesticides for soil and crop management, to impart knowledge and skills among farmers on bio-inputs, soil health management and water quality and to improve rural livelihood.

At present, a total of eight Biotech-KISAN hubs have been supported in different agro-climatic zones. The Biotech-KISAN hub at West Bengal University of Animal and Fishery Sciences has been started with an aim to connect available science and technology options to the farmers of Sundarban area with special focus on their problems and to offer suitable and alternative solution. Another such hub has been started at Foundation for Agricultural Resources Management and Environmental Remediation (FARMER), Ghaziabad with other partnering

institutes in the agro climatic zone of upper Gangetic plains. The third Biotech-KISAN hub situated at Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University, Andhra Pradesh focuses on assessment of yield gaps in major pulses and groundnut grown in scarce rainfall and north coastal zones.

The fourth Biotech-KISAN hub at Himalayan Environmental Studies and Conservation Organization, Dehradun, has a mandate to reach to farmers and to train them with latest agriculture and horticulture practices, spread sustainable use of available bioresources and soil and water conservation. A village-based fruit processing and a poultry business model unit were established at Chakarata Sub Hub. At Almora Sub Hub, efforts were made to promote goat farming and water harvesting at both places. Another Biotech-KISAN hub was established at Bihar Agricultural University, Bhagalpur to familiarize lathyrus cultivation in Tal areas and to conduct its values chain analysis and value addition.

So far the core activities carried out at Biotech-KISAN hubs broadly comprises understanding the problems of the local farmer, conduct base line surveys and participatory rural appraisals, gathering of information regarding biotechnological interventions and solutions provided to farmers, scaling up of such programmes, addressing both soil health issues and mitigation of water problems. Besides, these hubs also foster strong connectivity between R & D scientists and farmers, provide hands on skills training programmes, and generate awareness through radio, TV and social media platform.

Other unique feature of the scheme is that it provides individual thematic fellowships to selected farmers at high-tech science laboratories, and special solution-driven thematic fellowships to women farmers such as Mahila Kisan Biotech Fellowship to ensure that women become grass root scientist and contribute to their own livelihood opportunities and growing economy of country as well. Such schemes are impacting farmers' lives through scientific interventions and provide a breeding ground for generation of scientific knowledge and livelihood opportunities for rural farmers.

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