

ICRISAT sets up hub for innovations in agriculture

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Hyderabad: An innovation Hub (iHub) was inaugurated at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) recently.

At this facility, agricultural tech entrepreneurs, scientists and technology experts can collaborate to innovate cutting edge ideas across the whole agriculture value chain for smallholder farmers.

Agriculture in India is a \$370 billion sector, but there is little application of technology to improve productivity and lift millions out of poverty, says ICRISAT.

Farmers face a multitude of problems like water shortage, declining soil fertility, effects of climate change and rapid decrease of fertile agricultural lands. Innovation is imperative if agriculture has to feed a rapidly growing population with fewer resources, it said.

Telangana's Industry and IT Minister Mr K T Rama Rao and Agriculture Minister Pocharam Srinivas Reddy launched the iHub at ICRISAT located at Patancheru in Telengana.

Spread over 10,000 square feet, iHub includes a 40-seater accelerator facility.

Mr Srinivas Reddy described it as an important development for the welfare of farmers and hoped that the innovations will help farmers reduce their investments and increase productivity.

“I think the convergence of technology with the distressed sectors like agriculture, is the key to empowering our farmers and to improve productivity,” said Mr Rama Rao.

To enhance and strengthen the strategic vision for iHub, a high level advisory council has been set up which includes Telangana’s Principal Secretary, Information Technology Jayesh Ranjan, Microsoft India Managing Director Anil Bhansali, T-Hub Senior Vice President Rama Iyer, Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University Vice Chancellor Praveen Rao, Principal Secretary, Agriculture, Parthasarathi, ICRISAT Director General David Bergvinson. Its convenor is Ram Dhulipala, Lead, Digital agriculture and youth at ICRISAT.

“Entrepreneurs with passion are the ideal individuals to tackle problems using innovation and drive conversations at the intersection of agriculture, finance and IT. Promoting such intense collaborations between entrepreneurs and ICRISAT scientists is at the heart of the idea of iHub,” said Bergvinson.

He said they already launched an international Agricultural Innovations Program with T-Hub and many AgriTech startups have shown interest in collaborating with them.