

Press Release

ICAR-IARI Hosts 33rd Dr. B.P. Pal Memorial Lecture on "One Planet, One Health"

New Delhi, July 17, 2026: ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi, organized the 33rd Dr. B.P. Pal Memorial Lecture on the theme "One Planet, One Health: Biohappiness and a Sustainable Future." The memorial lecture was delivered by Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Chairperson, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Chennai, in the august presence of Dr. ML Jat, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) & Director General, ICAR.

Welcoming the dignitaries and participants, Dr. Anupama Singh, Joint Director (Education) & Dean, ICAR-IARI, New Delhi welcomed the gathering and highlighted the significance of the Dr. B.P. Pal Memorial Lecture in fostering scientific dialogue on issues of national and global importance.

Introducing the Chairperson, Dr. Ch. Srinivasa Rao, Director, ICAR-IARI, appreciated several transformative initiatives undertaken by ICAR under the leadership of Dr. ML Jat, including the SEHAT initiative in collaboration with ICMR, the CSR Conclave, the development of state-specific agricultural roadmaps, and the emphasis on demand-driven agricultural research to address emerging challenges in the sector.

Introducing the speaker, Dr. ML Jat highlighted Dr. Soumya Swaminathan's distinguished contributions to global public health, nutrition, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development. He lauded her leadership in advancing the vision of a TB-free world and appreciated the pioneering work of the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in empowering marginalized communities through science-led, community-centric interventions.

Delivering the memorial lecture, Dr. Soumya Swaminathan fondly recalled her childhood memories associated with ICAR-IARI, the inspiring personality of Dr. B.P. Pal, and visits of the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, to the Institute.

Speaking on the theme, she emphasized that while remarkable progress has been made in improving global health, the world is currently off-track in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) due to emerging environmental, economic and health challenges. She observed that food and nutrition security is increasingly threatened by biodiversity loss, declining pollinator populations, deteriorating soil nutritional quality, climate change and rising greenhouse gas emissions.

Dr. Swaminathan stressed that stunting among children continues to pose a serious challenge to cognitive and physical development and underscored the importance of resilient and nutrition-sensitive food systems.

Addressing environmental determinants of health, she pointed to air pollution, groundwater depletion, soil degradation, and loss of urban green spaces as major threats to human well-being. She also noted that the impacts of climate change disproportionately affect women, making inclusive and sustainable development imperative. Dr. Swaminathan emphasized the potential of underutilized food species in enhancing nutrition and climate security. She further suggested that ICAR prepare an Agrobiodiversity Map of India to systematically document the nation's rich agricultural biodiversity and support evidence-based conservation, research and sustainable development initiatives.

Advocating the One Planet, One Health approach, Dr. Swaminathan showcased several impactful initiatives of the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, including mangrove conservation, the One Sea Drive for plastic removal, artificial reefs for biodiversity restoration, integrated multi-trophic aquaculture, empowerment of fisherwomen, and traditional seed conservation by tribal farming communities. She emphasized that integrating ecological sustainability with public health and nutrition is essential for securing a resilient future.

In his Chairperson's Remarks, Dr. ML Jat, Secretary, DARE & DG, ICAR, congratulated Dr. Soumya Swaminathan on being elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society, recognizing her outstanding contributions to science and global public health. He paid heartfelt tributes to Dr. B.P. Pal, remembering his pioneering contributions to Indian agriculture and agricultural research.

Dr. Jat emphasized that planetary health, human health and biodiversity are intrinsically interconnected, and highlighted biodiversity conservation as one of the strongest tools to address the challenges of climate change and nutritional security. Stressing the concept of biohappiness, he underlined its importance in promoting a healthy and sustainable lifestyle. He also discussed the need for developing an Agrobiodiversity Atlas of India and preserving traditional knowledge systems to conserve the country's rich agrobiodiversity. Calling for a positive shift in perspective, he suggested that the terms "neglected crops" and "underutilized crops" should be replaced with "opportunity crops", recognizing their immense potential for enhancing nutrition, climate resilience and sustainable agriculture.

The programme concluded with a Vote of Thanks proposed by Dr. C. Bharadwaj, Professor, Division of Genetics and President, Genetics Club, who expressed gratitude to the dignitaries, participants and organizers for making the memorial lecture a grand success.



