

Pusa Krishi, ICAR-IARI Successfully Hosts SAMARTH 2026 – Empowering the Incubators

Pusa Krishi, ICAR-IARI successfully hosted *SAMARTH 2026 – Empowering the Incubators* on 19 to 20 March at NASC Complex, New Delhi. The two-day workshop brought together 31 incubators from across the country under the RKVY-RAFTAAR initiative (Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, GoI), creating a dynamic platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange and strengthening the agri-startup ecosystem.



Day 1: Inaugural Day Focuses on Strengthening Incubators and Agri-Startup Ecosystem

The workshop began with an inaugural session graced by Chief Guest, Shri Nabin Kumar Roy, Chief General Manager, NABARD. He highlighted the transformative role of FPOs as sustainable agri-enterprises driving rural development and emphasized NABARD's support through capacity building, credit, market linkages and value chain development. He also noted key initiatives like NABVENTURES and the AgriSURE Fund in promoting agri-startups and rural innovation.

Dr. Ch. Srinivasa Rao, Director, ICAR-IARI, underlined the importance of incubators in bridging the gap between research and field-level implementation. He noted that in the face of climate variability and evolving market demands, incubators are essential in translating scientific advancements into scalable, farmer-centric solutions.



The inaugural session was followed by experience-sharing and best practice presentations by Knowledge Partners (KPs) under the RKVY-RAFTAAR project. Post-lunch sessions included insightful discussions on startup equity and valuation by Mr. Manveen Chadha (ASSOCHAM), support mechanisms by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation presented by Ms. Srivalli Krishnan and the role of paid pilot projects in de-risking innovation by Mr. Suresh Rajagopalan of Samunnati Agri Innovation Labs.



The day concluded with an open discussion session, fostering interactive dialogue among KPs and RABIs, setting a collaborative tone for the days ahead.

Day 2: Focus on Leadership, Culture and Incubation Excellence

The second day began with a session on “The Human Side of Innovation: Team, Leadership and Culture in Advanced Incubation Ecosystems” by Ms. Bhakti Dhanak of IIMA Ventures. The session highlighted the importance of organizational culture and leadership in building successful incubation programs.



This was followed by Ms. Gladis Nair, Head of Operations, ISBA, who spoke on “Fostering the Essence of Incubation in Driving Innovation and Entrepreneurship,” emphasizing structured mentorship, ecosystem linkages and strategic support for startups.

A key highlight of the day was the experience-sharing session by RABIs (RKVY-RAFTAAR Agribusiness Incubators), where participants presented successful models, challenges and learnings from their incubation journeys, enabling peer learning and cross-institutional collaboration.

SAMARTH 2026 concluded on a high note, truly reflecting its vision of *Empowering the Incubators*. The workshop enabled meaningful dialogue, strengthened networks and equipped incubators with the tools and perspectives needed to nurture the next generation of agri-innovators.

