



**Organized by:** Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

**Date:** 21-23 July, 2025

**Venue:** NASC Complex, PUSA Campus, New Delhi

*"I have come here today not just to speak, but to dream. These three days will teach us how youth can return to agriculture in their own way—how they can modernize it without abandoning its values." – Meenaben, Youth Farmer from Gujarat*

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), with over 3.2 million women workers across 19 states, most of whom are small and marginal women family farmers. SEWA's larger members(55%) comes from rural areas whose primary livelihood is agriculture/shared croppers/agri labourers/animal husbandry/fishing/forest produce or pastorals.

SEWA runs agriculture campaign since 1985, that focuses on addressing the burning question of "Why does the farmer remain hungry? The major emphasis is to convert farm as an enterpriser and farmer as entrepreneur with focus on collective strengthen, regenerative and Sustainable practices and new technologies.

SEWA's approach has been to treat agriculture as an Enterprise and farmers as Entrepreneur to move agriculture form subsistence to becoming viable and profitable to provide decent and dignified profession for the youth from rural areas.

Additionally, to address the dire need for resilience building against the frequent and intense climate shocks and market shocks faced by these small and marginal farmers' members, the campaign focuses on developing and facilitating adoption of a climate-smart regenerative agricultural model that interweaves climate-resilient agricultural practices, technology at grassroots and regenerative farming practices.

Youth are backbone of the SEWA membership with over 33% members are young women from rural areas. Thus SEWA's efforts drive to make the work relevant for the new generation.

SEWA is steering a national network of National Farmer's forum which is a network of the Farmer's organizations (FOs) who work with small and marginal family farmers. The objective of the network is to provide visibility to small family farmers voices and provide platform to learn and share knowledge and experiences. Further SEWA has formed National Agriculture Trade Committee who meets regularly to discuss the local challenges and best practices and work on policy and programmes collectively.

SEWA has also actively participated in the Food system. SEWA has understood that women are the back-bone of an informal worker's household and are shouldering the responsibility of fulfilling the family's food and nutritional needs.

The National Youth Agri-Olympics 2025, organised by the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), was a landmark three-day event held from 21 to 23 July 2025 at the NASC Complex, PUSA Campus, New Delhi. The objective of an event was to bring together rural young farmers (majority women) from different regions to understand their aspirations from agriculture and showcase the importance of collective strength, values and at the same time opportunities in agriculture, facilitate knowledge exchange and promote climate resilient practices and green jobs to promote youth involvement in agriculture. The three days aimed to help believe youth by showcasing pathway to their dream agriculture by empowering, awaking and exchanging ideas on promoting sustainable agriculture, climate resilience, and entrepreneurship across India to help them reach to their dream agriculture. The event brought together participants from over 23 Farmers Organisations from 15 states, featuring knowledge exchange, cultural integration, and innovation in agriculture with representation of youth farmers from SEWA, NEICORD, and IMSE.

### **Day 1: Inauguration, Knowledge Sharing & Rural Sports**

#### **Opening Ceremony and Welcome Address**

The event commenced with a vibrant Young Farmer Song and Inaugural Procession symbolizing unity among India's farming communities. Holding their state and organization banners, they sang traditional folk songs attired in their traditional dresses, creating a moving display of unity in diversity. This was followed by a multi-faith prayer and lamp lighting reflecting India's spiritual diversity.



Ms. Ramilaben Rohit, SEWA's President, delivered her welcome address emphasizing youth-led rural development and the transformative role of young women farmers in agriculture. She also highlighted SEWA's ongoing commitment to building leadership among young farmers, and how events like the Agri-Olympics are essential platforms for nurturing collaboration, creativity, and shared learning. Her words set a strong and inspirational tone for the entire event, encouraging youth to dream big and take pride in their roots.

### **National Farmers Forum & *Kheti Zumbesh* Movement**

Meghaben Desai, senior coordinator, SEWA gave an overview of the National Farmers which acts as a collective space that brings together farmer organizations, youth groups, and rural innovators from across the country to share knowledge, build solidarity, and work toward sustainable, climate-resilient farming practices. She stressed the need for a strong, united farmer network that not only supports each other technically, but also inspires a new generation of leaders rooted in the values of sustainability, equity, and cooperation

### **Youth Voices and Regional Experiences**

Young farmers from various states shared their real-life agricultural experiences and challenges, and their dream agriculture scenario.

**Gujarat:** Meena Khokhar highlighted the importance of youth reconnecting with agriculture and integrating technology sustainably. She poetically described the role of farmers as the ones who *"fill the granaries of the nation"* — the providers of abundance and nourishment. Yet, she reminded the audience that women farmers go through countless hardships. Whether it is too much rain or no rain at all, the yield is affected. "Still, we endure. Still, we plant," she said. She saw the Youth Agri-Olympics as an opportunity for the younger generation to reflect, reconnect, and rediscover their bond with the land. "These three days will teach us how youth can return to agriculture in their own way—how they can modernize it without abandoning its values." She ended her speech with a heartfelt hope: "I have come here today not just to speak, but to dream.'



**Meghalaya:** A youth leader from NEICORD discussed challenges in adopting innovations amid community resistance. His testimony not only reflected the spirit of perseverance but also served as a reminder that while technological advancement is crucial, the real challenge lies in bridging the gap between innovation and tradition. It called attention to the importance of supporting young rural leaders not just with tools and knowledge, but also with community-based solutions and infrastructural support tailored to difficult terrains like those in Meghalaya.



**Kashmir:** Farmers from Kashmir shared how adopting kitchen gardening and organic farming has helped them earn ₹4,000–₹5,000 per month, improving their livelihoods and food security. Farmers also benefited from SEWA's cold storage initiatives, doubling income from apples and other fruits like plum, strawberries and cherries.

**West Bengal:** “When we work together, we grow together,” shared a farmer member from IMSE, West Bengal, capturing the spirit of collaborative agricultural change in the region. IMSE's collective farming improved livelihoods through organic practices and market linkages. By ensuring fair market prices and lower input costs, the initiative is enabling farmers to invest back into their land sustainably. As a result, many small and marginal farmers in West Bengal are now moving towards profitable, climate-resilient farming, improving their families' stability while contributing to local food security.

**Bihar:** Nari Gunjan's talk focused on how a strategic shift in crop selection specifically toward onion cultivation led to a remarkable improvement in farmers' income. Most notably, women farmers reported earning ₹3,500 or more per month, giving them not just financial stability, but also greater decision-making power within their families and communities. Their success story is a clear example of how focused interventions, crop diversification, and women's leadership in agriculture can bring lasting change to rural economies.



**Gujarat:** The state leads in renewable energy adoption, including biogas units and solar pumps. They reflected how Gujarat has become a frontrunner in adopting renewable energy solutions and sustainable practices in agriculture, creating a ripple effect of innovation across rural communities.

**Assam:** Assam members focused on the state's rich potential for organic farming, as well as the state's legacy in tea plantations, which have long been a backbone of its rural economy. Emphasis on organic tea farming and climate-adaptive agricultural models

### Special Guest Speeches

- **Dr. K.G. Mehta, Maharishi Ved Vigyan Academy, Gujarat and advisor, SEWA**
- **Dr. Rajbir Singh, Deputy Director General (Extension), Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR)**

## **Dr. K.G. Mehta – The Spirit and Future of Farming**

Dr. Mehta highlighted that agriculture is not merely a profession but a **deep cultural and historical practice** that connects communities, generations, and faith. He reminded the audience of the traditional wisdom that places farming above trade. He also mentioned the old saying “*Ship to Mouth*” to explain how farming has always been about survival but today, it must become about **growth, pride, and sustainability**.

He identified two major problems faced by farmers today:

- **Increasing risk** in farming due to climate change and market uncertainty
- **Decreasing income**, which discourages the younger generation from taking up agriculture

To address these challenges, he proposed a three-point solution:

- **Technology Awareness:** Farmers need to be aware of innovations that can reduce risk and increase yield.
- **Showcasing Present Practices:** There should be platforms where farmers can present and demonstrate their work.
- **Collective Sharing & Learning:** Farmers must share their stories, experiences, and learnings to inspire others.

He stressed that value addition and market access should remain in the hands of the producer, ensuring fair income and recognition. And the transformation of Indian agriculture lies in recognizing and respecting the farmer as not just a producer, but as a leader, entrepreneur, and innovator.

## **Keynote Address by Dr. Rajbir Singh (ICAR) – Youth, Women, and the Future of Indian Agriculture**

Dr. Rajbir Singh of ICAR praised SEWA’s women-led model and announced upcoming collaboration with SEWA for technical assistance and training via KVKs. Dr. Singh was particularly impressed by how women not only manage agricultural work but also participate confidently in events like the Agri-Olympics. “I saw women playing games, marching together, and wearing glazed saris. It showcased the pride they take in their identity as farmers,” he said.



Finally, he spoke about the National Youth Agri-Olympics, praising it as a dynamic initiative blending *justice, energy, and farming*. He emphasized that the momentum generated by this event must not end here. Instead, it should become a recurring platform for innovation, dialogue, and leadership—reaching not just 40 lakh farmers, but many more.

***“Agriculture is not just about crops—it is about courage, connection, and change. Youth and women must be at its forefront.”- Dr Rajbir Singh***

## **Rural Sports and Team Building**

Traditional games such as *Nimbu Chamcha*, *Pithu*, Tug of War, and *Kho-Kho* fostered team spirit and cultural bonding, culminating in recognition of winners and reflections on unity and perseverance. The atmosphere was charged with energy, camaraderie, and regional pride as participants engaged enthusiastically in each activity.

**Prof Pravar Srivastava of IILM University**, in his closing remarks reminded the participants that the games not only fostered inter-state friendships but also reinforced the values of teamwork, perseverance, and joy in simplicity values at the heart of Indian farming communities. They reminded everyone that strength lies in unity and that games, like agriculture, requires both strategy and spirit.



### **Session: Renewable Energy & Aspirational Farming**

The post-lunch session was structured around a dynamic blend of motivational dialogue, practical demonstrations, and grassroots-led innovation under the theme of “*Renewable Energy and Aspirational Farming*” by NRDC India. The session brought together experts, farmer leaders, and young participants to explore how localized, sustainable technologies can transform agriculture, particularly for women and youth in climate-vulnerable regions. NRDC India showcased innovations like electric tractors reducing fuel costs and solar-powered pest control solutions. Farmer leaders shared successes with biogas units, solar pumps for salt farming, and organic pest management.

### **Session: Mere Sapno Ki Kheti (My Dream Farm)**

This session was one of the most forward-looking and engaging segments of the afternoon session. Designed to spark imagination and innovation among young participants, it provided a platform for rural youth—especially women farmers—to reimagine the future of agriculture in the context of sustainability, equity, and resilience. Dr KG Mehta who is expert and worked with three generations shared about the origins of the agriculture and its links with values and vedas and how the current agriculture derived. The young farmers shared their questions and best practices for which Dr Mehta provided the result based examples of women farmers and collectives. Thus, rather than prescribing solutions, the workshop adopted a bottom-up, participatory format. Youth were invited to articulate:

- The **agricultural challenges** they face in their native regions—such as water scarcity, degraded soil, climate stress, pest vulnerability, and market inaccessibility.
- The **local resources and traditional knowledge** they already possess, including indigenous cropping patterns, seed-saving practices, and ancestral know-how.
- Their **dream models of farming**—from renewable energy-powered farms to bio-intensive organic cultivation, vertical gardening, aquaponics, and community-shared equipment

*"I dream of a farm where women don't just grow food but run the entire supply chain from soil to shelf."— Participant from West Bengal*

### **Grameen Bazaar and Rural Entrepreneurship**

The Grameen Bazaar featured stalls with organic grains, herbal cosmetics, traditional foods, and eco-friendly packaging, integrating digital payments and live demonstrations to enhance rural market skills. Salmaben from SEWA Bazaar, Ashish Lone from Khetiwadi.com highlighted the importance on product packaging, branding, and market access.

### **Day 2: Green Jobs, Regenerative Farming & Value Chains**

#### **Opening and Green Jobs**

The day began with a unity chant and a session by Geetika Goswami from IFAD on emerging green jobs in agriculture, highlighting women-led models and sustainable practices across states. She encouraged the youth to explore these emerging opportunities in agriculture not only as a livelihood but as a meaningful contribution to environmental sustainability

#### **Session: Abhivyakti: Women Farmers' Stories**

Farmers from Gujarat, Rajasthan, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, West Bengal, and Kashmir shared personal journeys overcoming water scarcity, adopting organic farming, solar technology, and community organization. Their stories illustrated resilience, innovation, and empowerment through SEWA's support.

#### **Session: Regenerative Farming and Green Villages**

Leela Ben shared the transformation of villages into "Hariyala Gams or Green Villages" emphasizing plastic-free environments, regenerative farming using cow dung-based fertilizers, biogas, pest management, and tree preservation. The model promotes local self-reliance and women's employment aligned with Gandhian principles.



*"If solar energy can run cars, why can't it power all farms in my village?" — Young farmer from Gujarat*

#### **Guest Expert: Dr. D.K. Singh- principal scientist, PUSA, Agriculture Engineering Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi**

Dr. D.K. Singh of IARI discussed India's agricultural history, the Green Revolution, and the need for a new sustainable revolution. He highlighted government schemes like PM-KUSUM promoting solar energy in farming and emphasized renewable energy's role in achieving net zero emissions by 2070. Concluding his address, Dr. Singh offered a motivational call to action, urging the audience to think long-term and contribute to India's goal of building a green, self-reliant agricultural future.

#### **Interactive Q&A with Dr. Singh**

Questions addressed practical solar energy applications, challenges in cold regions, financial access, corporate land leasing, and water quality issues. Dr. Singh advocated community models and direct government engagement to maximize benefits for farmers.

#### **Session: Value Supply Chain and Market Strategies**

***Guest speakers- Dr Dinesh Kumar, Head principal scientist- Division: Food Science & Post Harvest Technology, IARI and Rahul Barkataky, SEWA***

Dr. Dinesh Kumar emphasized the importance of managing the entire agricultural value chain from harvest to market, including waste utilization and cluster-based collaboration. Rahul Barkataky highlighted SEWA's women-led cluster initiatives and the need for innovation, packaging, and market intelligence to retain value locally.

***Session: Branding, Consumer Psychology, and Entrepreneurship***

***Guest speakers- Dr Alka Singh, Principal Scientist, Division of Agricultural Economics, IARI, Mr Ashish Lone, Co-founder Khetiwadi.com and Mr Alok De, retail and FPO expert***

Ashish and Dr. Alka Singh, Principal Scientist at the Division of Agricultural Economics, IARI discussed the significance of branding, packaging, storytelling, and understanding consumer psychology. They encouraged targeting niche markets and using scientific validation to enhance product appeal and farmer incomes. Alok De, added insights on market understanding and sustainable revenue models. He encouraged participants by saying even minor improvements can lead to big change — don't ignore small upgrades. Urged participants to remember that the market is all around us, and not necessarily in far-off places.

### **Cultural Night**

The day concluded with a cultural celebration featuring regional dances and folk performances from Gujarat, Assam, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Ladakh, Bihar, and West Bengal, honouring agricultural traditions and rural resilience.

### **Day 3: Youth Voices, Business Pitches & National Committee Formation**

***Session: Abhivyakti: Women's Transformational Stories***

Grassroots leaders from SEWA, IMSE and NEICORD shared inspiring journeys of entrepreneurship, solar energy adoption, community leadership, and cooperative farming, reflecting the event's core mission of empowerment and innovation. These narratives highlighted how determination, innovation, and collective support can shift rural livelihoods and inspire generational change.

*"We don't want to migrate anymore. Give us land, water, training and we'll build our own futures here."* — Youth from Bihar

### **My Ideal Green Village- Group Activity**

Post this session, each of the groups were asked to develop a template for 'Their Model Green Village' using available resources like papers, boards, ribbons, etc. Each of the groups worked on the concept of their Green Villages and shared with each other's.

**Business Pitching Sessions- Agri Shark Tank Format**

***Panel Members- Prof Saurabh Trivedi, IILM University, Mr Shailesh Thakur, Co-founder & Director, Drishtee and Rahul Barkataky, SEWA***

Youth teams from West Bengal, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, and Meghalaya presented agribusiness ideas focused on storage facilities, value addition, processing, and market expansion. Pitches included community grain storage, onion powder production, potato processing, wheat milling, apple cold storage, turmeric powder, and ginger value chain development. The panel advised focusing on market linkages, cooperative scaling, and incubation opportunities. Three of the best ideas were felicitated with a trophy.



### **Formation of National Youth Committee & Declaration**

A National Youth Committee was established to sustain the event's momentum, adopting a Youth Declaration pledging quarterly collaborations, climate campaigns, skill-building workshops, and a digital knowledge-sharing platform. The event closed with a unifying rendition of "We Shall Overcome," symbolizing resilience and shared purpose.

The event concluded not as an ending but as a new beginning for collective leadership in Indian agriculture

