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Agrochemical industry association CropLife India's recently concluded national conference was marked by sectoral players deliberating on the role of sustainable crop protection technologies in strengthening the country's agricultural ecosystem. The roundtable also involved discussions on matters including the requirement for new crop protection molecules, and the importance of adopting technologies such as agricultural drones.

The event in New Delhi saw representatives from the industry, government, as well as the civic sphere sharing their views on a plethora of subjects including the role of women in driving the agriculture industry, the role of agrochemicals in fostering growth of farming activities, and the importance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in ushering innovations for use by Indian growers.

Dispelling myths

Among topics brainstormed were debates surrounding the idea of India being one of the largest users of crop protection chemicals, with participants looking to dispel the concept. They observed that the nation had one of the lowest usage of agrochemicals when compared with other major geographies, pointing out that a transformation of the Indian agrochemical market was under way, with it diversifying from a product-centric to a sustainability-centric approach.

They also highlighted that the industry is working on equipping farmers with "beyond crop protection" offerings.

Favourable governance and investments

Spokespersons from the agrochemical sector deliberated on the role of state governments in facilitating the ease of doing business with an eye on enabling smooth agricultural functions, with CropLife India stressing that regional authorities had an "imminent role" in facilitating PPP models for capacity building and generating awareness.

To address issues faced by the agrochemical sector, an "industry facilitation cell" has been established, reported Dr Vishal Choudhary, the deputy industrial adviser to the Indian Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers, while other representatives from the government called for increased investments from industry players in research and development initiatives for sustainable agriculture and "long-term profitability".

Furthermore, Dr P K Singh, agriculture commissioner with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, propagated the adoption of a "one health" approach to ensure the health of humans, animals and the environment, observing that the exercise was "non-negotiable" for the development of the country's agriculture sector. "The role of technology in enabling multiple crop cycles in the same field, [and] educating farmers and reframing the perception of agrochemicals is the need of the hour," he added.

CropLife India's chairman, Dr KC Ravi, sought the establishment of a "predictable, stable and science-based policy and regulatory regime" for the growth of the agrochemical industry, while other office bearers took up various sectoral concerns and requirements with lawmakers attending the conference.

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