



BUILDING FOR RESILIENCE, INNOVATION, COOPERATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

BRICS WBA 2026

Women-led Initiatives in Agriculture

Positive Stories Compendium



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FOREWORD

The BRICS Women Business Alliance provides an important platform for advancing women's economic participation, entrepreneurship and leadership across diverse economies. Under India's BRICS Presidency in 2026, the Women-led Initiatives in Agriculture: Positive Stories Compendium brings this mandate into focus by showcasing women who are creating meaningful change across the agricultural value chain. The release of this Compendium in the International Year of Women Farmers provides a timely opportunity to recognise and highlight the important role women play in shaping agricultural economies and strengthening food systems. It also reflects the growing recognition of women not only as farmers and producers, but also as entrepreneurs, innovators, business owners and leaders across the agricultural value chain.

Agriculture is undergoing a profound transformation. Climate pressures, changing markets, evolving consumer expectations and the need for more productive and resilient value chains are creating both challenges and opportunities. In this changing landscape, the contributions of women farmers and women-led enterprises are increasingly significant. Women are contributing to this transformation in diverse ways—as entrepreneurs, producers, innovators, business leaders and community builders. Their experiences demonstrate that impactful solutions can emerge from different contexts, business models and stages of the value chain.

This Compendium brings together a selection of experiences from across BRICS countries, demonstrating how women are turning challenges into opportunities and contributing to more productive, inclusive and resilient agricultural systems. The stories illustrate how women are strengthening agricultural enterprises, developing new products and markets, advancing sustainable practices, creating livelihoods and building resilience within communities. Collectively, they demonstrate the value of combining entrepreneurial ambition with local knowledge, innovation and partnerships.

The purpose of this publication extends beyond recognition. By documenting these experiences, the Compendium creates a platform for knowledge sharing and cross-country learning. It offers an opportunity for BRICS nations

FOREWORD



to exchange approaches, identify common opportunities, build partnerships and consider how successful practices can be adapted to different agricultural and socio-economic contexts.

I hope these stories will encourage further dialogue among women entrepreneurs, businesses, policymakers, institutions and other stakeholders, while opening new pathways for collaboration and scaling. Most importantly, I hope they reinforce a simple proposition: enabling more women to lead in agriculture is not only an imperative for inclusion, but an opportunity to strengthen the productivity, resilience and sustainability of agricultural economies.

I extend my appreciation to the Chair, Co-Chair and members of the BRICS Food Security and Environmental Safety Working Group, as well as to all BRICS members, experts and contributors, for their support in the development of this report.

May they inspire greater ambition, stronger partnerships and continued action towards a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable future for agriculture across the BRICS economies.

Avarna Jain

Global Chairperson,
BRICS Women's Business Alliance 2026





MESSAGE

Agriculture sits at the heart of some of the world's most urgent priorities: food, energy and nutrition security, climate resilience, natural resource stewardship, and inclusive economic growth. Addressing these priorities demands bold innovation, deeper collaboration, and active participation across the agri-value chain.

Women are central to this endeavour. The FAO estimates women make up 36% of the global agrifood workforce: production, processing, marketing, and household nutrition. But still, too often, when we hear the word “farmer,” a woman does not come to mind.

Many women still face barriers to basic assets, technology, finance and markets. But if we were able to bridge this gender gap, imagine what the world could look like: we could add nearly USD 1 trillion to global GDP and reduce food insecurity for about 45 million people. So our mandate is clear: advancing women's participation in agriculture is not only a matter of equity, it is a powerful lever for economic and socio-political transformation.

Against this backdrop, the Positive Stories Compendium under India's BRICS Presidency reflects our shared commitment to recognizing and celebrating women and the work they do across BRICS countries' agriculture. The case studies featured here show women leading practical, scalable solutions in climate-smart agriculture, sustainable farming, nutrition, digital inclusion, the blue economy, and community resilience. The compendium also underscores the role of farmers as the foundation of BRICS nations, strengthening food security, sustaining rural economies, preserving local knowledge, and turning innovation into everyday practice across diverse agricultural landscapes.

By bringing these stories together, the compendium creates a valuable platform for knowledge exchange, cross-country collaboration, and the sharing of models that can be adapted across diverse socio-economic and agro-climatic contexts. I hope it serves as a practical resource for policymakers, businesses, researchers, development institutions, and practitioners working to strengthen food systems and expand women's leadership in agriculture.

The BRICS Women Business Alliance was founded to advance women's entrepreneurship, economic participation, and leadership through cooperation and innovation. This publication reinforces that mission by presenting women not just as participants in development, but as innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders shaping resilient communities and sustainable value chains.

I extend my appreciation to all BRICS National Chapters for their participation and for bringing forward these stories. I also thank every contributor whose experience and work have enriched this publication. Your efforts remind us that change often begins locally and can inspire transformation globally.

I congratulate FICCI and all partner organizations for this initiative under India's BRICS Presidency. I am confident this compendium will promote collaboration, support replication of proven models, and strengthen our resolve to build agri and food systems shaped by the ingenuity and leadership of women across BRICS nations.

Shona Sabnis

Chair, Food Security & Environmental Safety Working Group, BRICS Women Business Alliance (WBA)
Vice President, Public Affairs, Corteva





Dr. Zhang Dandan, China

Organization	: China Agricultural Credit Financial Technology Co., Ltd. (CAC)
Country	: China
City/Region	: Beijing (Operations across 19 provinces and 1,200+ counties)
Sector/Industry	: Rural Digitalisation Agri-Tech FinTech Digital Assets
Year of Establishment	: 1998
Website	: www.cacfintech.com

The Woman Behind the Change

Dr. Zhang Dandan has spent more than two decades working at the intersection of agriculture, technology and rural development. A serial entrepreneur, she founded her first venture at the age of 18 and established China Agricultural Credit Financial Technology Co., Ltd. (CAC) in 1998. Her work began with a simple but difficult challenge: rural farmers and assets often lacked the digital records needed to access formal finance, markets and modern agricultural services.

Dr. Zhang saw an opportunity to use technology to make these assets and economic contributions visible. Under her leadership, CAC developed digital systems for rural credit, asset registration, property rights and agricultural management. These include China's first provincial-level rural credit information platform and the Rural Asset Digital Certificate, for which she was a co-formulator of the national standard.

Her approach has also helped address a gender gap in agriculture. As farming becomes increasingly knowledge- and data-driven, women can participate beyond traditional labour-intensive roles. Digital credit, market access and agricultural management tools can enable women farmers, cooperative leaders and rural entrepreneurs to become more visible economic participants. For Dr. Zhang, technology is not an end in itself. Her vision is to "give value to every inch of land, and credit to every farmer."

Her journey demonstrates how women-led innovation can reshape not only technology, but also who gets recognised, financed and empowered within rural economies.

Impact Created

CAC's digital infrastructure has expanded access to finance, markets and asset-based economic opportunities for rural communities. The company has facilitated more than CNY 600 billion in agricultural financing, while its rural property rights trading platform has recorded transactions exceeding CNY 7 billion. Agricultural asset transactions supported through its platforms have crossed CNY 100 billion.

The company's rural credit systems have created 4.32 million digital credit records, helping farmers and rural businesses establish an identifiable credit profile. Its platforms serve a broad ecosystem of



agricultural enterprises and small businesses, supporting greater integration between rural producers and formal financial and commercial systems.

Women are important beneficiaries of this digital transformation. Women farmers and women-led cooperatives, who can face barriers in land rights recognition, access to credit and market participation, can use digital credit identities and inclusive financial services to participate more fully in the rural economy.

CAC's wider network supports more than 55,000 cooperatives across 1,200+ counties, creating channels through which rural entrepreneurs can access digital tools, finance and markets.

The impact also extends beyond agriculture. CAC and its affiliate Zhongnong Rongchang apply digital rights confirmation and asset transformation to education, folk culture and intangible cultural heritage. This creates opportunities for rural women involved in traditional crafts and cultural activities to gain recognition and develop new income-generating pathways.

CAC's digital rural ecosystem spans 19 provinces and more than 1,200 counties. Its platforms have facilitated CNY 600+ billion in agricultural financing, CNY 100+ billion in agricultural asset transactions and CNY 7+ billion in rural property rights trading. The company has created 4.32 million digital credit records, supports 55,000+ cooperatives, and has built public digital infrastructure across nine provinces. Its smart agricultural systems monitor more than 8.3 million mu of farmland. The company also reports a 0.03% non-performing loan rate, demonstrating the potential of technology-enabled inclusive finance at scale.

Innovation & Leadership

Dr. Zhang has led the development of more than 100 rural informatization software products covering rural finance, government services, land management and agricultural administration. CAC pioneered digital systems that connect rural assets with credit, valuation and markets. It helped develop China's rural asset classification system and the Rural Asset Digital Certificate and issued China's first such certificate.

The company has also developed the "Shennong" agricultural large model, using AI to support agricultural decision-making, alongside blockchain, big data, cloud computing and remote sensing solutions. Together, these technologies create a digital pathway from asset identification and verification to credit, transactions and market access.

Dr. Zhang's leadership is grounded in the belief that technology should create practical value for rural communities. Her philosophy of "technology for good" focuses on making rural assets visible, strengthening farmers' creditworthiness and connecting smallholders with modern economic systems.

As a woman entrepreneur in a traditionally male-dominated sector, she has also demonstrated that women can lead complex technology businesses while shaping innovation for agriculture and rural development. Today, women account for more than 65% of CAC's executive positions and 55% of its technical workforce, reflecting the inclusive workplace she has built alongside the company's external impact.

Rural digitalisation presented several interconnected challenges: scattered and non-standardised assets, limited access to formal credit, weak digital infrastructure and difficulties in confirming and valuing rural property rights. CAC addressed these challenges by developing standardised digital asset systems, rural credit platforms, digital certificates and technology-enabled property rights trading.

For women farmers, these systems help address barriers around credit, asset recognition and market participation. By creating a digital identity for rural economic activity, technology can make women's contributions more visible and strengthen their ability to participate in formal economic systems.



About the Organization

China Agricultural Credit Financial Technology Co., Ltd. (CAC) is a Beijing-based rural digital technology company founded in 1998. The company works across rural digital assets, agricultural finance, smart agriculture and digital transformation, providing technology solutions to governments, financial institutions, cooperatives and agricultural enterprises.

Its platforms integrate AI, blockchain, big data, cloud computing and remote sensing to support rural credit, asset registration, agricultural management and property rights transactions. CAC's role extends beyond technology development. Its systems create the digital infrastructure through which farmers and rural enterprises can establish credit identities, access financial services, participate in markets and unlock the value of previously under-recognised assets.

This approach has particular relevance for women in rural economies. By reducing dependence on traditional, relationship-based systems and creating digital pathways to credit and markets, CAC's model can help women participate more visibly as farmers, entrepreneurs, cooperative leaders and economic decision-makers.



Farmers in Jilin Province enjoy convenient inclusive financial services at our offline service stations

Awards & Recognitions

- National High-Tech Enterprise
- Vice Chairman Unit, China Rural Property Rights Transaction Professional Committee
- Most Competitive Enterprise in China's FinTech Industry
- Initiator, China Public Welfare and Green Finance Development Alliance
- Formulator, China Rural Asset Digital Certificate Standard
- Formulator, China Rural Land Rights Confirmation Standard
- Issuer of China's First Rural Asset Digital Certificate
- Global Typical Case selected for the 2026 International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- Beijing "Specialized, Sophisticated, Unique, and New" SME
- Outstanding Participant in Formulating Beijing's Data Element Series Standards
- Hainan Province Blockchain Application Demonstration Unit





Joyce Liu, China

Organization	: Optimize Integration Group (OIG)
Country	: China
City/Region	: Shenzhen, Guangdong (Operations across China and 20 countries)
Sector/Industry	: Agricultural Supply Chain Cold Chain Logistics Cross-Border Trade Digital Technology
Year of Establishment	: 2008

The Woman Behind the Change

Ms. Joyce Liu has spent more than two decades working across international trade, supply chains and cold-chain logistics. Starting her career in documentation and customer service, she progressed into business development and supply-chain strategy. She is now Co-Chair and Chief Operating Officer of Optimize Integration Group.

Her leadership journey was shaped by a practical problem she encountered in the frozen-food industry. In 2012, Liu and a client spent nearly half an hour searching through handwritten records to locate shipment information. The experience highlighted a wider challenge: thousands of small merchants were still dependent on paper-based systems with limited visibility of inventory, orders and transactions.

Liu saw digitalisation as an opportunity to change this. She led OIG's transition from traditional trading operations towards a technology-enabled supply-chain platform. The company introduced intelligent inventory management, digital trade tools, end-to-end traceability and technology-enabled supply-chain finance.

Her most significant contribution was recognising that better data could also improve access to finance. Many small merchants had limited collateral and financial records, making conventional bank financing difficult. Liu helped build systems that allowed inventory in the cold chain to become traceable and usable as collateral. Her journey demonstrates how women leaders can transform traditional industries by combining operational understanding with technology, finance and long-term thinking.

Impact Created

Under Liu's leadership, OIG has expanded digital and financial services for small and medium-sized enterprises across the agricultural supply chain. In 2021, OIG pioneered the "Platform Cloud Loan" with China Construction Bank Shenzhen Branch. Liu also drove the development of the "Youhe Financial Warehouse" model, integrating banking systems with IoT, blockchain and supply-chain data.

The model enabled financial institutions to assess and finance frozen products moving through the supply chain. In 2022, OIG facilitated nearly CNY 2 billion in financing for around 500 SME clients. Financing costs for downstream clients fell from approximately 10–18% to around 4%, improving access to working capital for smaller businesses.

Liu also led OIG's wider digital transformation. Intelligent systems now support trade documentation, inventory management, customer service and logistics operations, improving speed and visibility across the supply chain. Liu's approach focuses on making technology and financial services accessible to smaller businesses that are often underserved by conventional systems.

OIG's digital platform has supported 10,000+ SMEs across China, including small and family-run businesses. Liu has also promoted women's participation in logistics, compliance, digital operations and supply-chain management by creating opportunities for women to take on leadership roles within the organization.

Her wider vision is to build county-level service points that connect SMEs with information, finance, commodities and logistics services. The model also strengthens resilience across international agricultural supply chains. OIG works with producers and suppliers across BRICS markets, including Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa, helping connect agricultural products with the Chinese market.

OIG's digital and supply-chain ecosystem serves 10,000+ SMEs and works with more than 15,000 suppliers across 117 countries and regions. In 2022, its supply-chain finance model facilitated nearly CNY 2 billion for around 500 SMEs, while financing costs were reduced to approximately 4% from traditional levels of up to 18%. Its intelligent systems process more than 10,000 trade emails and 8,000 documents daily, and its logistics network covers 350+ trunk and branch routes, with more than 4,000 containers in scale. During the COVID-19 crisis, OIG also secured CNY 370 million in credit lines to maintain supply-chain continuity.

Innovation & Leadership

Liu has led OIG's digital transformation from a paper-based trading business into an integrated technology-enabled supply-chain platform. Key innovations include:

- Intelligent inventory management, replacing manual records with real-time digital information.
- “You Cold Chain”, a traceability system using IoT, blockchain and big data to track imported frozen products.
- AI-enabled trade and document processing, improving operational efficiency.
- Global Optimize Integration Industry Network APP, supporting standardised cross-border trade and logistics management.
- Technology-enabled supply-chain finance, linking inventory data, IoT and banking systems to improve SME access to working capital.

These solutions connect trade, logistics, information and finance within a single supply-chain ecosystem.

Liu's leadership philosophy is captured in her belief that women do not need to imitate traditional models of leadership. She describes her approach as “soft yet powerful, steady yet sharp”, drawing on qualities such as attention to detail, empathy and resilience. Her management approach combines flexibility with clear principles and data-driven decision-making. She also places strong emphasis on using technology to create practical opportunities for smaller businesses and underserved participants in the supply chain. The cold-chain industry faced fragmented operations, limited transaction transparency and difficulties in accessing formal finance.

Liu helped address these challenges by introducing standardised digital processes and stronger traceability. OIG worked with customs authorities to develop a settlement model based on bank Documents against Payment, using a “one container, one document” approach.

The company subsequently strengthened its compliance and risk-management systems. In 2020, OIG became the first private enterprise in China's imported frozen-food sector to receive AEO Advanced Certification. Its risk-control system has also maintained 13 years without bad debts, demonstrating the role of technology and disciplined systems in building trust across complex supply chains.

About the Organization

Optimize Integration Group is a Shenzhen-based enterprise specialising in cross-border food supply chains and cold-chain logistics. Founded in 2008, OIG integrates international procurement, customs clearance, cold-chain warehousing, logistics, digital supply-chain management, food safety traceability and supply-chain finance.

The company works with more than 15,000 suppliers across 117 countries and regions and has overseas branches in 20 countries. Its network covers more than two-thirds of China's primary frozen-product distributors. OIG's technology platform connects physical goods with digital information and financial services. This allows businesses to improve traceability, manage inventory and access working capital through more transparent supply-chain data.

Under Liu's leadership, OIG has used this infrastructure to support smaller businesses while strengthening the efficiency, compliance and resilience of agricultural and food supply chains.

Awards & Recognitions

Enterprise Awards & Recognitions

- 2025 – Selected as a Pilot Enterprise under the Second Batch of National Service Industry Standardization Pilots
- 2022 – National Supply Chain Innovation and Application Demonstration Enterprise
- 2022 – China Top 500 Private Enterprises, No. 484
- 2022 – China Top 500 Service Enterprises, No. 239
- 2021 – National SME Public Service Demonstration Platform
- 2020 – Customs AEO Advanced Certified Enterprise; first private enterprise in China's imported frozen-food sector to receive the certification
- 2020 – National 5A Logistics Enterprise
- 2020 – Guangdong Top 100 Private Enterprises, No. 72
- 2020 – Ranked No. 192 in the 2019 China Top 200 Importers List

Personal Recognition – Joyce Liu

- 2026 – Vice President, China Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Association
- 2021 – Profiled by Economic Daily for her work in technology-led industry transformation



Signing Ceremony for a Strategic Partnership to Jointly Advance the Digital and Intelligent Transformation of the Industrial Chain and Global Operations



Yin Jianmin, China

Organization	: Lanzhou Xinyuan Modern Agricultural Technology Development Co., Ltd.
Country	: China
City/Region	: Lanzhou City, Gansu Province
Sector/Industry	: Agriculture
Year of Establishment	: 2014

The Woman Behind the Change

Ms. Yin Jianmin, Chairwoman of Lanzhou Xinyuan Modern Agricultural Technology Development Co., Ltd., has spent many years building agricultural enterprises in the Gansu Plateau. Her work combines entrepreneurship with a strong focus on rural development and community prosperity.

She has used agriculture as a platform to create livelihoods, strengthen local industries and improve farmers' access to markets and technology. Her approach is rooted in the belief that industrial development can become a pathway to rural revitalisation when farmers are connected to skills, markets and sustainable sources of income.

Under her leadership, the company has developed an integrated agricultural model covering breeding, cultivation, processing, branding and agricultural tourism. It works with townships, cooperatives, production bases and farmers to connect different parts of the agricultural value chain.

Yin has also focused on bringing technology closer to farmers. She has worked with research institutions to introduce improved crop varieties, modern planting techniques and advanced breeding practices. Technical training has been used to help farmers adopt these practices and improve productivity. Her leadership extends beyond business. Through the Yin Jianmin Charity Fund, she has supported vulnerable groups and contributed to community welfare initiatives.

Her journey demonstrates how a woman entrepreneur can use agricultural enterprise, technology and inclusive business models to create economic opportunities while contributing to rural revitalisation.

Impact Created

The company's integrated agricultural model has created livelihood opportunities across rural communities in Gansu and surrounding regions. Its approach connects cultivation, breeding, processing, logistics, branding and cultural tourism, helping local agricultural products move from production to wider markets. The company has also developed five agricultural product brands, including Dongxiang Tribute Sheep, which has been recognised as a National Famous, Special, High-Quality and Innovative agricultural product. Its reported brand value exceeds CNY 6 billion.



The company's projects cover 27 villages across eight townships in Lanzhou, Linxia and Dingxi. By linking farmers and rural communities with organised production, technology, processing and markets, the model supports more stable income generation and contributes to local rural economic development.

Women are an important part of the company's rural livelihood model. At the Dongxiang and Zhangxian bases, more than 1,000 rural women, including left-behind women, have received employment and training opportunities. These opportunities have enabled women to develop practical skills and participate directly in agricultural and processing activities while remaining within their communities.

The company also provides hands-on training in meat sheep farming, fruit and vegetable cultivation and edible mushroom production. By combining skills development with employment opportunities, the model helps rural women strengthen their economic participation and build greater confidence in agricultural livelihoods.

The company has made a total investment of CNY 480 million, created around 1,000 direct jobs and supported income generation for approximately 43,000 people, benefiting more than 8,000 farming households. More than 13,000 people have recorded an average annual income increase of approximately CNY 40,000. Overall, more than 13,300 participants have received technical training, including 1,000+ rural women employed and trained at the Dongxiang and Zhangxian bases. The company's projects span 27 villages across eight townships, with five agricultural product brands established and the Dongxiang Tribute Sheep brand reaching a reported value of more than CNY 6 billion.

Innovation & Leadership

The company has developed a “circular farming + technology + brand + cultural tourism” model. The approach combines ecological agriculture with modern breeding, smart agriculture, agricultural processing and market development. This allows agricultural resources to be used more efficiently while creating additional sources of value across the production chain.



Lamb Sector

The company also follows a full value-chain approach. Farmers are connected not only to production, but also to processing, branding, logistics and markets. Technology and skills development form another important part of the model. The company works with research institutions to introduce improved varieties and agricultural technologies, while regular practical training helps farmers apply these methods.

Its “leading enterprise + township + cooperative + production base + farmers” model provides an institutional mechanism for connecting small farmers with larger agricultural value chains.

Yin Jianmin's leadership combines entrepreneurship, technology and social responsibility. She has focused on building agricultural industries that can create sustained economic opportunities for farmers rather than relying only on short-term support.

Her approach places importance on collaboration. Research institutions, cooperatives, townships, production bases and farmers are brought together to strengthen agricultural enterprises and local value chains. Her leadership also reflects a strong commitment to community development. Through both business activities and philanthropic initiatives, she has sought to create employment, improve rural incomes and support vulnerable communities.



The company faced challenges including limited technical capacity among farmers, weak market integration, production risks and the difficulty of building agricultural industries at scale. It responded by developing an integrated value-chain model.

Standardised production and improved breeding and cultivation practices helped strengthen productivity and product quality. Regular technical training improved farmers' skills. The company also integrated processing, branding and sales to improve market access and value realisation. Profit-sharing mechanisms helped reduce risks for participating farmers, while circular farming and digital management supported greater resource efficiency and operational effectiveness.

Together, these measures helped create a more resilient agricultural ecosystem connecting farmers, technology, markets and rural enterprises.

About the Organization

Established in 2014, Lanzhou Xinyuan Modern Agricultural Technology Development Co., Ltd. is a national key leading enterprise in agricultural industrialisation. The company focuses on ecological circular agriculture, technology-driven innovation and the integration of agriculture, industry and services.

Its operations include high-quality meat sheep breeding, organic fruits and vegetables, edible fungi, succulent flowers and seedling cultivation. It also provides agricultural product processing, agritourism, agricultural technology training and other value-chain services.

The company operates across Lanzhou, Linxia, Dingxi, Zhangye and other areas of Gansu Province. It occupies approximately 3.13 square kilometres and employs more than 1,000 people, including around 30 R&D personnel. Its infrastructure includes two provincial-level industrial parks and four R&D centres, alongside four subsidiaries established for poverty-alleviation and rural development activities.

The company's role extends beyond production. It acts as an enabler within the rural agricultural ecosystem, connecting farmers with technology, training, production systems and markets. Its integrated model seeks to create value at three levels: economic value through stronger agricultural enterprises and incomes; ecological value through circular farming; and social value through employment, skills development and community participation.

Through this approach, Lanzhou Xinyuan has positioned agricultural enterprise as a practical mechanism for advancing rural revitalisation and inclusive rural development.



Organic Fruit and Vegetable Farming Sector

Awards & Recognitions

- National Civilized Unit
- National High-Tech Enterprise
- National Advanced Private Enterprise in Employment and Social Security
- National Contract-Compliant and Credit-Worthy Enterprise
- National Model Workers' Home
- National Women's Civilized Post



- National Model Collective for Ethnic Unity
- Advanced Private Enterprise in the National “Ten Thousand Enterprises Helping Ten Thousand Villages” Targeted Poverty Alleviation Initiative
- National Key Leading Enterprise in Agricultural Industrialization
- National Women's Agricultural Demonstration Base
- National Key Project of the Glorious Cause
- Standardized Demonstration Farm for Meat Sheep Breeding under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
- National Model Brucellosis (Non-immunized) Purification Facility
- National Women's Meritorious Collective
- National Women's Modern Agricultural Science and Technology Demonstration Base





Devleena Bhattacharjee, India

Organization	: ClimaCrew Pvt. Ltd.
Country	: India
City/Region	: Mumbai, Maharashtra (Operations: Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra & Tamil Nadu coastlines)
Sector/Industry	: Marine Biotechnology Blue Economy Sustainable Agriculture Climate Tech
Year of Establishment	: 2022
Website	: www.climacrew.in

The Woman Behind the Change

Ms. Devleena Bhattacharjee's journey into seaweed began with her work with fishing communities. Through her first startup, Numer8, she worked with marine fishing communities facing rising fuel costs, unpredictable weather, declining catches and poor market connectivity. Numer8 developed N8Ofish, a digital platform using weather advisories, Potential Fishing Zone information and ocean intelligence to help fishermen determine when and where to fish, reducing search time, fuel consumption and operating costs.

Working closely with these communities revealed a deeper livelihood challenge. Improving fishing efficiency did not reduce households' dependence on an increasingly uncertain source of income. At the same time, women played important roles in the fisheries value chain but had fewer opportunities to earn directly from marine production. Devleena therefore began exploring whether the ocean could provide a second livelihood for fishing families, particularly one that could create direct economic opportunities for women.

Seaweed emerged as a complementary livelihood with the potential to diversify household incomes while creating a new economic role for coastal women. This became the foundation of ClimaCrew. Numer8 was subsequently acquired by ClimaCrew, and N8Ofish continues to operate within the company.

Founded in 2022, ClimaCrew is a marine biotechnology and coastal intelligence company developing sustainable seaweed value chains across India's coastlines. Its model combines GIS and satellite-based ocean intelligence, community-based cultivation, seed and nursery systems, processing, product development and market linkages. The company works with coastal communities across cultivation, harvesting and aggregation while developing downstream processing and industrial market linkages.

Today, ClimaCrew operates across Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, engaging 2,200+ farmers, including 1,000+ women, through 40+ Self-Help Groups. Its programmes support 500+ coastal livelihoods and 400+ family livelihoods, while its coastal assessments have identified 37,000 hectares of potential cultivation area. The organization's multidisciplinary team comprises 15+ professionals across GIS and technology, livelihood projects, applied research, supply chain and innovation.



Impact Created

ClimaCrew's model addresses a fundamental vulnerability in coastal communities: dependence on a single and increasingly uncertain livelihood. By introducing seaweed cultivation alongside fishing and other existing activities, the initiative creates an additional source of income while building a new coastal value chain. The model is designed to support livelihoods across cultivation, harvesting, aggregation, processing and market access, while connecting coastal producers to emerging industrial applications for seaweed-derived products.

Women are central to ClimaCrew's approach. More than 1,000 women are engaged through its programmes and 40+ Self-Help Groups, with opportunities spanning cultivation, farm management, harvesting, drying, aggregation and community mobilisation. The model therefore goes beyond participation to create pathways for women to earn, take responsibility within the value chain and assume leadership within their communities.

This progression is illustrated by Varsha Gorivale of Ratnagiri, Maharashtra. Previously engaged in traditional farming, Varsha moved into seaweed cultivation and progressed to become a seaweed farmer, entrepreneur and SHG leader, helping mobilise and support other women in her community. Her journey was publicly recognised when she was felicitated by Maharashtra's Women & Child Development Minister on International Women's Day.

Kalyani Angre, also from Ratnagiri, similarly moved from traditional farming into seaweed cultivation as an additional livelihood. Having received training herself, she has subsequently trained more than 50 women, helping transfer knowledge and create opportunities for other women within the community. Together, their journeys reflect the wider ambition of ClimaCrew's model: to enable women not only to participate in seaweed cultivation and generate income, but also to build capabilities, assume leadership roles and create opportunities for other women in their communities.

ClimaCrew has engaged 2,200+ farmers, including 1,000+ women, across 40+ SHGs and four coastal states, supporting 500+ coastal livelihoods and 400+ family livelihoods. Its coastal assessments have identified 37,000 hectares of potential cultivation area, creating a foundation for further expansion.

The wider model also incorporates artificial reefs and other marine sustainability interventions, linking livelihood diversification with coastal ecosystem restoration and resilience.

Innovation & Leadership

ClimaCrew combines ocean intelligence, marine science, biotechnology and community knowledge to develop a more predictable and scalable model for seaweed cultivation and coastal livelihoods. A key innovation is its use of GIS and satellite-based ocean intelligence for site selection, analysing parameters such as sea surface temperature, salinity, wave dynamics, chlorophyll-a concentration and ocean currents to identify suitable cultivation areas. This data-led approach reduces dependence on trial-and-error site selection and has enabled the identification of 37,000 hectares of potential coastal cultivation areas.

The company has developed an integrated seaweed value chain spanning site identification, community-based cultivation, seed and nursery systems, processing, product development and market linkages. It works with coastal communities across cultivation, harvesting and aggregation while developing downstream processing and industrial market linkages. To strengthen cultivation continuity, ClimaCrew is developing nearshore seed banks and nursery systems to improve access to reliable, climate-resilient planting material. Its work also includes artificial reef structures and marine ecosystem interventions, creating linkages between seaweed cultivation, biodiversity and coastal restoration.

Devleena Bhattacharjee's leadership has evolved from her earlier work with fishing communities through Numer8 to building ClimaCrew as a platform for alternative coastal livelihoods. Her experience



led her to recognise that improving fishing efficiency alone could not address the wider livelihood vulnerability of coastal households. This shaped her decision to explore seaweed as a complementary livelihood, particularly one that could create direct economic opportunities for women.

Under her leadership, ClimaCrew has moved beyond technology-led solutions to build a community-based model in which women can participate in cultivation, farm management, SHG governance, training and community mobilisation. Her approach is centred on using science, technology and enterprise to address practical livelihood challenges, while combining these capabilities with local knowledge and community participation. The evolution from Numer8 to ClimaCrew reflects this broader philosophy: from helping communities use the ocean more efficiently to creating additional and more resilient ways for coastal families to earn from it.

Scaling seaweed cultivation in India presents several challenges, including limited awareness of seaweed as a viable livelihood option, fragmented supply chains, limited digital infrastructure among fisherfolk and significant climate-induced variability in ocean conditions. ClimaCrew has addressed these through a combination of technology, community engagement and infrastructure development, including data-driven precision site selection to reduce cultivation risk and improve farmer confidence; on-ground training combining scientific methods with local knowledge; end-to-end supply-chain traceability and a digital marketplace platform providing coastal producers with direct access to premium buyers; and nearshore seed banking to address seasonal seedling scarcity. Dedicated livelihood and partnership engagement further supports awareness-building, trust and sustained participation among coastal communities.

Together, these interventions enable ClimaCrew to address the practical barriers to scaling seaweed cultivation while building a more resilient and inclusive coastal livelihood model.

About the Organization

ClimaCrew is India's first marine biotech CDMO. It was established with a broader objective than seaweed cultivation alone: to build the technology, community and market infrastructure required to develop a scalable coastal seaweed economy. The company's work begins with ocean intelligence and site assessment, using GIS and satellite-derived marine data to understand where cultivation can be environmentally and operationally viable. This is followed by community mobilisation and cultivation support, including farmer training, farm establishment, harvesting and aggregation.



Women At Work

To address constraints further along the value chain, ClimaCrew is developing seed banks and nursery systems, processing capabilities and downstream product applications, alongside market linkages with industrial buyers. Its work therefore connects the different stages required to move seaweed from a coastal livelihood activity into a commercially viable value chain. ClimaCrew is also exploring the wider potential of marine resources through seaweed-derived products and ingredients, including applications in agriculture, nutrition, food and sustainable materials. Alongside this, its work on artificial reefs and marine ecosystem interventions reflects its approach of linking economic activity with coastal ecosystem resilience.

The organisation brings together marine science, geospatial technology, biotechnology and community-based implementation to address a set of interconnected challenges - livelihood vulnerability, limited access to new coastal economic opportunities, fragmented value chains and changing ocean conditions. At the centre of this approach is the premise that a resilient coastal economy cannot be built by addressing livelihoods, technology and ecosystems separately. ClimaCrew seeks to bring these elements together through an integrated model in which coastal communities are active participants in developing new economic opportunities from the ocean.

Awards & Recognitions

- Active participation in BRICS WBA Working Group on Food Security & Environmental Safety
- Engagement with FICCI and allied institutional bodies under India's BRICS WBA Presidency 2026
- Selection for pilot projects and partnerships with coastal development stakeholders across Maharashtra and Gujarat
- National Fish Farmers Day Meet 2023 and the 'Start-up Conclave'.
- Women farmer's remarkable journey in seaweed farming led to a pride moment for ClimaCrew!
- Times of India – Alibag's first seaweed farm could change what Koli fishers catch & earn.
- YourStory – How this deeptech startup is driving seaweed cultivation along the western coast of India.
- Action for India Feature – ClimaCrew for innovation in India's seaweed and blue ecosystem, highlighting community-led coastal sustainability initiatives.
- Mumbai Tarun Bharat – ClimaCrew's seaweed farming initiatives in Ratnagiri district, Maharashtra, highlighting the economic and livelihood impact on coastal villages.
- The Better India Coverage – Highlighting how seaweed farming is helping coastal communities adapt to declining fish catch and climate pressures through regenerative livelihoods.
- The CSR Universe – Seaweed farming initiative supports coastal livelihoods and climate resilience in Maharashtra.





Dr. Liza Gupta, India

Organization	: SNL Innovations Pvt. Ltd. (Innofarms), with mentoring and incubation support from CCS NIAM, Jaipur
Country	: India
City/Region	: Jaipur, Rajasthan
Operations	: Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nubra Valley (Ladakh), Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Tamil Nadu
Sector/Industry	: Agri-Tech Food Processing Machinery Post-Harvest Processing of Agri Commodities
Year of Establishment	: 2019

The Woman Behind the Change

Dr. Liza Gupta, Founder of SNL Innovations Private Limited (Innofarms), is a Ph.D. in Biology who has led the company's R&D and sustainability functions since its founding in 2019. Her work has focused on a persistent challenge in India's horticulture sector: highly perishable produce often loses significant value because suitable processing infrastructure is not available close enough to the farm. Litchi illustrates the challenge particularly clearly, with a shelf life of only 3–4 days after harvest.

For Dr. Gupta, the solution lay in taking processing closer to where the problem occurs. She led the development of decentralised, farm-gate aseptic processing technology that enables surplus and highly perishable fruit to be processed within hours of harvest and converted into shelf-stable pulp. Her approach is rooted in developing technology that is scientifically sound, economically viable and practical for adoption in rural settings, using rapid prototyping and close collaboration with farmer groups, producer collectives and processing partners.

The technology was initially applied to guava, apple and mango in various cluster states, later this technology was applied to litchi through Innofarms collaboration with Prasad Foods in Muzaffarpur. Innofarms has developed an integrated processing capability covering decentralised aseptic processing units, spray dryers, evaporators, belt press, screw press, heat pump dryers and washers, alongside installation, commissioning, technical support and process optimisation.

Today, Innofarms decentralised processing systems operate across Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Meghalaya, Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir, while its broader containerised aseptic processing infrastructure has been deployed across 10+ states in India and internationally in Zimbabwe. The company's solutions are designed to help farmers, producer collectives, agribusinesses and food companies convert perishable agricultural produce into stable, higher-value products while reducing dependence on cold-chain infrastructure.



Impact Created

Innofarms decentralised model addresses post-harvest loss while creating opportunities for rural communities to participate in processing activities close to where they live. By enabling fruit to be processed within hours of harvest, the model helps retain the value of edible-grade surplus that might otherwise lose quality or marketability.

The economic impact is demonstrated through Innofarms work with Prasad Foods, Muzaffarpur. Processing volumes increased from 80 MT in the first year to 150 MT in the second, supported by advance procurement commitments from domestic FMCG buyers. The same processing system has also demonstrated cross-crop adaptability, with 10 MT of jamun pulp processed on the system and mango processing subsequently initiated. The technology has enabled litchi pulp to achieve a validated 12–18 month shelf life, compared with only 3–4 days for fresh litchi.

The decentralised nature of the model has also created paid seasonal employment for women in fruit-producing communities. Approximately 250 women are engaged each season in litchi peeling and cleaning at Prasad Foods in Muzaffarpur; around 50 women participate in seasonal pineapple processing in Jirang, Meghalaya; and 20–30 women are engaged daily during the guava season in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan. Across the sites, approximately 400–500 women have been trained and engaged in peeling, cleaning, sorting, grading and pre-processing activities

The significance of this opportunity lies not only in employment, but in its proximity: processing work is created in or near women's own villages, allowing them to participate in income-generating activities without moving away from their communities.

The experience of Shakuntla Devi of Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan, provides a documented example of how this opportunity can translate into greater responsibility. A homemaker with no documented independent income from the processing initiative before joining, Shakuntla began working as a seasonal processing worker in 2021. Over time, she developed skills in food-pulp processing and took responsibility for supervising peeling, washing and other pre-processing activities. She now works as a supervisor/team coordinator for women engaged in pre-processing, earning approximately ₹15,000–₹18,000 per month, and has encouraged and mobilised other local women to participate in the initiative.

Innofarms has reached 250+ farmers across six states/UTs and processes 800+ MT of produce annually, while creating training and seasonal employment opportunities for 400–500 women. Its litchi pulp technology has extended validated shelf life from 3–4 days to 12–18 months, helping improve the commercial potential of highly perishable produce. The same processing system has also handled 10 MT of jamun pulp, while Innofarms' broader containerised aseptic processing infrastructure has been deployed across 10+ states in India and internationally in Zimbabwe.

Innovation & Leadership

Under Dr. Gupta's leadership, Innofarms has developed a technology-led approach to post-harvest processing that shifts processing infrastructure from centralized facilities towards the farm gate and rural production clusters.

A key technical challenge was developing an alternative to conventional sulphited litchi processing while maintaining product stability and quality. Prasad Foods had been producing sulphited litchi pulp since 2019, with 30–40% of inventory going unsold annually due to changing buyer preferences for preservative-free products, limited export access and regulatory constraints on Potassium Metabisulphite use. Innofarms addressed this through decentralised aseptic processing, enabling sulphite-free, preservative-free litchi pulp with a validated 12–18 month shelf life. This was the first time this was achieved for litchi in India.



The company's modular approach has enabled the technology to be adapted across litchi, sea buckthorn, pineapple, guava, coconut, jamun, kinnow, strawberry and mango, demonstrating its applicability across different crops and operating environments. Innofarms wider containerised aseptic processing infrastructure has been deployed across more than 10 states nationally and in Zimbabwe.

Dr. Gupta's leadership combines scientific R&D with practical field deployment. Since Innofarms founding in 2019, she has led the company's R&D and sustainability work through technology development, rapid prototyping, field deployment and adaptation across different crops and rural operating environments.

Her approach has been to develop solutions around the realities of farmers, producer collectives and processing partners. Rather than designing technology for a centralised industrial setting alone, Innofarms works closely with field partners to understand operational constraints and adapt the model to local conditions. This leadership philosophy is reflected in the evolution of Innofarms core innovation: from addressing the technical challenge of preserving highly perishable fruit to creating a decentralised processing model that can be deployed across diverse agricultural landscapes.

Innofarms work has addressed several interconnected challenges: the short shelf life of highly perishable produce, limited access to processing infrastructure close to farms, dependence on conventional sulphite-based litchi processing, fragmented rural processing capacity and the difficulty of adapting advanced processing technology to different crops and geographies.

The company has responded through decentralised processing units, rapid prototyping, modular technology, close field collaboration and technical support at the point of deployment. In litchi, the shift from sulphited-based processing to aseptic processing addressed changing market requirements while extending shelf life and improving the commercial potential of the product. The model has subsequently been adapted across multiple crops and locations, demonstrating how decentralised processing can be used to address post-harvest challenges while creating new opportunities for rural employment and value creation.

About the Organization

Innofarms is an Indian agri-tech company founded in 2019, with mentoring and incubation support from CCS NIAM, Jaipur. Its core focus is to address post-harvest losses and improve value realisation through decentralised processing technology.



Women At Work



The company designs and manufactures decentralised aseptic processing units, spray dryers, evaporators, belt press, screw press, heat pump dryers and washers, alongside installation, commissioning, on-site technical support and process optimisation. Its solutions enable highly perishable agricultural produce to be processed closer to the point of harvest and converted into shelf-stable products.

Innofarms broader containerised aseptic processing infrastructure has been deployed across 10+ states in India, spanning geographies from Jammu & Kashmir to Tamil Nadu and Gujarat to Meghalaya, with an international deployment in Zimbabwe. Its decentralised systems currently operate across Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Meghalaya, Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab etc.

The organization's value proposition lies in combining food-processing technology with decentralised rural deployment-making advanced processing infrastructure more accessible to producer collectives, agribusinesses and rural enterprises while reducing dependence on long-distance transportation and cold-chain infrastructure.

Awards & Recognitions

- National Startup Award 2023 – DPIIT / Startup India
- Climate Launchpad – Runner-up
- Grant Support from IIMA Ventures
- Grant Support from Social Alpha
- RKVY-RAFTAAR Grant – Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India
- Viability Grant – Department of Information Technology, Government of Rajasthan
- Two Design Patents Accepted – Intellectual Property India
- Case Study Published by IIM Ahmedabad
- Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women Programme, IIM Bangalore – 2024: Dr. Liza Gupta is an alumna
- SAP Bootcamp, IIM Ahmedabad – 2021: Dr. Liza Gupta is a graduate
- Project SAFFAL: Dr. Liza Gupta was selected by the Massive Earth Foundation
- MassChallenge Switzerland 2026: Dr. Liza Gupta is representing Innofarms as part of the 2026 cohort in Renens, Switzerland





Meera, India

Organization	: Bayer Crop Science
Country	: India
City/Region	: Headquartered at Thane, Maharashtra; initiative in Andhra Pradesh
Sector/Industry	: Agriculture and Crop Science
Year of Establishment	: 1863 globally; in India since 1896; 2023 (FPO collaboration)

The Woman Behind the Change

For nearly three decades, Ms. Meera, Founder of Women's Initiatives (WINS), has worked with marginalised and excluded communities, particularly Scheduled Caste, Tribal, single and destitute women. Her work has focused on enabling women to recognise their strengths, understand their rights, access resources and build confidence through collective action.

Her approach is centred on facilitation, mentoring and institution-building. Rather than positioning women as recipients of support, she creates the conditions for women to organise themselves, develop leadership capabilities and take greater ownership of livelihoods and community institutions. Through this work, she has mentored and supported approximately 20,000 women, many of whom have progressed into leadership, entrepreneurship, farming and community decision-making roles.

This approach is reflected in Praneeksha Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) Ltd., established in Andhra Pradesh in June 2023. Praneeksha is a women-only Farmer Producer Company created by women, for women, with all 315 shareholders being women and a Board of 10 women directors. The FPO operates across vegetable cultivation, millet cultivation and trade, tamarind aggregation and processing, and goat rearing and trade.

The organisation has reached approximately 1,080 families across 37 villages in drought-prone regions of Andhra Pradesh. Bayer Crop Science has supported the strengthening of Praneeksha as a women-led agricultural institution through support for its operational capacity, business viability, market access and participatory governance. The model brings together women's capacity, collective ownership and access to markets, creating a pathway for women to participate more actively in agricultural enterprise and decision-making.

Impact Created

The impact of the initiative is reflected in the extent to which women have assumed economic, institutional and decision-making roles within a collective enterprise. Praneeksha has developed activities spanning farming, livestock, aggregation and value addition, creating diversified livelihood opportunities for rural households.



The goat-rearing enterprise provides a clear example of this shift. Traditionally, women raised livestock while men controlled sales and pricing decisions. Through Praneeksha, women began taking goats directly to local markets, negotiating prices, engaging with buyers and managing sales independently. Despite operating in a traditionally male-dominated environment and facing infrastructure and logistical challenges, the women successfully managed their own sales and generated profits, strengthening their incomes and their role in household and community decision-making.

The FPO has adopted a direct-to-market approach, reducing dependence on intermediaries and increasing producer prices by 20–30%. It has created stable employment opportunities for 150+ women, while revenue has grown by over 40% year-on-year. The enterprise has also expanded into new markets and value-added opportunities, including tamarind seed trade and goat sales to urban buyers.

The leadership effect extends beyond women directly engaged in the enterprise. Through exposure visits, training and mentoring, five women have emerged as champions of natural farming and sustainable agriculture. They now guide other women on sustainable cultivation practices, enterprise management, market participation and product sales. Women leaders have also undertaken mentoring and training in marketing, outreach and participation in agricultural exhibitions, helping to mobilise women across 57 villages. In parallel, the wider initiative has reached approximately 1,080 families across 37 villages, while 500+ farmers have been supported in accessing government schemes including PM-KISAN and e-Shram.

The initiative has contributed to a 25% average increase in household incomes through diversified livelihood streams, while direct market linkages have enabled 60% of sales to be achieved without dependence on intermediaries.

Praneeksha FPO has 315 women shareholders and a 10-member women-led Board, creating 150+ direct jobs and livelihood opportunities, with the majority benefiting women from marginalised communities. There has been 25% average increase in household incomes through diversified livelihood streams. The FPO has reached 1,080 families across 37 villages, while supporting 500+ farmers in accessing schemes such as PM-KISAN and e-Shram. 60% of sales achieved through direct market linkages, contributing to a 20–30% increase in producer prices and 40% year-on-year revenue growth. Additionally, five women have emerged as champions of natural farming and sustainable agriculture helping mobilise women across 57 villages.

Innovation & Leadership

Praneeksha has developed an integrated women-led enterprise spanning tamarind aggregation and processing, millet cultivation and value addition, goat rearing, vegetable farming and household nutrition. The FPO has adopted approaches such as leasing tamarind trees for aggregation and processing, developing millet-based value-added products and integrating vegetable cultivation with kitchen gardens. These interventions combine income diversification with household nutrition and food security.

The organization has also strengthened direct market linkages, enabling women producers to engage more directly with buyers, reduce dependence on intermediaries and improve price realisation. The model combines sustainable agriculture, entrepreneurship and collective ownership with women's leadership, creating an institutional pathway through which women can participate in and shape agricultural value chains.

Bayer Crop Science has supported the strengthening of Praneeksha's operational capacity, business viability, market access and participatory governance. Its role is therefore positioned as an enabling one: strengthening the systems and capabilities of a women-owned institution while the ownership and leadership remain with the women themselves.



Ms. Meera's leadership is rooted in collective action, capability building and institution-building. Her approach is deliberately designed to build local leadership rather than dependency.

This philosophy is visible in Praneeksha, where women are not simply beneficiaries of an agricultural programme. They are shareholders, Board members, entrepreneurs and market participants, with responsibility for the direction and operation of their collective enterprise. Women leaders have also gone on to mentor other women in marketing, outreach, sustainable agriculture and participation in agricultural exhibitions.

Praneeksha has navigated challenges including inadequate seed capital, seasonal production gaps, transportation constraints, fluctuating market prices and limited participation of women in market-facing and decision-making roles. Community mobilisation and leadership development helped women build confidence, strengthen collective action and assume greater responsibility within enterprises and producer institutions. Diversification across agriculture, livestock and value-added activities helped reduce business risk, while direct market linkages improved profitability and reduced dependence on intermediaries.

Bayer's support further strengthened business operations, market access and participatory governance, helping the FPO build its institutional and commercial capabilities. The resulting model connects women's leadership, collective enterprise, sustainable agriculture and market access, enabling a women-owned agricultural institution to build more sustainable livelihoods in challenging rural environments.

About the Organization

Bayer is a global enterprise with core competencies in healthcare and nutrition, guided by its mission, "Health for all, Hunger for none." The company works to address challenges associated with a growing and ageing global population while advancing sustainable development through innovation and growth. The Bayer brand represents trust, reliability and quality across the world. In fiscal 2025, the Bayer Group employed around 88,000 people, recorded sales of €45.6 billion and invested €5.8 billion in R&D.

Bayer has maintained a continuous presence in India since 1896, making the country one of its longest-standing global markets; 2026 marks 130 years of Bayer's presence in India. India serves both as a strategic commercial market and as a global innovation and capability hub within Bayer's international operations.



Women At Work

Bayer's Indian footprint includes 11,000+ direct and indirect employees and reach to 30 million+ smallholder farmers through its technology and services. Its broader India operations also engage 150,000+ healthcare professionals annually through the PH and CH divisions and reach 50 million+ households through OTC brands of the CH division. Within agriculture, farmers benefit from 60+ FVC Partnerships, 1,600+ BLF centres and 371 FPOs. Bayer also operates global hubs and Centres of Excellence in Mumbai and Bengaluru across R&D, IT, Finance, Procurement and Shared Services.

Over the last five years, Bayer has invested ₹1.25 billion+ (~€11.6 million) in CSR programmes focused on water, rural development, preventive healthcare and education. Its Vapi manufacturing facility in Gujarat is Bayer's largest synthetic pyrethroids production site globally, serving both domestic demand and export markets.

Awards & Recognitions

While Praneeksha has not yet received formal national or international awards, its work has received growing recognition from local communities, development stakeholders and government representatives for advancing women's empowerment, sustainable agriculture and rural livelihoods. Women leaders from the FPO have also participated in platforms such as International Women's Farmers' Day and International Environment Day, sharing their experiences and promoting sustainable agriculture and women's leadership.

Ms. Meera has received Certificates of Excellence from the District Collector on two occasions for her work with vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. She was also selected for the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership/Exchange Programme and subsequently served as a mentor under the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE), supporting women entrepreneurs and emerging women leaders.

Recognitions/Certifications

- Recognised locally for advancing women-led agriculture, entrepreneurship and collective action among rural women.
- Acknowledged by government stakeholders for supporting tribal women's access to welfare schemes, livelihood opportunities and community institutions.
- Women leaders from the FPO regularly participate in public and community platforms promoting sustainable agriculture, nutrition, biodiversity conservation and women's economic empowerment.
- Leadership and mentoring efforts led by Ms. Meera have received recognition through national and international leadership and entrepreneurship development platforms, including the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership/Exchange Programme and the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE).





Padma, India

Organization	: Godrej Agrovvet Limited (GAVL)
Country	: India
City/Region	: Mumbai
Sector/Industry	: Food and Agriculture
Year of Establishment	: 1991

The Woman Behind the Change

For Ms. Padma, agriculture was always part of everyday life, but becoming an independent economic actor within the agricultural ecosystem was a very different proposition.

A 52-year-old woman from Chinnasumatram village near Uthangarai in southern India, Padma was widowed in 2017 and became the sole earner for her family. She began collecting milk from local farmers and, in 2018, took on a new role as a Godrej Jersey Direct Farm Procurement (DFP) agent, transforming a part of her home into a milk collection centre. She began with 83 litres of milk a day from 17 farmers, earning approximately ₹2,528 a month. Over time, her centre grew to collect more than 263 litres a day, while her monthly income increased to ₹10,380.

The significance of Padma's journey went beyond the increase in income. The role placed her at the centre of a local agricultural transaction—managing farmer relationships, procurement and daily operations in a role that had initially been viewed with scepticism because she was a woman. Her experience illustrates a distinctive feature of the DFP model: by placing responsibility for a local milk-procurement centre with an individual agent, the model creates space for women to move from participation in agricultural livelihoods to ownership of an economic role within the value chain.

This philosophy extends beyond individual entrepreneurship. Through initiatives such as Disha, Godrej Agrovvet Limited (GAVL) is also working to create pathways for young women from agricultural backgrounds to enter formal careers in the sector.

Together, these approaches reflect a broader proposition: women can participate in agriculture not only as workers or farmers, but as entrepreneurs, professionals and decision-makers.

Impact Created

Padma's experience demonstrates the economic and social impact that can emerge when women are given responsibility within an agricultural value chain. Starting with a modest milk collection operation, she more than tripled the volume of milk procured and increased her monthly earnings by more than four times. Her centre became a trusted point of interaction for local farmers, giving her greater visibility and authority within a traditionally male-dominated rural environment.



The change was also perceptual. Farmers who had initially questioned whether a woman could manage the role increasingly came to depend on her centre and her ability to manage procurement. Padma's journey therefore represents more than an individual livelihood improvement. It demonstrates how economic responsibility can translate into confidence, visibility and recognition within the community.

The wider impact of GAVL's work is reflected through its efforts to build opportunities for women at different stages of the agricultural ecosystem. Through the Disha programme, 276 agriculture students have received support through a campus-to-corporate initiative, with more than 33% placed in industry. The programme has also provided scholarships to 11 women students.

Beyond Disha, GAVL's broader interventions have impacted 63,316 women over two years, while more than 400 managers have been sensitised to inclusive leadership. The result is a two-level impact: creating immediate economic opportunities for women such as Padma, while also building the skills, confidence and pathways required for more women to enter agriculture as professionals and leaders.

Innovation & Leadership

The innovation in GAVL's approach lies not only in what the company provides, but in how responsibility is structured. The Direct Farm Procurement model decentralises milk procurement by placing a local agent at the centre of farmer relationships and day-to-day operations. This gives the agent responsibility for managing procurement, farmer interactions, logistics and cash handling rather than limiting the role to routine employment. For women, this creates a pathway into a position of operational responsibility and local economic leadership.

Padma's experience demonstrates how such a structure can enable a woman with no established position in the trade to build credibility through performance. Her centre became a local point of trust, and her experience helped challenge assumptions about the roles women can occupy in agricultural business.

GAVL's leadership approach also looks further upstream. The Disha programme addresses the transition from agricultural education to formal employment by creating a campus-to-corporate pathway for women completing agriculture degrees, many of whom come from farming families. GAVL is also extending this thinking to younger students from agricultural families, introducing them to agriculture through the lens of science, innovation and professional opportunity. The intent is to make formal careers in agriculture visible to girls well before they reach the stage of choosing a profession.

Together, these interventions represent a continuum—from enabling a woman already participating in agriculture to take charge of a local enterprise, to helping the next generation see agriculture as a field in which they can build professional careers.

About the Organization

Godrej Agrovet Limited is a diversified agri-business company and part of the Godrej Industries Group, working across the agricultural and food value chain. Its businesses span Animal Nutrition, Crop Care, Oil Palm, Dairy and Food, bringing together products, services and capabilities across crop and livestock production, processing and food markets.

The organization's distinctive value lies in its integrated presence across the agri-value chain, combining research-driven innovation with an understanding of farmers and rural ecosystems. Its portfolio includes animal feed for cattle, poultry and aquaculture; crop protection and plant health solutions; oil palm cultivation and processing; dairy; and processed foods.



GAVL operates at significant scale across India, supported by a nationwide rural presence, distribution network and partnerships with farming communities. The company employs approximately 3,518 people and also has an international presence through exports and partnerships, including in Bangladesh.

Its commitment to women in agriculture has been formalised through a public goal to empower one lakh women in agriculture, announced at its inaugural Women in Agriculture Summit. In January 2026, GAVL also entered into a three-year agreement with the Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission to support more than 5,000 women farmers and over 50,000 acres of farmland across nine cotton-growing districts.

Within this broader mandate, GAVL acts as an enabler by creating economic opportunities, building capabilities and opening pathways into agricultural value chains and careers.

Padma's experience provides one example of this approach at the grassroots level, while programmes such as Disha demonstrate how the organization is building longer-term pathways for women's participation in agriculture.

The overarching approach is to strengthen the agricultural ecosystem not only through products and productivity solutions, but also by expanding the role, visibility and economic participation of women within it.

Awards & Recognitions

GAVL was recognised with the Godrej Group Award 2025 for Outstanding Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI).

The recognition reflects the organization's broader efforts to strengthen an inclusive workplace and create greater opportunities for participation and advancement.



Women At Work





Pooja Arya, India

Organization	: Yara India
Country	: India
City/Region	: Kalayat, Kaithal District, Haryana
Sector/Industry	: Agriculture / Women Entrepreneurship
Year of Establishment	: Yara – 15 years of presence in India
Website	: https://www.yara.in/

The Woman Behind the Change

Ms. Pooja Arya is a farmer from Kalayat village in Haryana whose journey demonstrates how access to knowledge, confidence and the right support ecosystem can transform a small farm into a sustainable and commercially successful enterprise. Until 2017, both Pooja and her husband worked as agricultural labourers while continuing traditional farming on their small plot. Income was uncertain and opportunities were limited, with Pooja's contribution to agriculture largely unrecognised despite the central role she played on the farm.

In 2018, Pooja learnt about net house farming and the potential of protected cultivation to generate higher returns through better-quality crops. She enrolled for training at the Centre of Excellence for Vegetables in Gharaunda, Karnal, and decided to establish her first net house. Although a government subsidy covered part of the investment, the family still had to commit almost everything they had to establish it. The decision was also met with scepticism about whether a woman farmer could successfully manage such an enterprise.

Her first season proved difficult. Pooja planted nearly 8,000 cucumber plants, but poor germination caused by seeds being sown too deep resulted in near-total crop failure. Rather than abandon the initiative, Pooja and her husband removed the crop and started again. Over the following two years, she continued to build her knowledge through training, technical guidance and experimentation with improved farming practices.

This journey brought her into closer engagement with Yara from late 2020, when she adopted a structured crop nutrition approach based on a complete crop calendar rather than individual product applications. Yara's agronomic guidance supported her transition towards more scientific nutrient management, contributing to improvements in productivity, crop quality and consistency.

Today, Pooja's experience extends beyond her own farm. Her results have attracted neighbouring farmers seeking to learn about protected cultivation, crop nutrition and improved farming practices, positioning her as a local source of knowledge and experience.

Pooja's transition from traditional cultivation to protected farming created a significant change in the productivity and commercial viability of her farm. Following the adoption of a structured crop nutrition approach and improved farming practices, yields initially improved by 8–10% and eventually by 20–25%.



Crop quality and consistency also improved, enabling Pooja to secure a ₹2–3 per kg premium over prevailing market prices.

Impact Created

Pooja's transition from traditional cultivation to protected farming created a significant change in the productivity and commercial viability of her farm. Following the adoption of a structured crop nutrition approach and improved farming practices, yields initially improved by 8–10% and eventually by 20–25%. Crop quality and consistency also improved, enabling Pooja to secure a ₹2–3 per kg premium over prevailing market prices.

Improved returns enabled her to expand from one net house to two by 2021, while her produce gained access to larger markets across Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi. The resulting income stability enabled Pooja and her husband to build a new house, invest in their children's education and create greater financial security for the family. What began as a one-acre experiment therefore developed into a sustainable and commercially successful farming enterprise.

Pooja's journey has also influenced how women participate in agricultural decision-making within her community. In an environment where women were actively involved in farming but were less often recognised as decision-makers, her growing success demonstrated that women could independently learn, adopt and manage modern agricultural practices.

As neighbouring farmers began visiting her farm, women who had traditionally remained in the background of farm decisions started showing greater interest in cultivation, training and farm incomes. Male farmers who came to learn from Pooja increasingly encouraged their wives to attend trainings and engage more actively with modern farming practices.

Pooja's influence has extended beyond her own farm. By 2025, more than 20 farmers in and around Kalayat had adopted net house farming, influenced in part by her experience and results. Pooja now regularly hosts farm visits, shares her experiences and provides practical insights to farmers interested in protected cultivation, crop nutrition and modern farming practices. Her journey has consequently evolved from that of a farmer adopting a new approach to that of a local source of knowledge and confidence for other farmers, including women.

The shift to protected cultivation and structured crop nutrition improved yields by 20–25%. Better crop quality enabled a ₹2–3 per kg premium over market prices. Pooja expanded from one to two net houses by 2021, with produce reaching Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi. By 2025, 20+ farmers around Kalayat had adopted net house farming, influenced in part by her experience. Higher and more stable income helped the family build a new house, invest in children's education and improve financial security.

Innovation & Leadership

Pooja's journey is one of perseverance, continuous learning and farmer-led leadership. After losing her first cucumber crop, she did not abandon the idea of protected cultivation. Instead, she continued to seek technical knowledge, adopt improved practices and refine her approach. The adoption of a structured crop nutrition approach based on a complete crop calendar was an important part of this transformation. With Yara's agronomic guidance, Pooja moved towards more scientific nutrient management, contributing to improvements in productivity, crop quality and marketability.

Her experience subsequently became a source of farmer-to-farmer learning. As her results became visible, neighbouring farmers started visiting her farm and exploring protected cultivation and improved farming practices. By 2025, more than 20 farmers in and around Kalayat had adopted net house farming, influenced in part by her experience and results. Pooja's journey also helped reinforce the role of



women as capable participants in agricultural decision-making. Women who had traditionally remained in the background of farm decisions began showing greater interest in cultivation, training and farm incomes.

About the Organization

Yara is a global crop nutrition company with roots in Norway and a history spanning more than 120 years. Guided by its purpose of responsibly feeding the world and protecting the planet, Yara works to improve agricultural productivity while contributing to resilient and sustainable food systems. Yara has been present in India for 15 years, working with farmers across diverse crops and geographies to improve productivity, profitability and sustainability. Its approach combines science-based crop nutrition, farmer education, field demonstrations, digital advisory services and collaborations with governments, research institutions and farmer organizations.

Yara's work is based on the belief that agriculture is not only about growing crops, but also about improving farmer livelihoods and strengthening the wider agricultural ecosystem. Its interventions focus on improving soil health, food quality, farm profitability and climate resilience, while also creating greater opportunities for women and youth in agriculture.

In Pooja's case, Yara's support played an important role in helping her move towards a more structured and scientific approach to crop nutrition. From late 2020, Pooja worked more closely with Yara and adopted a complete crop calendar-based approach to nutrient management, rather than relying on individual product applications. This technical and agronomic guidance contributed to improvements in crop productivity, quality and consistency, helping her achieve better market returns.

More broadly, Yara focuses on equipping farmers with the knowledge, technical expertise and confidence required to adopt improved agricultural practices. Through farmer education, field demonstrations, digital advisory services and partnerships, the organization seeks to ensure that knowledge reaches farmers at the field level and can be translated into practical results.

Pooja's experience illustrates how this support can extend beyond an individual farm. As her results became visible, neighbouring farmers began visiting her farm, learning about protected cultivation and crop nutrition, and adopting similar practices. In this way, support provided to one farmer contributed to a wider farmer-to-farmer multiplier effect, with Pooja herself emerging as a local source of knowledge and inspiration.



Women At Work

This reflects Yara's broader approach of strengthening agricultural ecosystems where innovation, farmer knowledge and improved practices can contribute to more productive, profitable and sustainable farming communities.

Awards & Recognitions

- Women Farmer Excellence Award (2021): Recognized by CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar for outstanding work in protected vegetable cultivation on Kisan Diwas 2021.
- Republic Day Appreciation Award (2022): Honored by the Sub-Divisional Administration, Kalayat for contributions to agricultural development and farmer welfare.
- Progressive Farmer Award (2022): Recognized as a Progressive Farmer by KVK Kaithal, CCSHAU Hisar, and ICAR during the Vigyan Mela 2022.
- Agricultural Knowledge & Leadership Recognized (2023): Felicitated by Prasar Bharati Akashvani Hisar and the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare for excellence in agriculture, horticulture, livestock management, and farmer outreach.
- District-Level Farmer Excellence Award (2023): Recognized by the Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Department, Kaithal for outstanding work in natural farming, horticulture, and livestock development.
- Sustainability Champion Recognition (2025): Honored by Sehgal Foundation and Grow-Trees for promoting sustainable crop residue management and environmental stewardship.
- Crop Residue Management Award (2025): Recognised by KVK Kaithal for leadership in sustainable crop residue management practices.
- State-Level Horticulture Excellence Award (2025): Awarded First Prize in Vegetable Production at the 11th Mega Vegetable Expo 2025, organized by the Department of Horticulture, Haryana.
- "True Son of Soil" Recognized (2025): Felicitated by the Naveen Jindal Foundation for outstanding contributions to agriculture and inspiring fellow farmers.





Roli Goel Jindal, India

Organization	: RMSI Cropalytics Pvt. Ltd.
Country	: India
City/Region	: Noida, Uttar Pradesh
Sector/Industry	: Agritech and Geospatial Analytics
Year of Establishment	: 2019

The Woman Behind the Change

Ms. Roli Goel Jindal, Co-Founder & MD, has shaped RMSI Cropalytics around a simple objective: use advanced geospatial technology to make agricultural intelligence more accessible, practical and inclusive. Since the organization was founded in 2019, she has focused on connecting technology with real agricultural and rural development needs.

RMSI Cropalytics converts satellite, weather, historical yield and agronomic data into decision-ready intelligence for farmers, FPOs, governments, agribusinesses, insurers and financial institutions. Its solutions include crop acreage estimation, crop health monitoring, yield forecasting, soil-moisture analytics, pest and disease early warning, traceability and sustainability intelligence. Remote sensing and GIS are combined with AI/ML and domain expertise to generate high-resolution, localised insights.

The distinctive proposition is precision at the farm and village level rather than relying only on broad district averages making sophisticated agricultural intelligence usable for smaller farmers and rural enterprises as well as large institutions. The agricultural intelligence ecosystem spans 792 districts and 6.65 lakh villages across India. The company maps the entire Indian farmland covering 180 million hectares, mapping more than 25 crops across cropping seasons each year.

Impact Created

Roli Jindal has been at the forefront of the adoption of digital technology in agriculture in India. Through RMSI Cropalytics, she has pioneered and piloted several applications of satellite imagery, geospatial intelligence and AI in partnership with government institutions, demonstrating how technology can improve the accuracy, timeliness and scale of agricultural decision-making.

Her work has contributed to the wider adoption of satellite-based approaches for agricultural assessment and yield estimation in India. By demonstrating the value of objective, technology-enabled crop intelligence at scale, these initiatives have helped support the evolution of policy and government systems towards greater use of satellite imagery for agricultural estimation and planning.

She has also played a leadership role in enabling the adoption of satellite-based crop monitoring by the Government of Uttar Pradesh. The resulting high-resolution agricultural intelligence provides government and other stakeholders with more timely and reliable data on crop conditions and production.



This intelligence supports better decision-making across areas such as crop distress mitigation, weather-related advisories and pricing and market support for farmers. By moving from periodic, fragmented field information towards technology-enabled and continuously updated agricultural intelligence, the approach strengthens the ability of government to respond to emerging risks and support farmers more effectively.

The wider adoption of digital agricultural intelligence has created benefits across the agricultural value chain. Satellite-based crop mapping, yield forecasting and predictive analytics enable governments, agribusinesses, insurers and financial institutions to make faster and better-informed decisions on production, procurement, risk and resource allocation. For farmers, better crop intelligence can support earlier intervention, improved planning, reduced losses and more effective access to advisory and market support.

Roli's technology-led approach also extends to creating more direct economic opportunities for women in agriculture and allied activities. A notable example is the Traceability System, which creates greater transparency in the honey value chain, for example, from hive to market. The system has reached several thousand beekeepers, a large percentage of whom are women.

The honey initiative illustrates a broader principle underlying Roli's work: technology can do more than improve data and efficiency - it can open access to markets, information and economic opportunity for women who have traditionally remained at the margins of formal agricultural value chains.

Innovation & Leadership

Roli's leadership has been defined by an early recognition that digital technologies such as satellite imagery, GIS and AI could fundamentally change the way agriculture is monitored, assessed and managed in India. Rather than treating these technologies as standalone commercial tools, she has focused on demonstrating their practical value through large-scale applications with government and agricultural stakeholders.

Her leadership has therefore combined technological innovation with institution-building: piloting new approaches, demonstrating their value in real-world agricultural systems and working with stakeholders to translate successful applications into scalable programmes and wider adoption.

Her approach is centred on purposeful innovation, collaboration and measurable outcomes. She has consistently sought to connect advanced technology with practical agricultural problems whether improving the accuracy of crop estimation, identifying emerging crop distress, strengthening weather and farmer advisories, supporting market decisions or opening new economic opportunities for rural communities and women.

A defining feature of this approach is the emphasis on making sophisticated technology usable at scale while retaining sufficient local detail to support meaningful decisions. This has helped RMSI Cropalytics evolve from a geospatial technology provider into a broader agricultural intelligence platform.

The adoption of digital technology in agriculture has involved challenges including fragmented data, regional differences in farming systems, climate variability, trust in technology and the need to demonstrate value within established government and agricultural processes.

Roli and her team have addressed these through pilots and real-world implementation, combining satellite and geospatial technology with agricultural domain expertise, historical data, weather information and AI/ML. Stakeholder engagement and a focus on practical outcomes have been central to building confidence in technology-led approaches and enabling them to scale.

About the Organization

RMSI Cropalytics provides the technology and intelligence infrastructure that enables Roli Jindal's vision of a more inclusive and data-driven agricultural ecosystem. The organization brings together satellite imagery, AI, machine learning, GIS, remote sensing, agronomy, historical yield data, weather information and predictive analytics to convert complex datasets into actionable agricultural intelligence. This enabling role can be seen across its women-focused interventions.



Through the Honey Traceability System, technology has helped women beekeepers access verified quality certification, formal markets and better price realisation. Through UPDASP, village-level agricultural intelligence is supporting more than 1.5 crore farmers, including 45%+ women farmers, with information that can improve productivity, reduce input costs and support better decision-making.

Through the Farmer Distress Support System and Pest & Disease Prediction Tool, timely information is helping women and other farmers respond earlier to crop distress and pest risks. At a broader level, RMSI's scale — covering 792 districts and 6.65 lakh villages — allows these technology-led approaches to move beyond individual projects and contribute to a wider agricultural intelligence ecosystem. The organization's work demonstrates how technology, when combined with strong agricultural knowledge and an inclusion-focused leadership approach, can help make markets, information and decision-making more accessible to women and smallholder farmers.

RMSI Cropalytics' contribution extends across multiple points of the agricultural value chain, where reliable and timely information can influence planning, resource allocation and market decisions. By supporting stakeholders with a consistent evidence base, its work helps create greater alignment between agricultural programmes, enterprises and the communities they serve.

Its approach also places emphasis on making agricultural intelligence relevant to local realities. Rather than treating agricultural conditions as uniform across large geographies, the organization enables stakeholders to identify variations at finer geographic levels and use these insights for more informed planning. This localised perspective strengthens the practical value of data, particularly in contexts where agricultural conditions and farmer needs can vary significantly from one area to another. The organization's work demonstrates how technology, when combined with strong agricultural knowledge and an inclusion-focused leadership approach, can help make markets, information and decision-making more accessible to women and smallholder farmers.

Awards & Recognitions

- FICCI – Best Women AgTech Entrepreneur, 2022 – recognised Roli Jindal's pioneering work in technology-driven agricultural transformation.
- FICCI – Best Agri Startup in Application of Digital Technologies, 2021 – recognised RMSI Cropalytics' application of digital and geospatial technologies in agriculture.
- NASSCOM Emerge 50 – Bharat Category, 2020 – RMSI Cropalytics was selected among promising technology enterprises creating transformational impact in Bharat-focused markets.
- Winner – Agri AI Grand Challenge, 2021, organised by NASSCOM and the Telangana AI Mission, for the Farmer / Output-Backed Credit Risk Assessment use case.



Women At Work





Vishala Reddy Vuyyala, India

Organization	: Minkan Agro Industries Pvt. Ltd. (Millet Bank)
Country	: India
City/Region	: Hyderabad
Sector/Industry	: Food & Agriculture
Year of Establishment	: 2021
Website	: www.milletbank.in / www.visv.org

The Woman Behind the Change

Ms. Vishala Reddy Vuyyala's story is one of returning to her roots with a larger purpose. A farmer's daughter from Rayalaseema, one of southern India's dryland agricultural regions, she grew up understanding the realities of smallholder farming, climate vulnerability and rural livelihoods.

Over two decades, Vishala built a professional career spanning hospitality, destination development, creative industries and large-scale civic initiatives. These experiences gave her a strong understanding of markets, consumer behaviour, enterprise building and stakeholder engagement. She eventually chose to bring this experience back to the communities and landscapes that had shaped her.

In 2021, she founded Millet Bank with a central ambition: to make traditional, climate-resilient grains relevant to contemporary consumers while creating greater economic value for the communities that produce them. The venture has since evolved into a broader food-systems mission. Vishala's work brings together enterprise development, nutrition, women's entrepreneurship, rural livelihoods and climate resilience. Her approach seeks to move indigenous grains from the margins of traditional consumption into modern food and economic systems.

This vision also extends through Vishala Innovations for Sustainable Value Chain (ViSV Foundation), where her work focuses on women-led food systems, rural enterprise development, skills and market ecosystems.

Impact Created

Millet Bank's growth demonstrates how market creation for climate-resilient foods can generate economic opportunities while strengthening participation across the rural value chain.

The enterprise has grown from 3 products to 50+ millet-based SKUs, while its team has expanded from 3 to 58 professionals. Its distribution network now spans 18 Indian states, with exports reaching 5+ countries. The enterprise has delivered more than 50,000 premium millet and cultural gift hampers to over 250 institutional and corporate clients.



Its wider ecosystem includes 500+ farmers, women entrepreneurs, micro-enterprises and rural artisans, creating opportunities for participation in value addition and formal markets. Through its associated foundation, more than 460 rural women have been trained in millet-based recipes and entrepreneurship in partnership with the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP).

Beyond direct economic participation, Millet Bank has invested in awareness and public engagement. It has undertaken 40+ millet exhibitions, demonstrations and public installations and participated in 100+ regional, national and international forums promoting indigenous grains, healthier diets and resilient food systems.

Together, these outcomes reflect a model that combines enterprise growth with livelihood creation, women's participation and wider awareness of climate-resilient foods.

Innovation & Leadership

Vishala's leadership is anchored in a fundamental shift in perspective: she approaches millet revival not simply as an agricultural or nutrition challenge, but as a market-development challenge.

This thinking has shaped the way Millet Bank approaches product development. Traditional grains are adapted to contemporary consumption through Ready-to-Eat and Ready-to-Cook formats, supported by branding, consumer engagement and market access. The objective is not merely to preserve traditional foods, but to make them competitive within evolving food categories.

Her approach also recognises that value must be created across the wider ecosystem. Farmers, women entrepreneurs, processors, rural artisans, institutions and consumers are connected through a value-chain model designed to strengthen participation beyond primary production.

Experimentation is central to this approach. Ideas are tested at the grassroots, refined through partnerships and adapted for wider application. Her work with communities, government, institutions and industry enables solutions to evolve in response to real-world conditions.

This systems perspective extends to her work through ViSV Foundation, including efforts around women-led food systems and the Kuppam constituency-level food-systems model.

Underlying this approach is a clear leadership philosophy: economic viability and social impact should reinforce each other. Rather than treating community outcomes as a parallel intervention, Vishala seeks to embed them within the enterprise itself.



Women At Work



About the Organization

Millet Bank, a brand of Minkan Agro Industries Pvt. Ltd., is a purpose-led food enterprise working to reposition millets and other indigenous, climate-resilient grains for contemporary markets.

Its model combines product innovation, value addition, branding and market development. Traditional food knowledge is translated into formats that respond to changing consumer expectations, while market-facing activities help build sustained demand for millet-based foods.

The enterprise has developed Ready-to-Eat and Ready-to-Cook offerings and complements its product work with consumer awareness initiatives, exhibitions, demonstrations, institutional engagement and food-culture experiences. This enables Millet Bank to work across the food value chain—from the way millets are presented and consumed to the way they are positioned within modern markets.

Its work has also brought millet-based food and cultural experiences to high-profile national and international platforms. Millet Bank curated the official Millet Experience and Gifting for the G20 Agriculture Ministers' Meeting 2023 and the Millet and Indian Food-Culture Experience for the G20 Leaders' Summit 2023 Spouses Programme.

The enterprise has built a strong institutional and corporate market presence, with products reaching organizations including Microsoft, Amazon, Google, S&P Global, Hindalco, Aurobindo Pharma and Rapido, alongside its presence across e-commerce and quick-commerce channels.

Millet Bank's broader value proposition lies in demonstrating that indigenous, climate-resilient foods can be positioned as viable contemporary products while creating opportunities for participation across the wider food ecosystem.

Awards & Recognitions

- Winner – Atal New India Challenge (ANIC), NITI Aayog, Government of India
- National Startup Awards Finalist, DPIIT, Government of India
- Featured in NITI Aayog's "75 Agri Startups & Innovators" Compendium
- Best Millet Startup – IIMR–Nutrihub, recognised across Growth & Scaling / Branding & Promotion for three consecutive years (2022, 2023 & 2024)
- Millet Bank showcased at NITI Aayog Technology Week, inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India
- Curated the official Millet Experience & Gifting for the G20 Agriculture Ministers' Meeting 2023
- Curated the Millet & Indian Food-Culture Experience for the G20 Leaders' Summit 2023 – Spouses Programme
- Speaker and participant at international platforms, including global forums on food systems, sustainability, entrepreneurship and climate action; her profile specifically records participation at COP28, Dubai
- Member – BRICS Women Business Alliance, Food Security Council (2026)
- Member – National Task Force on Millets, FICCI
- Featured in UN Women's "75 Transformative Women Stories" (2024)
- Recognised among the Top 50 Women Leaders of Telangana (2025) and featured in the associated coffee-table publication
- Recipient of recognition for a Best Behavioural Change Campaign, reflecting her earlier work in citizen engagement and large-scale social and civic campaigns
- Consultant – Gender Transformative Action (GTA), supported by GIZ
- Member – Coalition of Food Systems Transformation India (CoFTI)
- Mentor to startups, women entrepreneurs and emerging youth leaders





Yogita Patidar, India

Organization	: Corteva Agriscience
Country	: India
City/Region	: Delhi/ Hyderabad
Sector/Industry	: Agriscience
Year of Establishment	: 2020

The Woman Behind the Change

Ms. Yogita Patidar, a homemaker from a farming family in Barwani, Madhya Pradesh, understood the challenges faced by smallholder farmers - uncertain incomes, limited market access and few opportunities to participate in agricultural decision-making. In 2019, she joined an SHG under the State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM), where access to savings, credit and peer support helped her start small enterprises including stitching and pickle-making. These experiences gave her financial independence and, more importantly, the confidence to take on larger responsibilities.

Her journey took a significant turn when she became associated with Barwani Shubh Laxmi Farmer Producer Company (FPC). Established on 31 October 2022, the women-led FPC was created to help farmers overcome challenges around inputs, markets, productivity and bargaining power through collective action. The FPC is supported by Corteva Agriscience under its 2 Million Women Programme.

Yogita joined the FPC as a Promoter in 2023 and gained hands-on experience in farmer mobilisation, share-capital collection, input supply, buyer negotiations and institutional governance. In 2025, she was elected as a Director and Authorized Signatory, taking on responsibility for strategic planning, financial approvals and coordination with banks, buyers and government institutions.

With support from Corteva, the FPC has evolved into a structured women-led agribusiness.

Today, it represents 1,283 women farmer shareholders across 28 villages and an annual turnover of ₹1.66 crore. The FPC brings farmers together to access quality seeds, fertilizers, agrochemicals and cattle feed, while enabling collective aggregation and marketing of agricultural produce.

For Yogita, this collective platform has meant more than access to markets. It has enabled her to move from individual livelihood activities to institutional leadership, giving her greater exposure to business management, financial systems, market negotiations and decision-making. Through the FPC, women farmers have greater access to inputs, technical knowledge and market opportunities, helping strengthen their participation in the agricultural value chain.

The transformation is also visible in the confidence and agency of women associated with the FPC. Women who were once largely excluded from financial and agricultural decisions are now participating in meetings, handling transactions, negotiating with buyers and contributing to institutional decisions.



Impact Created

Yogita has become an example of this progression - from SHG member and micro-entrepreneur to FPC Director. Her leadership now extends beyond the FPC. She serves as a resource person at the Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI), where she shares practical insights on entrepreneurship, SHG-FPC convergence and women-led agribusiness. She also represents the FPC at district- and state-level workshops, exposure visits and government programmes, helping connect grassroots women farmers with formal institutions.

Barwani Shubh Laxmi FPC currently represents 1,283 women farmers across 28 villages, covering more than 3,500 acres of cultivated land and generating an annual turnover of ₹1.66 crore. The FPC works across crops including wheat, gram, cotton, maize and vegetables, combining input supply, production support, aggregation, processing and market linkages.

The FPC combines the SHG-to-FPC model with collective agribusiness, creating a pathway for women to move from individual livelihoods into enterprise ownership and leadership. Its model brings together input supply, agricultural training, aggregation and market linkages. It is also introducing AI-enabled learning and digital advisory, helping farmers access information on crop practices, weather and pest management in simpler, locally accessible formats.

Innovation & Leadership

For Yogita, leadership is rooted in collective strength and leading by example. Her own progression reflects this philosophy: she began by building confidence through small livelihood activities, gained experience through collective institutions, and then took on formal responsibilities within the FPC. Today, she believes leadership is not about holding power, but about creating more leaders, particularly by encouraging other women to take decisions, assume responsibility and participate in agricultural enterprises.

Yogita's early journey involved barriers that many rural women face, including limited decision-making power, restricted mobility, limited financial and technical exposure, and the challenge of balancing household responsibilities with professional commitments.

She overcame these through continuous learning, peer support through SHGs, institutional guidance, exposure visits and gradually taking on greater responsibilities within the FPC. As her experience and results grew, so did recognition from her family and community.



Women At Work



About the Organization

Corteva Agriscience India's flagship CSR initiative, the “2MillionWomen in ag by 2030,” is a programme aiming to transform rural livelihoods by enabling women across the agri value chain - women as farmers, agri-entrepreneurs, climate leaders, and decision-makers in agriculture. Launched in 2024, this programme aims to enable two million rural women by 2030 through integrated interventions in livelihood enhancement, skilling, health, nutrition, and women-led institutions.

The programme has already created measurable economic and social impact across 23 states of India. More than 79 women-led Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) have been strengthened through governance support, business planning, market linkages, and value-addition opportunities. Over 1,900 rural women have been trained as agri-entrepreneurs in areas such as silage production, seed grading, nursery management, and sustainable farming practices, enabling them to generate independent incomes and local employment opportunities. In addition, more than 100 women from farming families have been trained and licensed as drone pilots, introducing rural women to modern precision agriculture technologies.

The programme has also invested significantly in education and inclusion. Over 1,200 female agriculture students from marginalized communities have received scholarships and mentoring support to pursue higher education in agriculture and STEM-related fields.

On the social front, Corteva has integrated health and nutrition into the empowerment ecosystem. Through partnerships with healthcare organizations, mobile health services and awareness programmes have reached ~ 1.7 lakh women across multiple states, focusing on menstrual hygiene, nutrition, mental health, and women-centric diseases.

Awards & Recognitions

- Best Tailoring Center Award, Barwani Collector Sir
- Best Women Director, Reliance Foundation
- Corteva Agriscience recognised for commendable work as Socially Responsible Company 2023-24 by FICCI





Irina Murashova, Russia

Organization	: Rostock Alliance Group
Country	: Russian Federation
City/Region	: Volgograd
Sector/Industry	: Agriculture
Year of Establishment	: 1994
Website	: https://rassadaprof.ru/

The Woman Behind the Change

Ms. Irina Murashova is the Director and Company Owner of Rostock Alliance Group, an agricultural enterprise in the Russian Federation. For over three decades, she has managed an agricultural business that includes vegetable seed sales, seedling production, and seed breeding. Her work also includes the development of technologies for growing vegetable young plants and the start of their industrial production. Irina Murashova graduated from Herzen State Pedagogical Institute and began her professional career as an excursion guide at a high school. Her professional values have been shaped by the importance she places on family, nature, freedom, and independence.

In 1994, she established a company focused on importing vegetable seeds. This marked the beginning of a long-term commitment to strengthening agricultural production. A decade later in 2004, she led the construction and Organization of a trial and consulting centre for vegetable growers.

The Organization expanded further in 2010 with the establishment of a nursery specialising in coniferous and ornamental plants. In 2017, the company began developing technologies for growing vegetable young plants followed by the launch of industrial production in 2018. In 2023, the enterprise established a breeding and seed-growing centre, adding another important dimension to its agricultural activities.

Among the defining milestones of her career was the first highly professional production of young plants in the Russian Federation. Another defining milestone was the creation of a breeding and seed-growing centre.

Rostock Alliance Group operates in the agricultural sector under the general management of Irina Murashova. The business focuses on vegetable seed sales, seedling production, and seed breeding. Its principal products and services include vegetable seeds and the production of young plants through propagation.

The organization's unique value proposition is the supply of seeds and young plants. It employs approximately 250 people and serves the seeds and seedlings markets. Its customer base includes farmers, professional glasshouses, processing factories, and local growers.



Impact Created

Rostock Alliance Group has contributed to the development of professional seedling supply in the Russian Federation while generating employment and supporting agricultural producers across multiple regions.

The organization employs approximately 250 people in Volgograd, Stavropol, Rostov-on-Don, Astrakhan and some more regions of the Russian Federation. Its customers include farmers, professional glasshouses, processing factories and local growers, serving both the seeds and seedlings markets.

A significant market-level contribution has been the creation of professional-scale seedling supply. According to the organization, this market did not exist in the Russian Federation before its seedlings centre was established, making Rostock the first to develop it on a professional scale. The organization has also experienced some seedling exports to Belarus and Azerbaijan, extending its activities beyond the domestic market.

Women's participation is a notable feature of the organization. Almost all top management positions at Rostock are occupied by women. The organisation also notes that many types of work in the nursery require "gentle women's hands".

Its community engagement extends to the restoration of natural resources, including forests and rivers, as well as landscaping, tree planting in the region and nature clean-up campaigns. Skills development is maintained across all position levels. Employees in top positions receive training through Skolkovo and the Scandinavian Economic School.

Innovation & Leadership

Murashova's leadership has focused on identifying gaps in agricultural production and developing professional capabilities around them. A central example is the creation of professional-scale young plant production in a market where farmers had traditionally produced their own young plants.

Rostock introduced an innovative grafting technology applied to four vegetable crops. The seedling complex "Rostock", created by Murashova, provides seedlings to agricultural enterprises across a wide range of regions in southern Russia and beyond.

The main challenge was that the organization's customers became its competitors, as farmers in Russia had traditionally grown young plants themselves. The organization overcame this challenge by demonstrating to growers the advantages of being relieved of the labour-intensive work of producing young plants.



About the Organization

Rostock Alliance Group is an agricultural enterprise established in 1994. Its business encompasses vegetable seed sales, young plant production and seed breeding. The organization supplies vegetable seeds and produces young plants through propagation. Its core value proposition is the supply of seeds and young plants to agricultural producers.

Rostock's capabilities have developed progressively over three decades. The enterprise began with vegetable seed imports in 1994. This was followed by a trial and consulting centre for vegetable growers in 2004 and a nursery for coniferous and ornamental plants in 2010. Development of technologies for growing vegetable young plants began in 2017, industrial production started in 2018, and a breeding and seed-growing centre was created in 2023.

The seedling complex "Rostock" is a central component of the organization's young plant production activities, providing seedlings to agricultural enterprises across a wide range of regions in southern Russia and beyond.

Women's empowerment within the organization is supported through full social rights. Almost all top management positions are occupied by women, while professional development is maintained across all position levels, including training for senior staff through Skolkovo and the Scandinavian Economic School.

Awards & Recognitions

- Awarded the titles of Honored Worker of Agriculture and Honored Farmer of the Russian Federation.
- "Rostock" was awarded by CX World Awards – "Best Social Project 2024".



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