

## **Global Experts Unite for Agrobiodiversity Management at the International Agrobiodiversity Congress (IAC)**

The 3rd International Agrobiodiversity Congress (IAC) was held at Convention Centre, Kunming, Yunnan, China, from May 20 to May 22, 2025, focused on the critical role of agrobiodiversity in ensuring sustainable agricultural systems for both people and the planet. The congress, co-hosted by organizations like the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, CGIAR, and the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, provided a platform for global experts to discuss strategies for preserving agricultural biodiversity. Some 800+ participants from 50 countries attended the Congress.

While addressing the participants, Dr RS Paroda, President, ISPGR and Chairman, TAAS, made a speech on “Road from Delhi-Rome-Kunming” during Inaugural Session of the 3rd IAC. He presented an account on the progress made in India related to agrobiodiversity management in context of post-Delhi Declaration that was adopted during 1st IAC held in 2016 at New Delhi. Dr Paroda briefly mentioned about the organization of 1st IAC and emphasized the urgent need to conserve and utilize agrobiodiversity to address global challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, and environmental degradation. Dr Paroda highlighted the progress on (i) effective coordination of 5 bureaus i.e. NBPGR, NBAGR, NBFGR, NBAIM and NBAI; (ii) improved conservation strategies including community seed banks with main thrust of landraces and crop wild relatives; (iii) National Safety Duplicate Genebank; (iv) trait discovery of landraces and CWRs; (v) registration of trait-specific germplasm and farmers’ varieties; (vi) development of biofortified crops; (vii) organization of 9<sup>th</sup> Governing Body meeting of ITPGRFA and Global symposium on Farmers’ Rights; (viii) amendments of Biological diversity Act; and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan. A key theme of Dr Paroda’s speech was the need for conservation of genetic resources. He stressed the importance of gene banks and in situ conservation efforts to safeguard traditional and wild crop varieties. Dr Paroda called for increased investment in such conservation efforts, emphasizing that the loss of genetic diversity is irreversible and poses a long-term threat to global agriculture.



Dr Paroda also addressed the role of agrobiodiversity in improving livelihoods, particularly for smallholder farmers and underscored the need for policies that support farmers in adopting such sustainable practices, including access to markets for diverse crops and incentives for conservation.

Dr Paroda concluded his presentation with a call to action for global collaboration. He urged governments, research institutions, and the private sector to work together to prioritize agrobiodiversity in agricultural development agendas. Overall, Dr Paroda's speech underscored the multifaceted benefits of agrobiodiversity, from enhancing food security and nutrition to supporting environmental sustainability and cultural heritage. His insights very well aligned with the congress's theme of "Agrobiodiversity for People and Planet," reinforcing the need for collective action to address the pressing challenges facing global agriculture.

### **Side Event: Sustainability Challenges and Solutions for Farmer-led Initiatives on Community Genebanks**

Indian Society of Plant Genetics Resources (ISPGR), Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), India Office, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), and Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), organized a side event titled as *"Sustainability Challenges and Solutions for Farmer-led Initiatives on Community Genebanks"* on May 21, 2025, during 3<sup>rd</sup> IAC. About 30 participants of IAC attended the side event.

Dr Paroda Chaired the Side Event. He discussed the importance of Community Genebanks (CGBs) and the role of farmers in maintain the precious germplasm in CGBs. He also underscored the challenges like limitation of funding, inadequate infrastructure, climate impacts, and inadequate trained manpower to operate



the CGBs efficiently. Therefore, government support is vital in providing resources and policy support to sustain the CGBs.



Dr RK Tyagi, Vice President, ISPGR convened the session. Dr JC Rana, Country Representative, Alliance BI-CIAT, India and Dr Ronnie Vernooy made the presentations. Dr Anuradha Agrawal, General Secretary, ISPGR coordinated of Side Event and proposed vote of thanks. Dr Kuldeep Tripathi, Treasurer, ISPGR was the Rapporteur.

