

Technology integration imperative in agri, food business: Amaethon

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Amidst growing challenges and changing food habits in the agri and food business, technology integration has become imperative, said experts at the ongoing Amaethon 2015, the food and agribusiness summit organised by students of Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

“Growing challenges in the agri business and food business has made use of technology and its integration imperative in the current scenario,” said Balwant Singh, Director, Seedbuzz as one of the panellists in the ‘ICT Dialogue’ panel discussion during Amaethon.

The three-day event witnessed several sessions including panel discussions

on various issues like ICT, venture space and development agenda through agriculture, among others.

In her keynote address, Mohini Datt, Research Analyst, World Bank, highlighted the need for cooperation that countries of South Asia should think of in view of their shared geography. This was followed by IIM-A faculty member G. Raghuram’s address that traced the evolution of IIMA and the Post Graduate Programme in Agribusiness Management and IIMA faculty member and faculty advisor – Amaethon 2015 Vasant Gandhi’s talk on challenges facing Indian Agriculture due to growing population with scarce resources, urban migration of labour, liberalisation, and advent of new technologies and changing

food habits of the population.

Gandhi highlighted Amaethon has moved on from being a small event to the one which this year has attracted nearly 600 participants from across the country and even overseas for the first time.

As part of the panel discussion on ‘Food Dialogue’, panellists spoke of the need of food security and suggested various ways like efficient PDS, introduction and commercialisation of GM food crops, extrapolating the growth and success strategy of dairy in other sectors of agriculture etc. to ensure food security. The panel consisted of Raghuram; Atul Chaturvedi, CEO, Adani Wilmar; N. Seetharama, Executive Director, ABLE Ag; and S. Venkataramani, Chief Marketing Officer, ABT

Foods, a company of Sakthi Group. Another panel discussion, ‘Women Leaders in Social Entrepreneurship’, comprised of panellists like Lalitha Kumaramangalam, Chairperson, NCW; Archana Garodia, Gupta, President Elect of FLO (women’s wing of FICCI); Reema Nanavati, SEWA; and Indira Nityanandam, Visiting Faculty, IIM-A. The panellists spoke about the importance of skill building in women to overcome fear and to become effective leaders. Kumaramangalam spoke about the movement of SHGs in empowering women of this country and the emergence of new women entrepreneurship groups and the need for policy level changes and enabling infrastructure to cater to this group.

Apart from panel discus-

sions, the Amaethon also featured a workshop on ‘Cold Storage and Warehousing’, conducted by Debjit Roy, faculty member - Production and Quantitative Systems Area, at IIM-A. The workshop aimed to focus the gap between existing and desired status of storage facilities in India and the possible ways to overcome this lacuna.

In the ‘Venture Space Discussion’, the panellists including Sonal Baid, Founder, Aura Herbal Textiles Ltd.; Avinashi Sharan, Founder & Ex-CEO, Cinque Education and V. Pradeep Kumar, Executive Director, Mother India Farms, brought out issues and opportunities faced by start-ups and means to explore new business avenues.

Meanwhile, there was a

panel discussion on “Value Chain of Agricultural Commodities” led by Prof. Gopal Naik, IIM Bangalore, Prof. Chetan Soman, IIMA and Prof. Vasant Gandhi, IIMA where current issues in the supply chain management, particularly in agribusiness sector were discussed.

The ‘ICT Dialogue’ panel discussion involving Baskar S. Reddy, Executive Director, Syngenta Foundation; Kavita Ranganathan, faculty member - Information Systems Area, IIM-A; Neil Patel, Founder, Awaaz.De, along with Balwant Singh saw the discussion centering on the importance of information and communication technologies in enhancing farmer incomes in agriculture, besides a host of other applications.