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# ICRISAT celebrates 40th birthday

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**Bangalore:** The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) held a program in its Patancheru campus to commemorate its 40th anniversary. The chief guest of the event was Professor MS Swaminathan, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, India, and chairman, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, who said that, "Inclusive agriculture is the key to winning the fight against poverty, hunger and malnutrition in the dryland tropics of the world,"

In his talk Prof Swaminathan highlighted the need for inclusiveness to empower the farming poor. He highlighted that by giving smallholder farmers access to technologies and by connecting them to markets, we could provide them options for a more profitable and resilient agriculture towards achieving food, nutrition and economic security.

With the theme "A journey to prosperity in the dryland tropics," the week-long celebration began with a science symposium on Monday, attended by about 100 international agriculture experts, partners and scientists, and a loyalty day program on Tuesday to honor staff for their dedicated service to the Institute. ICRISAT's 67th governing board meeting will also be held later this week as part of the anniversary celebrations.

Professor Swaminathan also recognized ICRISAT's four decades of commitment and dedicated service to the most underprivileged sector of the world, the poor in the dryland tropics. He posed a number of challenges to the institute including, crop biofortification to combat the 'hidden hunger' or malnutrition due to micronutrient deficiencies prevailing in the developing world; and appropriate mechanization to help resource poor farmers, particularly women, in ensuring the economic viability of small-farm operations.

Dr Nigel Poole, chair of board, ICRISAT, highlighted the institute's science-based and sustainable innovations have greatly improved rural livelihoods, contributing to the CGIAR's high return of $17 for every dollar invested. He stressed that this impact is due, in no small part to the institute's strategic public, private and civil society partners worldwide.

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In his annual day report, General William Dar, director, ICRISAT, said that the 40-year journey was "marked by the exploration of opportunities for inclusive and sustainable development to finally surmount the twin challenges of global hunger and poverty in the dryland tropics." He added that the way to enhance "our relevance is through excellence in our science and in our ability to influence policies and markets."

Professor Swaminathan also raised the important role of science communication to inform, educate and mobilize the public on the importance of such technologies as agri-biotechnology in the fight against poverty and hunger, and the decision makers to come up with supportive policies. Professor Swaminathan is known as the Father of India's Green Revolution, and was one of the architects of ICRISAT's creation.