

REPORT ON THE 5th NATIONAL SPICE CONFERENCE 2026

The World Spice Organisation (WSO) organised the 5th National Spice Conference (NSC 2026) on **19–20 September 2026 at the Novotel Jaipur Convention Centre, Jaipur**. Held under the theme *“Empowering Farmers, Protecting Consumers,”* the conference brought together about 450 delegates representing farmers, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), spice processors, exporters, retailers, testing laboratories, industry associations and other stakeholders across the spice value chain.



The conference provided a platform to deliberate on key challenges and opportunities facing the Indian spice sector, with a focus on improving farmer livelihoods, promoting sustainable production, strengthening food safety and meeting evolving market and regulatory requirements. The two-day programme featured expert-led business sessions, panel discussions, an exhibition and a dedicated buyer–seller meet.



Inaugural Session

The inaugural session featured a welcome address by Mr. Ramkumar Menon, Chairman, WSO, followed by addresses from senior government and industry representatives, including Shri M. S. Manivannan, IAS, Secretary, Spices Board, and Smt. Manju Rajpal, IAS, Principal Secretary, Agriculture and Horticulture Department, Government of Rajasthan.



Mr. M. S. Manivannan, IAS, Secretary, Spices Board, in his keynote address highlighted the Board’s initiatives in productivity enhancement, sustainable production, post-harvest management, quality improvement, technology adoption and market development. Emphasising the need to strengthen food safety from farm to market, he called for greater farmer empowerment through knowledge, technology, infrastructure and market support.

He stressed collaboration among government, research institutions, FPOs and industry, alongside shared responsibility for the costs and rewards of quality. He urged the sector to convert evolving global standards into opportunities to enhance the competitiveness of Indian spices and called for strategies to address industry challenges and strengthen India's position in global markets.



WORLD SPICE ORGANISATION

**NATIONAL
SPICE
CONFERENCE**



Ms. Manju Rajpal, IAS, Principal Secretary, Agriculture and Horticulture, Government of Rajasthan, outlined the state government's initiatives to strengthen the spice sector through micro-irrigation, agro-processing clusters, food parks and district-level crop development programmes. She highlighted the Food Processing Policy 2026–2029, which provides for a 25% upfront subsidy for eligible FPOs, along with initiatives to establish incubation centres and support priority crops such as cumin, fennel and coriander.

She emphasised the need to translate Rajasthan's significant spice production into greater economic value through processing, branding and improved market access. She also highlighted the importance of strengthening traceability, research and testing infrastructure to improve quality and build consumer confidence. She stressed the need to promote high-value, water-efficient crops in view of Rajasthan's water constraints. She called for support from the Spices Board in capacity building, training and attracting industry participation.

Mr. Tejus Gandhi, Chairman, Federation of Indian Spice Stakeholders (FISS) offered his felicitations. Mr. Ganapathy K. D., Business

Committee Chairman, NSC 2026, set the context for the conference.



Business Sessions

The business sessions addressed the interconnected priorities of farmer empowerment, sustainability, food safety, innovation and market access.

Session 1: Farmer Empowerment & Income Growth



The session explored ways to strengthen FPOs, improve farmer incomes through value addition and market linkages, and expand access to finance, insurance and risk management. Dr. Vinay Bhardwaj, Director, National Research Centre on Seed Spices (NRCSS), moderated the discussion.



Speakers included Mr. Ramesh Bhandari, CEO, Sri Venketa Sai FPO; Mr. Amarander Y, Senior Manager – Backward Integration & Procurement – Spices, ITC Ltd., Agri Business Division; and Mr. Arun Yadav, Executive Vice President, National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX).

The discussions highlighted the need to prioritise farmer prosperity and sustainable livelihoods through stronger FPOs, improved market access and financial inclusion. A phased sustainability roadmap was also proposed, emphasising traceability, resource conservation and responsible sourcing.

Session 2: Sustainability & Responsible Sourcing



This session examined practical approaches to reducing environmental impacts while building resilient and responsible spice supply chains. Topics included carbon footprint reduction, water management, agroforestry, natural and regenerative farming, climate resilience and responsible sourcing. The session was moderated by Mr. Ravindra Singh, Director, Indo-German Biodiversity Programme. Presentations were delivered by Mr. Jagjeet Singh, Country Director, IDH; Dr. Aastha Bajaj, Founder and Director, Ancient India Group; Dr. Poonam

Pande, Senior Manager, McCormick & Company; and Ms. Syamala Gouri Lingala, Senior Manager – Sustainability, Jayanti Herbs and Spice.

The session highlighted the need for coordinated action across the spice value chain to address climate-related risks and promote sustainable farming practices. Discussions covered the importance of responsible sourcing, resource conservation and collaborative approaches involving industry, farmers and other stakeholders. The speakers emphasised the need to align sustainability initiatives with market demand, strengthen farmer partnerships and ensure access to finance and traceability systems.

Session 3: Food Safety & Consumer Protection

With international market requirements becoming increasingly stringent, the session focused on ensuring food safety throughout the spice supply chain. Discussions covered pesticide residue management, global regulatory compliance, quality assurance, certification and measures to combat adulteration.



Dr. Debi Sharma, Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Pesticide Residues, moderated the session. The panel comprised Dr. Dinesh



Singh Bisht, Scientist, Spices Board; Mr. Avinash Maheshwari, CEO, Geo-Chem Industries Pvt. Ltd.; Dr. Vandana Tripathy, Network Coordinator, All India Network Project on Pesticide Residues, ICAR–Indian Agricultural Research Institute; and Mr. Ashvin Subrahmanyam, CEO – International Business, Orkla India.

The discussions underscored the need for stronger collaboration between the Spices Board, ICAR, laboratories and industry to improve residue monitoring, harmonise testing practices and strengthen export compliance. Greater farmer awareness of pesticide use and pre-harvest intervals was also identified as a priority.

Session 4: Innovation & Future Readiness



The session highlighted the potential of technology and innovation to improve productivity, sustainability and compliance in spice production. Discussions covered AI and agri-tech applications, precision farming, compliant crop protection solutions and post-harvest processing. Dr. Santhosh J. Eapen, Advisor, WSO and Member of the FSSAI Scientific Panel on Pesticide Residues, moderated the session. Speakers included Mr. Prashant Gunye, CEO and Managing Director, Agreeta Solutions Pvt. Ltd.; Mr. Ganesan S., Vice President – Policy & Outreach, UPL; and Mr. Satish Kumar, Managing Director, VSR Enpro Consultants Pvt. Ltd.

The session highlighted the potential of digital traceability, advanced diagnostic technologies and stronger industry–research collaboration to address emerging challenges in spice production and quality assurance. The need for increased research funding, improved pesticide registration for spice crops and better integration of supply-chain data was also emphasised.

Session 5: Role of Farmer Groups in Ensuring Compliance with Quality and Market Requirements



This session highlighted how farmer collectives can help producers understand and meet quality standards and buyer requirements. It featured perspectives on chilli, turmeric, cumin and coriander FPOs from the western and southern India and integrated village cooperative societies from the North East. Dr. Venugopal K. J. Menon, Managing Director, Food Safety and Quality Solutions Inc., moderated the session. Speakers included Dr. Takhat Singh Rajpurohit and Mr. K. Upender Reddy, Master Trainers under NSSP–WSO, and Mr. Augustus Suting, Director, Meghalaya Basin Management Agency (MBMA).

Dr. Rajpurohit and Mr. Upender Reddy explained the steps taken by the FPOs working under NSSP to maintain the quality and safety of the spices. Mr. Suting mentioned the ways in which MBMA



has helped improve the infrastructure and market access of the spices produced in Meghalaya. Mulching, using bio-pesticides, using only recommended green label pesticides, data bank of traditional knowledge, alternate solutions, exchanging products and technical skills across India were touched upon.

Session 6: Farmer Challenges & Crop Outlook

The session provided a platform for farmers to share field-level challenges and perspectives on crop outlook across major spices, including cumin, turmeric, pepper, chilli and coriander. Moderated by Mr. Karthik, Co-Chair, FISS, the discussion brought the farmer perspective into the wider deliberations on production, markets and sustainability.



Farmers highlighted the growing impact of climate variability, declining water availability and crop-specific pest and disease challenges, including thrips and whiteflies in chilli and root rot in turmeric. The discussions also noted increasing farmer awareness of integrated pest management and the need to explore varieties suited to changing climatic conditions.

Session 7: Changing Regulations in Organic Farming & Certifications

The session examined evolving organic regulations, certification challenges, traceability and opportunities for developing organic spice markets.



Mr. Manoj Kumar Menon, Executive Director, ICCOA, moderated the discussion. Speakers included Mr. Sandeep Bhargava, CEO, OneCert International; Mr. Abhijeet Bhosale, Assistant General Manager – Farm Production & Procurement, 24 Mantra Organic; and Mr. Joshi Tuisum, Project Coordinator, Sustainable Land Management, MBMA.

The discussions highlighted growing opportunities in organic spice markets alongside increasingly stringent certification and documentation requirements. The need to address certification costs, fragmented production, contamination risks and limited access to support services was emphasised, with collective approaches and improved institutional support identified as important enablers.

Session 8: Role of FPOs in Consumer Protection and Food Safety





WORLD SPICE ORGANISATION

**NATIONAL
SPICE
CONFERENCE**

The session highlighted the contribution of spice-sector FPOs in meeting buyer expectations on quality, compliance and food safety. It featured a presentation by Mr. Kumaraswami Reddy, CEO, Tolakari FPO, Kurnool, showcasing the role of farmer organisations in connecting responsible production with consumer protection. This was followed by a presentation by Mr. Ganapathy KD on the buyer requirements received.

Exhibition and Buyer-Seller Meet

The conference exhibition featured **16 stalls**, offering organisations an opportunity to showcase products, services and technologies relevant to the spice industry.



The dedicated buyer-seller meet brought together **15 FPOs and approximately 20 companies**, creating opportunities for direct engagement between farmer organisations and prospective buyers. The initiative aimed to strengthen market linkages, facilitate business discussions and encourage sustained commercial relationships.



The support of sponsors and participation of exhibitors contributed significantly to the success of NSC 2026. Their involvement enriched the conference by bringing diverse industry perspectives, showcasing relevant products and solutions, and facilitating interactions across the spice value chain. WSO extends its sincere appreciation to all sponsors and exhibitors and is grateful for their partnership and continued commitment to the growth and development of the Indian spice sector.

NSC 2026 reinforced the importance of collaboration across the spice value chain in achieving better farmer incomes, sustainable production, regulatory compliance and consumer protection. Through knowledge exchange, industry engagement and direct interaction between FPOs and buyers, the conference provided a valuable platform for advancing a competitive, responsible and sustainable Indian spice sector.



WORLD SPICE ORGANISATION



NSC 2026 SPONSORS

Platinum Sponsor



Associate Partner



Diamond Sponsors



Sustainability Partner

Knowledge partner

Lanyard Sponsor



Technology partner

Regen Agri Partner



Quality Partner

Responsible Sourcing Partner

Silver Sponsor

