(16 March, 2024)

Brainstorming Meeting to Increase the Productivity of Wheat and Barley

India cultivates wheat across approximately 30 million hectares, with total production hovering around 110 million tonnes and an average yield of 3.5 tonnes per hectare. The Indian wheat program exhibits a positive trajectory, evidenced by a 17.94% increase in productivity between 2010-11 and 2021-22. This sustained growth since the Green Revolution has significantly transformed both the quantity and quality of wheat and barley production in India, benefiting producers and consumers alike. However, to further enhance wheat productivity and ensure food and nutritional security, several challenges must be addressed. These include climate change, diminishing natural resources, evolving pest and disease patterns (including the emergence of new threats like wheat blast), abiotic stresses (heat, drought, and salinity), and malnutrition.

On March 16, 2024, the Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley (IIWBR) in Karnal hosted a brainstorming session focused on increasing productivity in wheat and barley crops.

The meeting was chaired by Padma Bhushan Dr R.S. Paroda, a distinguished figure in Indian agriculture, Chairman of the Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS) and Former Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Secretary of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Government of India. Other notable attendees included Padma Shri Dr Ravi Singh, a leading scientist and Head of Global Wheat Improvement at CIMMYT, Mexico; Dr P.K. Singh, Agricultural Commissioner at the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare; and Dr Gyanendra Singh, Director of IIWBR, along with other esteemed scientists from the institute.

Driven by the concern of a growing population, Dr Paroda emphasized the need to significantly increase wheat and barley production and productivity. He advocated for the adoption of disruptive innovations and cutting-edge technologies to develop high-yielding varieties in these crops. Dr. Ravi Singh highlighted the importance of utilizing appropriate genetic resources to create lodging-resistant varieties, a crucial factor in maximizing yield potential. Dr P.K. Singh discussed the establishment of biofortified wheat clusters in major wheat-growing states, building upon the success of about 400 existing demonstration clusters.