

(November, 2025)

National Conference of the Centre for Fruitful India (CFI)

In November 2025, the **Centre for Fruitful India (CFI)** convened its inaugural national conference in New Delhi, marking a significant step toward addressing India's complex malnutrition challenges. Centered on the theme of **"Advancing Fruit Diversity for Nutrition, Climate Resilience, and Community Empowerment,"** the two-day event brought together a network of over 140 scientists, policymakers, and grassroots innovators. The gathering served as a strategic platform to align India's vast horticultural potential—highlighted by its global leadership in mango and banana production—with the government's **Viksit Bharat 2047** roadmap for a developed and nutrition-secure nation.

A defining moment of the conference was the keynote address delivered by **Dr R S Paroda**, the Founder Chairman of the Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS). Dr Paroda provided a critical call to action, urging the sector to move beyond mere production volume. He emphasized that while India has achieved self-sufficiency in food, the new frontier lies in value chain innovation. Dr Paroda advocated for a "catalytic" approach, calling on the CFI to implement unique, non-repetitive initiatives that complement existing government efforts. He noted that robust value chains are the linchpin for success, as they enhance the economic viability of fruit



cultivation, providing sustainable livelihoods for smallholder farmers while simultaneously ensuring that nutrient-dense fruits reach the country's most vulnerable populations.

The conference also functioned as a catalyst for high-impact research through the CFI Grant Program. From an impressive pool of 190 nationwide

submissions, 32 projects were shortlisted for their potential to scale fruit diversity solutions across India's 28 states. Technical experts, including Dr Prem Mathur and Dr Chris Kettle, highlighted the urgent need to utilize "virtual pollination networks" to reintroduce traditional, climate-resilient fruit species that have vanished from modern markets. This sentiment was echoed by Dr Sanjay Kumar Singh of ICAR, who reaffirmed that targeted research grants are essential to reversing nutrition insecurity.

Looking ahead, the CFI is transitioning into the implementation phase, focusing on finalizing grant awards and initiating on-ground research. By fostering a multi-stakeholder platform and promoting the consumption of India's 172 domestic fruit and vegetable species, the center aims to transform the nation's "sweet legacy" into a tangible tool for public health, policy reform, and economic empowerment.



For More Details:

<https://alliancebioversityciat.org/stories/nurturing-india-fruitful-basket-holds-key-unlocking-nutrition-security>