

ICAR–RCER, Patna Celebrates International Women’s Day 2026; Focus on Empowering Women Farmers

International Women’s Day 2026 was celebrated at the ICAR–Research Complex for Eastern Region, Patna on March 8, 2026, with the objective of expressing respect towards women and highlighting their empowerment and significant contributions to society and agriculture. The programme was organized on the theme “Give to Gain,” emphasizing the importance of strengthening women farmers through knowledge sharing, capacity building, and institutional support.

The programme was chaired by Dr. Ashutosh Upadhyaya, Acting Director, ICAR–RCER, Patna. In his address, Dr. Upadhyaya highlighted the pivotal role played by women in agriculture and emphasized that empowering women farmers is crucial for achieving sustainable agricultural development and nutritional security. Dr. Upadhyaya explained the importance of four types of donations—Annadaan (donation of food), *Vidyadaan* (donation of knowledge), *Aushadhidaan* (donation of medicine), and *Abhayadaan* (granting fearlessness or protection). He stated that practicing these four forms of charity brings mental peace, satisfaction and a sense of self-pride to an individual. Therefore, every member of society should strive to practice these forms of giving to attain inner satisfaction and also contribute significantly to women’s empowerment.

Earlier, delivering the welcome address, Dr. Shivani, Principal Scientist briefly explained the significance of International Women’s Day and the objectives of the programme. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Dhiraj Kumar Singh, Senior Scientist elaborated on the contribution of ICAR–RCER in uplifting women farmers, highlighting the institute’s initiatives in skill development, technology dissemination, and livelihood improvement. Dr. Kumari Shubha, Scientist delivered a talk on “*Awareness about Nutrition through Homestead Farming and Nutri Garden*,” explaining how household nutrition gardens can play an important role in improving family nutrition and ensuring food security. Addressing the participants, Dr. Rajni Kumari, Senior Scientist spoke about women empowerment through livestock farming and emphasized that small livestock enterprises can significantly enhance income and livelihood security for rural women.

A technical session on the problems faced by farm women and possible solutions was conducted by Dr. Anirban. Mukherjee, Senior Scientist where experiences from various project studies were shared and participants discussed the practical challenges faced by women in agricultural activities. Shri Pushpanayak, Chief Administrative Officer (S.G.) delivered a talk on “*Strengthening Women in Agriculture for a Better Future*,” highlighting the need for institutional support, gender-sensitive policies, and continuous capacity building for women farmers. During the programme, Dr. Kamal Sarma, Head, DLFM, and Dr. Sanjeev Kumar, Head, DCR, shared their remarks and appreciated the important role played by women farmers in strengthening the agricultural sector. This was followed by the distribution of agricultural inputs and wellness kits to women farmers, which included items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, bathing soap, handwashing soap, ORS packets, sanitary pads, vegetable seed kits for summer vegetables, and band-aids (handi plast), and the collection of their feedback regarding agricultural technologies and extension services.

The programme also featured a Lok Geet and cultural presentation by women farmers, adding cultural vibrancy to the celebration and reflecting the rich traditions of rural communities. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Dr. Rachana Dubey. In the afternoon, the participating women farmers were taken for a field visit to the institute’s demonstration units, where they observed, understood, and learned about various agricultural technologies developed by the institute, especially the units focused on women and nutrition.

Dr. Anup Das, Director, ICAR–Research Complex for Eastern Region, Patna, conveyed his message on the occasion of International Women’s Day 2026 and extended his heartfelt greetings and

congratulations to everyone. He emphasized that the vision of “Viksit Bharat@2047” cannot be achieved without the active participation and empowerment of women, particularly women farmers. A total of 208 participants, including 140 women farmers from Bihar and Jharkhand, along with scientists and staff, attended the programme, making the celebration meaningful and impactful. The event reaffirmed the commitment of the ICAR–RCER, Patna towards empowering women in agriculture and promoting inclusive agricultural development.

The event was coordinated by the organizing secretaries Dr. Shivani, Dr. Rajni Kumari, Dr. Rachana Dubey, Dr. Kumari Shubha, and Dr. Sonaka Ghosh, along with co-organizing secretaries Dr. Bikash Sarkar, Dr. Dhiraj Kumar Singh, Dr. Anirban Mukherjee and Mr. Umesh Kumar Mishra.



ICAR RCER, Patna

International Women's Day Celebration - 2026

Key Issues and Training Needs Identified from Discussion with Women Farmers

- Women farmers reported that they are actively involved in nearly 64% of agricultural activities, especially in field operations such as sowing, weeding, harvesting, and post-harvest processing.
- Despite their high participation, most of their work is labour-intensive and physically demanding, leading to significant drudgery.
- Many women farmers highlighted health-related problems arising from continuous field work, including:
 - Back pain and body strain due to bending and manual operations
 - Allergies and cough during post-harvest activities such as threshing, cleaning, and handling crop residues
 - Exposure to dust and plant particles during crop processing
- Women also expressed concerns regarding the lack of proper market linkage and fair price realization, particularly for organic or naturally grown produce.
- Limited access to agricultural tools designed for women further increases the workload and physical strain.
- Women Farmers emphasized the need for capacity-building and skill development programmes tailored specifically for them.

Priority Training Areas Identified

Women farmers expressed interest in the following training areas for improving income and livelihood security:

- **Vegetable production** (highest priority)
 - Improved varieties
 - Nutrient management
 - Pest and disease management
 - Kitchen garden / nutrition garden practices
- **Mushroom cultivation**
 - As a low-cost enterprise suitable for small spaces and household-level production
- **Goat farming**
 - Considered a viable income-generating activity with relatively low investment
- Training program on on-Farm and off farm activities enhancing income and livelihood of farm women

Suggested Interventions

- Organizing women-focused agricultural training, capacity building and awareness programmes at the village level.
- Promoting drudgery-reducing farm tools and ergonomically suitable implements for women farmers.
- Strengthening market access and price support mechanisms, particularly for organic and locally produced food.
- Integrating nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices such as kitchen gardens and diversified farming systems.