



CABI News Bulletin Asia

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Welcome to this edition where we feature some of CABI's work across the region through a selection of news, stories and project highlights.

CABI's visit to Fiji helped to strengthen partnerships, identify national needs and explore key areas of potential collaboration. In doing so, CABI will support Fiji in growing its agriculture sector, improving livelihoods and food security. You can read the full story [here](#).

CABI's attendance at international conferences has allowed our expertise in [digital development](#) and [sustainable crop pest management](#) to be shared, highlighting CABI's commitment to transformative agricultural development.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition.

With best wishes,

Dr Babar Bajwa

Senior Regional Director, Asia

News and Stories

Fiji visit strengthens partnerships for sustainable agriculture, improved livelihoods, and food security



CABI has visited Fiji to help strengthen partnerships aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture, enhancing livelihoods and trade opportunities, and ensuring food security —

all while contributing to the preservation of Fiji's rich biodiversity, including its coral reefs, mangroves, and rainforests.

[Dr Feng Zhang](#), Regional Director for East & Southeast Asia, [Sally Stone](#), Head of Strategic Partnerships, Asia Pacific, and [Dr Ravindra C. Joshi](#), Honorary CABI Research Associate, met with a high-level delegation of Fijian officials to identify the national needs and explore key areas for potential collaboration.

The visit included a meeting with the Honourable Vatimi Rayalu, Minister for Agriculture and Waterways, and Dr Andrew Tukana, Permanent Secretary for Agriculture and Waterways, at the Ministry headquarters in Raiwaqa.

“We Want the Agriculture Sector to Grow” — Fijian Minister emphasizes need for collaboration

The agriculture sector has been the backbone of Fiji’s economy since independence, contributing approximately 18 percent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product. According to the World Bank, agriculture employs around 28 percent of the working-age population, placing farmers and the sector at the heart of national welfare and development.

The Hon. Rayalu said, “We want the agriculture sector to grow, and in order for this to happen, we need more collaboration with all stakeholders. Your visit today is timely, and we hope to learn more about CABI as we move forward — and of course, collaborate further into the future.

“Government efforts in the agriculture sector have led to significant investments with improved services to our farmers and stakeholders. However, it has become critical to go beyond simply increasing production.

“We must now focus on the broader role of agriculture in improving livelihoods and

creating greener jobs for women and youth. The Ministry is committed to this through our Gender in Agriculture Policy and Youth in Agriculture Policy, respectively.”

The CABI team also met with the Dr Tekini Nakidakida, Deputy Secretary for Agricultural Development, Dr Shalendra Prasad, Director for Research & Agricultural Scientific Services Division, and other senior management staff from various divisions within the Ministry. Additional stakeholder consultations were held in Suva with officials from the [Secretariat of the Pacific Community](#) (SPC), [Fiji National University](#) (FNU), and the [Biosecurity Authority of Fiji](#) (BAF).

Shared priorities aligned with CABI’s Medium-Term Strategy and Fiji’s Agricultural Development Agenda

The CABI delegation met with the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Waterways.

Discussions between CABI and Fijian stakeholders identified several priority areas that closely align with CABI’s Medium-Term Strategy, as well as the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways’ Strategic Development Plan (2024–2028).

Key thematic areas included capacity building for science and extension services, the development of value-addition industries, management of invasive species, biosecurity, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) and trade facilitation, digital development, pesticide risk reduction and increased access to bioprotection products.

These topics are well aligned with the Ministry’s five strategic priorities: food and nutrition security; inclusive and sustainable livelihoods; climate resilience;

commercializing agriculture; and strengthened service delivery.

Fiji's key agricultural commodities include sugarcane, root crops such as cassava, taro, and yams, along with a variety of fruits and vegetables, including papaya, pineapple, and eggplant. The team learned that recent developments in value-addition industries have opened new trading opportunities. Fiji has successfully launched a range of innovative products, including vegetable chips, concentrated juices, kava, and semi-processed ginger.

Challenges to Fiji's agricultural sector

Despite its strengths, Fiji's agricultural sector faces a range of challenges, including crop pests and diseases, invasive species, climate change and natural disasters. For instance, Cyclone Winston in 2016 caused

severe damage to crop and infrastructure, underscoring the urgent need for more resilient farming practices. Pests such as fruit flies, cane weevil borer, termites, armyworms, and Fiji Leaf Gall disease continue to pose serious threats to agricultural productivity.

Fiji also boasts unique biodiversity, with a high number of endemic species. Over 50 percent of the country's plants and birds are found nowhere else in the world. All 24 palm species, 72 of the 76 *Psychotria* (wild coffee) species, both native frog species, and over 90 percent of certain insect groups — including cicadas and marine insects — are endemic to Fiji.

Forests cover approximately 52.6 percent of Fiji's landmass, totalling around 1.8 million hectares. However, this biodiversity is under pressure from over-fishing, exploitation, pollution from agricultural and industrial



The CABI delegation met with the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Waterways.

waste, urbanisation, agricultural expansion, and the introduction of non-native species.

Sugarcane stays Fiji's most significant agricultural export, accounting for around 70 percent of the sector's exports and supporting an estimated 200,000 Fijians. Yet the crop is increasingly affected by changes in rainfall patterns, and many sugarcane farmers suffer from declining incomes while producing little of their own food.

One of the targets outlined in Fiji's national development plan is to promote competitive, sustainable, and value-adding non-sugar agriculture. The Hon. Rayalu highlighted the Ministry's success in working with farmers to introduce rice cultivation into wetlands within the sugarcane farms — an initiative that both supplements income and reduces dependence on imported rice.

CABI's Commitment to Supporting Fiji

Dr Feng Zhang said, "Fiji benefits from a rich agricultural sector and exceptional biodiversity, both of which are key to livelihoods, food security, and thriving tourism industry — an important pillar of the economy.

"We recognise the critical role of partnerships in sustainably managing agriculture and minimizing the environmental impacts of human activity, especially in the context of climate change.

"We hope this visit serves to reaffirms CABI's commitment to supporting Fiji wherever possible — by sharing our expertise to help transform Fiji's agriculture into a resilient, competitive, innovative and inclusive sector, while protecting its unique environment."

Senior Chinese delegation visit to CABI's regional centre for Africa serves to strengthen South-South collaboration



[CABI's regional centre for Africa](#) in Nairobi, Kenya, welcomed a senior delegation of Chinese officials to further strengthen

partnerships for greater South-South collaboration and efforts towards sustainable food security and development.

[Dr Daniel Elger](#), CABI CEO, [Dr Dennis Rangi](#), Director General, Development, [Phyllis Ombonyo](#), Director of Strategy and Engagement, International Development, and other CABI staff met with their colleagues from China led by Professor Sun Tan, Vice President of the [Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences](#) (CAAS).

Those who also attended in person included [Dr Gbemenou Joselin Benoit Gnonlonfin](#), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS), Global Program Lead at CABI, and [Dr Joseph Mulema](#), Senior Scientist, Research.

[Dr Morris Akiri](#), Senior Regional Director, Africa, [Dr Natasha Mwila](#), Regional Director, Southern Africa, [Dr Feng Zhang](#), Regional Director, East & South-East Asia, and [Dr Qiaoqiao Zhang](#), Memberships Director, attended the meeting remotely.

Catalyst for future research and development exchanges

Both parties recognized the need to deepen South-South collaboration – especially in regards to Africa and Asia – with the [Chinese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs \(MARA\)-CABI Joint Laboratory for Biosafety](#) seen, for example, as a catalyst for future research and development exchanges.

Professor Tan was part of the annual Steering Committee meeting of the Joint Lab last month (March 2025) in China where the work of the facility and its subcentres was reviewed and plans set for future activities and longer-term strategies.

During this year's meetings, a particular focus was put on invasive species management, the promotion of biopesticide and biological control products for large-scale application and technology transfer,

pesticide risk reduction, and grassland ecological restoration and carbon sequestration.

Other areas of mutual interest which were highlighted at the meeting in Nairobi, as part of the talks, included invasives species, digital development and digital tools, value chains and trade, the sharing of scientific knowledge and safer-to-use and more environmentally friendly biological solutions for crop pest and disease control.

One area of successful South-South collaboration which was highlighted, for example, was the [use of beneficial nematodes to fight the fall armyworm](#) (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) in Rwanda as part of Integrated Pest Management.

The work with the [Rwandan Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board](#) (RAB) was a part of a triangular North-South-South cooperation among [CABI Member Countries](#), supported by key partners including CAAS, [Guangdong Entomological Institute](#), and CABI centers in [China](#), the [UK](#), [Kenya](#), and [Switzerland](#).

Foster greater sustainable food security and development

Similarly, CABI worked with CAAS as part of a tripartite south-south cooperation and technical exchange to [support Botswana develop a digital knowledge hub](#) to foster greater sustainable food security.

A comprehensive needs assessment is being carried – at the request of Botswana's [National Agricultural Research and Development Institute](#) (NARDI) to support the government's commitment to establishing a knowledge-based economy.

The work involved CABI and CAAS working with NARDI to see how digital knowledge products and services can help Botswana's smallholder farmers grow healthier, higher yielding and more profitable crops free from pests and diseases.

The CABI and CAAS talks also reflected on the [China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Action Plan 2025-2027](#) – part of which seeks to establish a China-Africa agricultural science and technology innovation alliance to assist Africa's development.

China as a valued Member Country

Dr Rangi said, "CABI is pleased that the visit enabled us to build upon the strong relationship we have with China as a valued Member Country – particularly in the exchange of scientific knowledge and expertise from the Joint Lab and innovation in the field for the benefit of greater livelihoods and sustainable food security.

"We look forward to building upon our discussions and identifying further

collaborations which will make staple and cash crops in Africa – including maize, wheat, rice, bean, millet, mango and other fruits – more resilient to the pressures of pests and diseases exacerbated by climate change."

One of the benefits China enjoys as a Member Country is to help CABI shape and develop its [Medium-Term Strategy](#) which sets out ways in which it aims to help tackle some of the greatest challenges facing humanity. These include hunger, poverty, gender inequality, climate change and the loss of biodiversity.

The recent [Regional Consultation of Asia-Pacific Member Countries](#), for instance, focused on collaboration to tackle these challenges with a specific emphasis on pesticide risk reduction and the promotion of biological solutions for pest control.

Furthermore, at the [CGIAR Science Week](#) – held between 7-12 April 2025 – CAAS were in discussion to strengthen ties between CGIAR and the [China-Africa Agricultural Science, Technology and Innovation Alliance](#) (CASTIA). It is also hoped CABI can be part of this collaboration.



Members of the Chinese delegation at the meeting in Nairobi.

Strengthening the potato value chain in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq



On 30th May, we marked the International Day of Potato. In this blog, CABI's Crop Health Advisor Anna Wood provides an update on a five-year project led by CABI to strengthen the potato value chain in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

An ambitious five-year project led by CABI to strengthen the potato value chain in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) is making timely progress towards its goal of meeting demand for locally produced and processed potato products.

The project 'Value chain development for potato and processing in Kurdistan Region Iraq' is being implemented in the Duhok Province of KRI through a public-private partnership funded by the [Netherlands Enterprise Agency](#) (RVO) with co-finance from the Kurdistan-based company Kurdistan Holland (KH).

Its implementing partners, in addition to KH, include the Directorate of Agriculture (DoA), part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources in Kurdistan Region, University of Duhok, and the Dutch-based global market leader in potato breeding and trading HZPC.

The public-private partnership is working to achieve an increased and more resilient income for farmers and a sustainable, locally sourced value chain that supplies the regional market and contributes to local economic development.

Since the project's inception phase in 2021, the project has continued to progress to achieve its impressive objectives.

An efficient, high-specification potato cold storage unit has been operating since 2023, storing 10,000 tonnes of harvested potatoes in 2024. The storage unit is also used to maintain high-quality seed potato imported from Holland before it is distributed to farmers.

Providing farmers with high-quality seed potato varieties and training

The project also aims to ensure that farmers continue to be provided with high-quality seed potato varieties and training to ensure the potatoes produced meet the required quality standards. A bespoke French-fry processing line purchased from the Netherlands is due to be established in 2025.

Health and safety training has been given to cold store personnel, while technical training has been provided to over 400 project stakeholders, including partner staff and extension agents. Topics included pest diagnosis, pest management, biological control, extension messaging, experimental design, monitoring and evaluation and survey techniques.

To ensure that the maximum number of farmers are reached with pest diagnosis and management advice, the project is extending training on these topics to agro-input dealers in Duhok as well as extension agents of the Directorate of Agriculture (DoA), part of the [Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources in Kurdistan Region](#), and KH agronomists.

Difficult to compete against imported goods

Insufficient investment in KRI's agricultural sector has resulted in a growing dependency on imported low-quality food being offered at low prices to consumers.

Smallholder farmers, therefore, find it difficult to compete against imported goods, which results in small profit margins and an unwillingness to invest in technology and increased production.

Post-harvest losses are also substantial due to poor infrastructure, a lack of suitable storage facilities and the absence of processing facilities. Consequently, agriculture in KRI used to be a 'low input/low output' system.

Potato is a high-value crop, providing for an opportunity to change. Farmers used to face production challenges which the project is helping to address. For example, there still is a shortage of affordable potato seed of high quality and a lack of access to objective

and professional extension advice. Pest management was not yet consistent with good agricultural practice requirements.

In addition, the absence of investments in research and diagnostic services hampers access to valuable knowledge that could help to overcome these challenges. The poor links between research and extension add further problems, which lead to unsustainable crop production.

Extension messages on pest management and Good Agricultural Practice

[Dr Anna Wood](#), Project Manager and Crop Health Advisor at CABI, said, "The Department of Agriculture (DoA), as one of our partners, works well with CABI to develop extension messages on pest management and Good Agricultural Practice for farmers and create pest management decision guides.

"Content for mass extension campaigns via TV, radio and farmer rallies has also been



Examining potatoes in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (credit: CABI).

drafted and will be introduced in due course. These capacity building activities will help to reach the targeted 8000 farmers.”

“Knowledge sharing through study visits is an important component of this project, and training on potato quality inspection and seed potato production for KH staff continues to take place in the Netherlands to support this. DoA staff will also benefit from this training in 2025.”

She added that in June 2024, CABI’s centre in Délemont hosted 11 staff members from the [University of Duhok](#) (UoD) and the DoA during their visit to Switzerland. The centre introduced the visitors to innovative agriculture production techniques, integrated pest management approaches and extension models applied in Swiss agriculture.

Opportunities for investment in the potato value chain

Furthermore, she said, over 300 value chain actors, including farmers, retailers and government employees, have attended workshops organized by project partners in KRI to raise awareness of recent agriculture developments and opportunities for investment in the potato value chain.

Three special studies are being conducted as part of the project. A comprehensive farmer baseline study has been completed

and will be repeated in 2026 to assess impact.

A study on gender in the potato value chain has been completed, and data on labour practices in potato production is being analysed. UoD and DoA staff, with support from CABI, have conducted all three of these studies.

Exploring agricultural innovation in potato farming

In May 2025, CABI’s Janny Vos, Partnerships Development Director, and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) visited the project to meet project partners and assess progress of the potato value chain development project. The project team and visitors discussed implementation outcomes, challenges, and future opportunities for expansion.

Among others, Prof Dawood S. Atrushi, President of the UoD, informed the delegation about their strategic commitment to agricultural sustainability and international collaboration.

He highlighted the project as a model for regional food security and innovation.

This recent meeting underscores the power of collaboration to drive innovation and advance sustainable agricultural development.



Potato fields in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (credit: CABI).

CABI and CIRAD join forces to strengthen sustainable agriculture in Southeast Asia



CABI and the [French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development](#) (CIRAD) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), marking a key milestone toward strengthening sustainable and resilient agricultural pathways across Southeast Asia.

Agriculture contributes significantly to Southeast Asia's economy, with the agri-food sector in five key countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam valued at over [USD \\$800 billion](#) in 2021. It continues to play a central role as a global food powerhouse, supporting millions of livelihoods and driving regional development.

In this region, millions of smallholder farmers rely on agriculture not only for income but also for food security and community resilience. However, they are increasingly affected by climate change, biodiversity loss, and market volatility, highlighting the urgent need to transition to more sustainable and inclusive agricultural systems.

Practical, environmentally sustainable solutions

This partnership aims to translate research into practical, environmentally sustainable solutions for farmers. A key priority is empowering women and youth in rural communities, helping them access innovations and take on leadership roles in the region's sustainable agriculture transition.

Furthermore, the partnership is aligned with CABI's [Medium-Term Strategy](#) which emphasises regional partnerships and long-term development impact while seeking to tackle some of the greatest challenges facing humanity. These include hunger, poverty, gender inequality, climate change and the loss of biodiversity.

[Dr Feng Zhang](#), CABI's Regional Director, East & Southeast Asia, said, "This partnership is an important step toward our shared mission finding real-world solutions to Southeast Asia's agricultural and environmental challenges. By combining our strengths, we are creating local strategies

that improve farmers' livelihoods and strengthen food systems across the region.”

Both CABI and CIRAD have been a long-standing presence in Southeast Asia – CABI through its strong implementation networks at its regional office in Malaysia, and CIRAD with its extensive experience in tropical agriculture and research.

Both parties are committed to supporting smallholder farmers in adopting more sustainable practices, particularly through integrated concepts such as One Health, agroecology, and integrated pest management (IPM).

CABI brings complementary strengths through its flagship initiatives Plantwise and [PlantwisePlus](#), which have helped build the capacity of national extension systems, particularly in plant health diagnostics, invasive pest detection, and sustainable crop management.

Sharing knowledge for research and education purposes

Meanwhile CIRAD is a leading organisation in the One Health space and has implemented several research and capacity-building initiatives. One Health promotes integrated

approaches that connect human, animal, and environmental health, essential in the face of accelerating ecosystem changes. Both organizations are at the heart of sharing knowledge for research and education purposes. CABI also plays a leading role in publishing science-based guidance and knowledge products on sustainable crop protection and pesticide risk reduction.

Dr François Roger, CIRAD's Southeast Asia Regional Director, said, “This MoU is signed very timely to create new opportunities for meaningful collaboration in the region and beyond. It marks the beginning of a strengthened collaboration, and we look forward to the work and impact we can bring together.”

CABI and CIRAD aim to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to food security (SDG 2), good health and well-being (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), climate action (SDG 13), and life on land (SDG 15).

This strategic agreement reaffirms CABI and CIRAD's shared commitment to advancing sustainable production systems, protecting biodiversity, reducing crop losses, and promote long-term resilience across Southeast Asia.



CABI and CIRAD colleagues gather as part of the signing of the MoU to collaborate on sustainable resilient agricultural pathways across Southeast Asia. In the photo are (from CIRAD) Dr François Roger, Dr Flavie Goutard (Senior Researcher in Epidemiology and One Health), Dr Kazi Ahmed Kabir (Senior Researcher in Tropical Aquaculture), and Ms Hoai Linh Vo Le (Communication Officer) and (from CABI) Dr Feng Zhang, Dr Arnaud Costa (Crop Health Advisor), Dr Muhammad Faheem (Integrated Crop Management Advisor), and Dr Dao Thi Hang (CABI Associate).

PlantwisePlus News and Stories

Training Sri Lanka's agro-dealers in pesticide risk reduction



Through PlantwisePlus, CABI is collaborating with partners in Sri Lanka to develop agro-dealer training materials. (Image: CABI).

Agro-dealers provide vital support to Sri Lanka's farmers. These agricultural input suppliers are often the first point of contact for smallholders who need advice on plant protection products. However, agro-dealers often lack formal training in safer pesticide use and pesticide alternatives. This can lead to the misuse of agro-chemicals, environmental harm, and health risks for both farmers and consumers.

In addition, Sri Lanka's agro-dealers (and smallholders) face a unique set of challenges. As an island nation, [the country's agricultural sector is particularly vulnerable to climate shocks](#). This includes an increased frequency of droughts and flooding, as well as coastal erosion and rising sea levels. Farmers need advice and inputs tailored to address these conditions. Agro-dealers are well placed to deliver climate-smart knowledge and products. However, they need formal training to do so. Pesticide risk reduction is critical.

Streamlining training and certification for Sri Lanka's agro-dealers

In Sri Lanka, all agro-dealers must hold a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 4 in order to operate. Various organizations have agreed on a pathway to deliver the necessary training and certification. This route uses a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) approach, which recognizes knowledge learned informally. The organizations involved include:

- Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC)
- National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA)
- Registrar of Pesticides at the Department of Agriculture (RoP-DoA)

The initial RoP-DoA training course will take 400 hours to complete. After this time, agro-dealers will receive a provisional licence to operate. Following four years of on-the-job

experience, NAITA will assess the agro-dealers' performance. Those who pass the assessment will be able to obtain their full NVQ level 4 certification. This will enable them to operate as fully licensed agro-dealers.

Working in partnership to deliver Sri Lanka's agro-dealer training

Through [PlantwisePlus](#), CABI is collaborating with Sri Lanka's RoP-DoA to support the new licensing scheme. The initiative will adapt and expand the existing training programme, helping it to meet the new national qualification standards. Ultimately, the training will enhance the effectiveness, professionalism, and long-term impact of agro-dealers across the country.

A core part of this effort is the development of training materials. These will help agro-dealers to become more knowledgeable and trusted input advisors. The newly agreed RPL route has led to a reduction in the amount of time required for teaching. Therefore, workshops have considered training content to meet the RPL route. CABI and staff from the DoA jointly developed a training outline, with the activity being led by the Register of Pesticides (RoP). The initiative is also developing a training toolkit using a blended approach, incorporating:

- Digital content from CABI Academy
- Participatory activities
- Presentations
- Videos

Incorporating PlantwisePlus courses into the training

In November 2024, PlantwisePlus and the DoA held a workshop to further develop training content. To address capacity building, they invited newly recruited staff to take part. Joining the event were 45 staff members (21 women and 24 men) from various institutes within the DoA. During the workshop, staff worked in groups to develop a draft curriculum for their relevant topic area. They then shared a draft plan showing the required materials and duration of training. Participants discussed them and gave feedback.

To provide content for the mandatory training scheme, PlantwisePlus also suggested including [CABI Academy](#) courses. So far, the [Introduction to BioBioprotection Products](#) course has been translated into Sinhala and Tamil. The programme plans to translate more courses once they have been finalized. These include training on [Crop Pest Diagnostics](#) and [Crop Pest Management](#). They will most likely be followed by a



Participants from the November workshop gathered to further develop training content. (Image: CABI).

translation of the [Reducing Pesticide Risk](#) course. The original Plantwise Plant Doctor Training course has been updated, translated, and included in the training. Additionally, PlantwisePlus has developed animations on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including [how to put it on](#) and [how to remove it safely after spraying crops](#). In addition, the initiative commissioned three videos locally on:

- The safe use and handling of pesticides
- Early identification of key weed species
- A model agro-dealer shop

Improving the training materials and planning next steps

In March 2025, CABI led a three-day workshop to assess progress in developing new agro-dealer training modules. It brought together 37 participants (19 women and 18 men) from the DoA and other partner organizations. Attendees reviewed training outlines and gathered feedback from technical leads. The aim was to refine plans for rolling out future training.

Each training module coordinator presented their draft outlines. These covered topics such as safe pesticide use, soil health, seed quality, pest management, biocontrol and business skills. Participants offered ideas for improvements and assigned next steps for finalizing each module. They also created a WhatsApp group to ensure continuous

collaboration between meetings and established a Microsoft Teams space to share and store training materials. Attendees agreed on follow-up actions to keep the process on track. In addition, they discussed funding agreements and the next phase of CABI's PlantwisePlus programme in Sri Lanka.

The future of Sri Lanka's agro-dealer network

Although training has not yet begun, the workshops mark an important step. The goal is to build a more resilient and informed agro-dealer network. Once implemented, the training programme will help agro-dealers deliver advice on pesticide risk reduction. The training will also enhance business practices and strengthen the role of agro-dealers in sustainable food systems. Looking ahead, CABI's vision is to support Sri Lanka's agro-dealers in becoming more impactful and sustainable. Their training will help them to build stronger links between agro-dealers, extension services, and farmers.

Sri Lanka faces climate risks and changing policies. The country's agro-dealers must be equipped not just with products but also with knowledge. Structured training, collaborative partnerships and long-term planning are critical. CABI is helping to lay the groundwork for a more resilient, responsive agro-dealer system. In future, this system will support Sri Lanka's farmers as they adapt, bringing the country closer to its goal of becoming a world leader in sustainable agriculture.



Plant clinic materials endorsed in Nepal for greater plant health and food security



The Government of Nepal has adopted training materials derived from the CABI-led global [PlantwisePlus](#) programme which seeks to help smallholder farmers sustainably manage plant health threats, increase their incomes and food security.

Major crop pests and diseases affecting Nepal's rice, maize, wheat, millet, mangoes, citrus and bananas, include borers, thrips, and aphids, as well as pathogens like fungi and viruses. While diseases like blight, rot, and mosaic are also prevalent.

Following the signing of a material-sharing agreement, the Agriculture Information and Training Center, [Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development](#) (MoALD) has now adopted the Plant Clinic Training Curriculum across the country.

This curriculum includes modules to train plant doctors to help smallholder farmers tackle crop pests and diseases across three key impact pathways including pest preparedness, pesticide risk reduction, and farmer advisory.

Streamlines activities emanating from the plant clinics

The approval of the training materials also streamlines activities emanating from the plant clinics – where smallholder farmers bring their plant specimens for diagnosis and advice on treatment given – including stakeholder engagement, data management, and training across all seven provinces in Nepal.

[Dr Mahesh Handiganala Munireddappa](#), Crop Health Advisor, South Asia, at CABI, said, “The enhanced plant clinic program is expected to have a profound impact on farmers and the agricultural sector in Nepal.

“With better-trained extensionists, farmers can expect more accurate diagnoses and effective advisories for their crops, leading to improved yields and reduced losses. This contributes to the overall growth and sustainability of Nepal’s agriculture sector.”

The approval and adoption of the plant clinic training curriculum by MoALD is a promising step towards strengthening Nepal’s agricultural sector. As plant doctors begin to receive standardized training, the quality of plant health services will undoubtedly improve, benefiting farmers and the nation.

Country’s dedication to sustainable agricultural development

Dr Mahesh Handiganala Munireddappa added, “Nepal’s commitment to enhancing plant health services through approving plant clinic operations procedures and adopting plant clinic training curricula is a testament to the country’s dedication to sustainable agricultural development and safeguarding their plant health sector.

“With a sound and proactive approach, continued support and investment in

training and resources, the future of Nepal's agriculture looks brighter."

Modules 1 and 2 of the training curriculums covers essential aspects of plant health management. These modules include topics such as field diagnosis, pest identification, disease diagnosis, and the art of advising effective treatment methods.

The curriculum also emphasizes practical training, allowing plant doctors to gain hands-on experience on various aspects of plant health.

In-depth overview of the CABI decision support tools

Back in May 2024, Dr Mahesh Handiganala Munireddappa gave an in-depth overview of the CABI decision support tools at a session hosted by the [Agriculture and Forestry University](#) (AFU) in Rampur Chitwan, Nepal.

These tools include the [CABI Academy](#), [CABI Bioprotection Portal](#), [PlantwisePlus](#)



A plant doctor helps diagnose a plant health problem at a plant clinic in Nepal (Credit: CABI).

[Knowledge Bank](#), [Crop Sprayer App](#), [PlantwisePlus Factsheets App](#), and [Crop App Index](#), all of which have been developed under the PlantwisePlus programme.

CABI designed the tools to assist in diagnosing plant health problems, offering practical solutions and advice to manage pests and diseases effectively. The session emphasized how digital resources can transform traditional farming methods and help improve crop yields and the use of sustainable agricultural practices.

CABI Resource Spotlight

CABI Academy - Introduction to Bioprotection products

A free course designed to explain what bioprotection products are and how they work in the field.

Ideal for anyone wanting to learn more about using and applying bioprotection products.

Access the course now



Acknowledgment

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