

Brainstorming cum Workshop on ‘Ensuring Fodder Security in Cold Arid Regions’ held in Leh, Ladakh

The Brainstorming cum Workshop on ‘Ensuring Fodder Security in Cold Arid Regions’ held at School of Agricultural Sciences & Technology, Leh, Ladakh, during 7-8 September 2024 and organized by ICAR-IGFRI and AICRP Forage Crops in collaboration with University of Ladakh, brought together over 120 participants from R&D institutes, NGOs, line departments and local stakeholders to address the challenges of fodder production in harsh climates like Ladakh and Lahaul-Spiti. The workshop had five sessions including a field visit to some of the trans-Himalayan grasslands of Changthang. Dr. T. R. Sharma, DDG (CS), ICAR, New Delhi, chaired the programme and provided an overview of ICAR’s initiatives focused on enhancing agricultural productivity in challenging environments like Ladakh. Dr. S. K. Mehta, Vice Chancellor, University of Ladakh, who was Chief Guest in the inaugural session, expressed the University of Ladakh’s commitment to working closely with other institutions especially ICAR to address local challenges through collaborative research and outreach programs. Dr Pankaj Kaushal, Director, ICAR-IGFRI, Jhansi, Dr O P Chaurasia, Director, DIHAR, DRDO, Leh along with Directors of Animal & Sheep Husbandry, Agriculture also presented their views. Dr Vijay K Yadav, Project Coordinator, AICRP (Forage Crops) acted as Organizing Secretary. Key takeaways focused on the need for region-specific strategies to boost fodder security. Participants highlighted the importance of collecting and evaluating native forage germplasm including trees & shrubs and prioritizing crops like dual purpose barley & wheat, alfalfa, sainfoin, tall fescue etc. to diversify and improve productivity. A comprehensive assessment of the nutritive value of forage crops in the Trans-Himalayan region was deemed crucial to support livestock health. Reliable seed production systems and post-harvest management techniques, including silage, TMR and feed block preparation, were identified as essential to sustain fodder availability. The establishment of forage gardens at Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and the use of advanced technologies, such as drone-assisted reseeding and GIS mapping, were recommended to rejuvenate degraded pasturelands. A field visit to the grasslands in Changthang region further reinforced discussions, providing practical insights into managing and restoring grasslands for sustainable fodder production.

