



Start-up Farmer Dialogue & Demo Day

Sowing Innovation

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INTRODUCTION

In the heartlands of rural India, where tradition meets toil, a quiet transformation is taking root—sparked not just by technology, but by dialogue.

Pusa Krishi, ICAR-IARI, recognized a growing disconnect: agri-tech innovations were flourishing in labs and incubators, but their real test lay in the hands of those who knew the soil best—farmers. Thus, Start-up Farmer Dialogue & Demo Day, a grassroots initiative was designed to bridge that gap.

1. THE IDEA: INNOVATION MEETS THE FIELDS

Rather than one-way demonstrations, this was envisioned as a two-way street—where start-ups could learn directly from farmers, and farmers could get firsthand exposure to cutting-edge technologies. It was more than just a product showcase; it was about mutual growth.

At every event, 8 to 12 agri-startups interacted with 80 to 100 farmers, including large and marginal landholders, village heads, and progressive growers. These startups, all incubated under Pusa Krishi's mentorship, represented a spectrum of agricultural solutions:

-  Animal Health Monitoring Devices
-  Agri-Bio Inputs for Soil & Crop Health
-  Post-Harvest Technologies (for mushroom & vegetable shelf-life enhancement, coconut-based products)
-  Farm Mechanization Tools (like onion sapling planters)
-  Soil & Milk Testing Kits
-  Water Softening Solutions
-  Agri-Automation Tools
-  Millet-Based Nutritional Products

The format was simple but powerful—live demonstrations, interactive Q&A, and hands-on training, followed by open dialogue. Farmers were encouraged to offer real feedback, share challenges, and explore pilot collaborations.



2. EVENTS THAT PLANTED THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

Here's a glimpse into the impact across three successful events:

Date	Location	Farmers Engaged	Startups Participated	Key Outcomes
29 May 2019	Shikarpura, Bulandshahr (UP)	80+	08	Initial pilot. Farmers showed strong interest in agri-inputs and testing tools.
17 Dec 2024	Mandora, Sonipat (Haryana)	70+	10	Partnered with RuTAGE Smart Village Center; rural innovation took spotlight.
19 March 2024	Sungarpur, Delhi	100+	12	Supported by HDFC Bank CSR; leads generated for commercial trials and pilots.

3. IMPACT: STORIES FROM THE GROUND

For farmers, the Dialogue became a gateway to innovation:

- In Sungarpur, farmers were captivated by mushroom shelf-life extension technologies, animal health sensors, and farm mechanization tools.
- Across all events, farmers were trained to use devices, interpret results, and understand ROI, equipping them with both confidence and curiosity.
- The presence of village influencers and heads helped spread the word beyond event attendees, triggering community-wide conversations on tech adoption.



For startups, the return was just as valuable:

- Many received direct feedback, identifying pain points they hadn't anticipated.
- Several forged trial partnerships with interested farmers and even secured initial sales inquiries.
- One startup working on water softening tech recalibrated its pricing after learning about rural cost sensitivity, resulting in increase in inquiries.



- A millet-based startup got connected with a farming community to streamline its millet procurement.

4. COLLABORATIVE GROWTH

The impact of the initiative has been further amplified through collaborations. Support from HDFC Bank CSR and partnerships like the RuTAGE Smart Village Center brought credibility, resources, and reach to the program.

5. CONCLUSION

As the soil accepts the seed, so too have farmers begun accepting innovation. The Start-up Farmer Dialogue and Demo Day is more than a program—it's a movement. A movement that brings lab-bench ideas to dusty fields and gives farmers a seat at the table of agri-tech development.

Moving forward, plans are afoot to expand this model across more regions, integrate digital feedback tools, and establish long-term field trial clusters. Because when farmers and innovators walk together, the future of agriculture doesn't just grow—it thrives

6. SOME GLIMPSES OF STARTUP FARMER MEET

