

## Press Release

### **International Conference on “Building Gender-Just Food, Land and Water Systems” to be held in Chennai from 7–8 August 2026**

August 5, 2026

M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) will host a two-day International Conference titled “Building Gender-Just Food, Land and Water Systems” on 7–8 August 2026 at MSSRF, Chennai, India. The conference will bring together over 200 delegates and speakers including government officials, policymakers, academics, development practitioners, researchers and women farmers.

Each year, the conference is hosted during the birth anniversary of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, the founder of MSSRF and architect of India’s green revolution. This year, the conference is being convened in backdrop of the United Nation’s International Year of the Woman Farmer, a landmark global observance that recognises the indispensable contributions of women to agriculture, fisheries, pastoralism, biodiversity conservation, food and nutrition security, and sustainable rural livelihoods.

The inaugural address will be delivered by Prof Mahendra Dev, Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, Government of India.

The conference will feature five panel discussions: Women as Custodians of Agrobiodiversity, Forgotten Foods and Climate-Resilient Farming Systems; Advancing Women’s Leadership in the Governance of Coastal Resources, Fisheries, Wetlands and Rangelands; Gendered Experiences of Climate Change, Heat Stress, Health and Care Systems; Women Agripreneurs, Digital Innovation and Inclusive Food Value Chain; Policies, Entitlements and Collective Action as Pathways Towards Gender-Just Food, Land and Water Systems.

“As we mark the International Year of the Woman Farmer, this conference brings science, policy and community knowledge together on one platform,” said Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Chairperson, MSSRF. “Women are the backbone of our food systems, carrying out majority of the agricultural work today. We hope that the two-day conference will spark new ideas and connections for more dialogue on women’s work and other pressing challenges such as climate change that impact women differently than others.”

The conference will feature an exhibition titled ‘Cultivating Equality: An Exhibition Showcasing Gender-Responsive Innovations’ with a showcase on women-led innovations in agri-food systems, agrobiodiversity conservation, climate resilience, sustainable livelihoods, nutrition security, natural resource management, and community development.

“The conference has been designed as a platform for evidence-based dialogue and collective action,” said Dr Anamika Ajay, Lead Gender and Co-Anchor of the conference MSSRF. “The discussion over the two days will help us shape a policy paper on pathways to gender-just food, land and water systems. It will highlight key recommendations, strategic actions, and policy priorities for governments, development agencies, research institutions, civil society organizations, and donor partners,” she said.

Dr Oliver King, Head of Biodiversity Management at MSSRF and co-anchor of the conference, said that the MSSRF works across 11 states. “The conference will bring together representatives from many of these regions and provide an opportunity for mutual learning ,” he said.

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