



## **Promoting Diversification for Higher Incomes and Sustainable Agriculture in Punjab and Haryana: Policymakers and Experts Convene in Chandigarh**

*ICRIER, CRRID, and CCF convene high-level colloquium to explore crop diversification, sustainable agriculture, and market-led pathways for farmers*

April 2, 2026

**Chandigarh, India** – Punjab and Haryana have been central to India's food security, driven by the success of the Green Revolution and the dominance of the rice-wheat production system. However, this model is increasingly under strain due to slowing agricultural growth, stagnating farmer incomes, and mounting environmental challenges — including groundwater depletion, soil degradation, and greenhouse gas emissions.

To address these challenges, the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), in partnership with the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID) and Chandigarh Citizens Foundation (CCF), convened a high-level colloquium on "**Promoting Diversification for Higher Incomes and Sustainable Agriculture in Punjab and Haryana**" at CRRID, Chandigarh on April 2, 2026. The event brought together policymakers, researchers, agricultural experts, private sector stakeholders, and farmers to deliberate on pathways for transitioning towards more sustainable and diversified agricultural systems.

### **Keynote Address: Reimagining Agriculture in Punjab and Haryana**

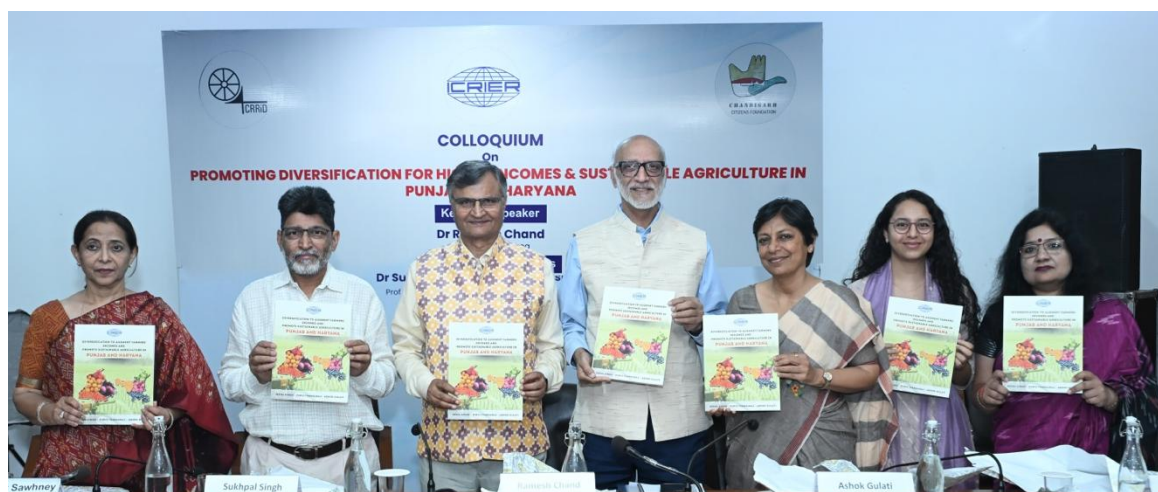
Delivering the keynote address, **Dr Ramesh Chand**, Member, NITI Aayog, highlighted that *“the deceleration of agricultural growth in Punjab is not inevitable, and evidence from other states shows that higher productivity and higher growth can coexist, provided we adapt through diversification and innovation.”* He further emphasised the need for a balanced approach, noting that while staples such as rice and wheat will continue to play an important role, farmers should increasingly be encouraged to diversify towards high-value, market-driven crops such as fruits and vegetables to enhance incomes and sustainability. He recommended expanding the share of area under high-value horticulture crops by 10 per cent over the next decade, noting that this could raise annual crop sector growth by about 3.5 percentage points, from the current 1.5 per cent to nearly 5 per cent.

In his special address, **Dr Sukhpal Singh**, Professor, IIM Ahmedabad, underscored the structural and institutional barriers to diversification, noting that *“the real challenge is not just identifying alternatives, but creating the mechanisms to make diversification viable and inclusive for farmers.”* He emphasised that without strengthening markets, institutions, and

farmer awareness, diversification efforts will remain limited, adding that “*money is not in the field, money is in the markets, but we are still not geared towards enabling farmers to access and benefit from them.*”

In her remarks, **Vini Mahajan**, IAS (Retd.), member Governing Body CRRID, Vice President CCF, emphasised the importance of collaborative policymaking and grounded solutions, noting that “*the focus must be on improving farmers’ incomes and agricultural productivity while simultaneously protecting the environment, as the sustainability challenge ultimately affects farmers and their livelihoods.*” She highlighted the need to bring together policymakers, practitioners, and farmers to identify practical pathways for diversification, adding that “learning from both successful and struggling farmers will be critical in shaping priorities and scaling what works on the ground.”

The colloquium also marked the release of ICRIER's report titled ["Diversification to Augment Farmers' Incomes and Promote Sustainable Agriculture in Punjab and Haryana"](#), co-authored by Dr Reena Singh, Ms Purvi Thangaraj, and Dr Ashok Gulati, which provides evidence-based recommendations to facilitate a transition towards sustainable and diversified agriculture.



**Dr Ashok Gulati**, Distinguished Professor, ICRIER, presented the key findings of the report and highlighted that a transition from the prevailing paddy-based system in Punjab and Haryana towards oilseeds and pulses would require policy support aligned with sustainability and profitability goals. He noted that “*one of the key innovations suggested in the report is to provide farmers shifting from paddy to pulses and oilseeds an incentive of about ₹35,000 per hectare for at least five years, without requiring additional fiscal burden.*” He explained that such a shift would effectively repurpose existing subsidies, as savings in power, canal irrigation, and fertiliser subsidies would offset the incentive. “*This approach makes incentives crop-neutral while reducing the carbon footprint of paddy and conserving water and soil in the region,*” he added.