

SUTRA - The Sustainable Trade Summit 2024

Accelerating Responsible Sourcing in
Indian Markets

EVENT REPORT



The **Sustainable Trade Summit**, hosted by IDH, is a strategic platform for addressing the challenges of integrating ethical, sustainable, and responsible sourcing principles into global supply chains.



Overview

SUTRA: Launched in 2023, the inaugural event explored strategies for inclusive business, procurement, government roles in sustainability, and pathways to achieve responsible value chains, while integrating gender-transformative models, and promoting innovative financing.

SUTRA 2024 is built on this momentum, focusing on scaling impact through shared goals, collaboration, and best practices. It continued to engage businesses, civil society, and government stakeholders in dialogues, offering insights through thought leadership, case studies, and targeted discussions.

This year's summit aimed to foster pre-competitive business collaborations, drive investment in smallholder communities for regenerative and climate-resilient agriculture, address value chain challenges, and emphasise the importance of manufacturing and worker safety throughout the agricultural and textile industries. With sessions on sustainable procurement, regenerative agriculture, and innovative financing, it also featured deep-dive sessions on key value chains including spices, palm oil, coffee, and textiles, ensuring a comprehensive approach to responsible sourcing.

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Welcome & Introduction

Jagjeet Singh Kandal,
Country Director, IDH India



In his welcome address, Jagjeet Singh Kandal shed light on agriculture's vital role in driving India's economy, supporting livelihoods, and shaping the nation's cultural fabric. He stated that, despite involving over half of the population and contributing 15% to GDP, Indian agriculture faces significant challenges, including farmer debts, volatile prices, limited access to modern techniques, and severe climate impacts. He stressed that the future of agriculture hinges on sustainable decisions made today, focusing on three key pillars: environmental stewardship, economic viability, and social equity.

- **Environmental stewardship:** He called for a shift to regenerative agriculture, agroecology, and integrated pest management to protect natural resources and improve soil health.
- **Economic viability:** Described as crucial for farmers to earn fair returns, facilitated by stronger value chains, access to credit, technology adoption, and improved market access.
- **Social equity:** Highlighted the need for inclusive growth, ensuring smallholders, women, and marginalised communities have equal access to resources, education, and decision-making.

He concluded with a call for collaboration among FPOs, brands, policymakers, and civil society to create sustainable value chains. Strategies included developing a value chain approach, market-led sustainable initiatives, technological efficiency, empowered FPOs, nature-based finance, and consumer awareness. Jagjeet urged participants to focus on creating a productive, sustainable, and resilient agricultural system for India's future.

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The promise of sustainability must extend to all, including smallholder farmers and marginalised communities. Women, who play an indispensable role in agriculture, must be empowered through education and access to resources. Ensuring that all voices are heard in policymaking will lead to more inclusive and effective solutions.”

- Jagjeet Singh Kandal, Country Director, IDH India



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Opening Remarks

Accelerating Pre-competitive Collaboration in Driving Sustainability in Supply Chains

Daan Wensing,
Global CEO and Chair of the
Executive Board, IDH



Daan Wensing highlighted India's vital role in global development. As the world's fifth-largest economy, India is distinguished not only by its role as a major producer but also by its rapidly expanding consumer market. This unique position enables India to lead sustainable transformations across value chains. He emphasised the importance of collaborative, pre-competitive efforts to advance sustainability, asserting that success depends on co-creation and shared responsibility among stakeholders.

Daan pointed to the IDH Regenerative Production Landscape Collaborative programme as a model for addressing the impacts of climate change on agricultural growth, stressing the need for effective governance facilitated through both voluntary and governmental institutions. He also underscored the significance of state-level partnerships and a data-driven approach that generates actionable insights to benefit smallholder farmers and the broader agricultural sector.

“ As India works towards its development and climate targets, our focus must now be on ensuring agricultural transformations are both sustainable and just, benefiting smallholder farmers and their communities. Through SUTRA, we are creating a platform to build strong partnerships and drive collective action for more sustainable and inclusive value chains in India.”

- **Daan Wensing**, Global CEO and Chair of the Executive Board, IDH



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Opening Remarks

Inaugural Address

Her Excellency Ms Marisa Gerards

Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to India, Nepal and Bhutan



The Ambassador's address focused on the evolving landscape of agriculture and the urgent need for responsible sourcing in Indian markets. She highlighted how climate change is disrupting food value chains, resulting in higher prices and reduced production. This has emphasised the need for investments in resilience and sustainability to ensure food security. Ms. Gerards stressed that adapting to these changes is crucial for sustaining agricultural productivity and economic stability.

She also mentioned the increasing role of governments and regulatory frameworks in promoting sustainability and responsible sourcing and emphasised that collaboration between various sectors is necessary to address these pressing challenges. She pointed to successful initiatives like the Netherlands-India strategic partnership in agriculture and innovation as examples of effective cooperation. Additionally, programs like the IDH Cocoa Origins

Program for sustainable chocolate production and the EU directive on corporate sustainability and due diligence were cited as models that could impact sourcing practices in India.

Ms. Gerards underscored the importance of co-creation and collaboration in achieving sustainability goals. Public-private partnerships were presented as vital for fostering data-driven decision-making in agriculture, providing financial support for responsible sourcing practices. She also stressed the need for education, capacity-building, and support for farming communities, as farmers face increasing challenges due to climate change and market pressures.

She concluded by reinforcing that by integrating collaboration, strategic investments, and regulatory support, sustainable solutions can be developed to meet the demands of both producers and consumers.

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The EU corporate sustainability due diligence directive is a legislative act that sets a target for the member states towards responsible procurement. This directive has a huge impact on the way products are being sourced from the countries of origin like India as the companies will now have to be able to demonstrate that their end product is sourced sustainably throughout the whole value chain.”

- HE Marisa Gerards, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to India, Nepal and Bhutan



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Keynote Address

Josma Kanoje
Farmer from Madhya Pradesh

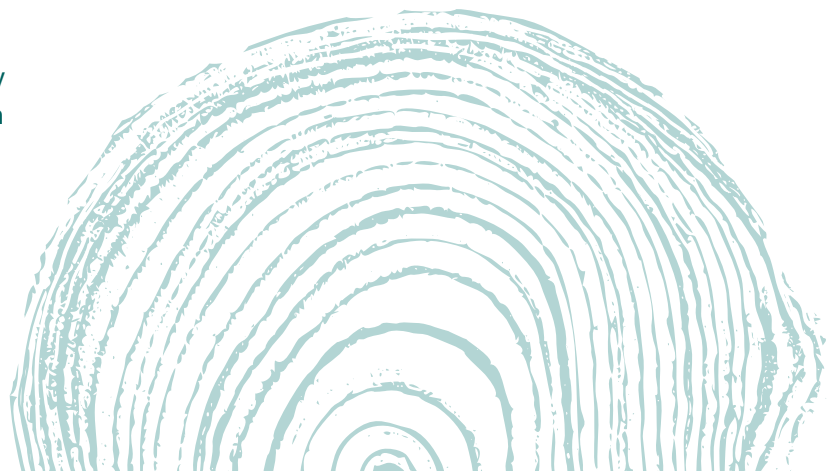


Josma shared her journey from facing personal struggles to becoming a beacon for sustainable agriculture, reflecting broader challenges and opportunities for women farmers in rural India. Coming from Barwani, Madhya Pradesh, she faced issues like water scarcity, poor soil, limited farming knowledge, inaccessible markets, and dependence on middlemen. Despite these barriers, she pursued education and joined the government's Aajeevika Mission, gaining training in agriculture and finance. Her role as a Community Resource Person was pivotal, as she mobilised women into producer groups and led a Farmer Producer Company (FPC) with over 1,200 women members.

As a Board member, Josma oversaw ventures like a flour mill with a turnover of over 1 crore and a processing unit generating INR 80 lakh. She actively supports women farmers across 15 villages through training in sustainable practices, soil testing, post-

harvest management, and direct market linkages. Collaborating with Arya.Ag, she extended her impact to rural health camps and further training.

Josma highlighted finance as a key challenge but emphasised the role of progressive farmers in fostering change, driven by a positive mindset among rural women. She concluded by calling for empowerment efforts through training, resources, and local leadership, essential for sustainable growth and community transformation.



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As a tribal farmer, I once faced water scarcity, limited knowledge, and poverty, relying solely on rainfed agriculture. Training in advanced farming practices, post-harvest techniques, and financial literacy transformed our lives. Today, I lead 16 village groups and established an FPC with 1,250 shareholders, achieving a ₹1 crore turnover. By learning, sharing, and working together, we are driving change in our village.”

- Josma Kanoje, Farmer



DAY 1

Fireside Chat:

Responsible Sourcing Leadership - Role of CEOs



Panelists:

- **Sanjeev Asthana**, CEO, Patanjali Foods
- **Sushama Shrikandath**, Managing Director, AVT McCormick
- **Sonali Shahpurwala**, Managing Director & Head Inclusive Banking, HSBC India

Moderator: Daan Wensing, Global CEO and Chair of the Executive Board, IDH

“ We believe that large corporations can make a significant impact, but real change happens when each of us recognises that we, too, can make a difference. We can look up to the giants among us, learn from them, and do our own work.”

- **Sushama Shrikandath**, Managing Director
AVT McCormick

The panel explored the crucial role of CEOs in advancing sustainability through responsible sourcing, emphasising that it should be a core business strategy rather than mere compliance. The discussion underscored the need for practical implementation rooted in science, collaboration, and effective technology transfer, particularly in sectors like palm oil, spices, and other agricultural commodities, which face complex supply chains and global scrutiny. The CEOs were urged to engage with smallholders, ensure fair value distribution, and support policies suited to local contexts.

Panelists highlighted the importance of grassroots efforts and robust monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) systems to ensure that sustainability initiatives benefit both producers and consumers. Financial institutions were cited for transforming priority sector lending from compliance to opportunity, emphasising digital tools for financial inclusion and social accountability.

The discussion concluded that sustainability is not only an ethical obligation but a long-term business strategy. The CEOs must embed responsible sourcing into organisational culture, align business goals with sustainability, and ensure ongoing stakeholder engagement and innovation.

Masterclass:

Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting Framework

Shankar Venkateswaran
Co-Founder, Ecube Investment Advisors



Shankar's masterclass centred on the SEBI-mandated Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) framework for India's top 1,000 companies, integrating Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors into corporate reporting. The discussion highlighted the shift from traditional financial metrics to comprehensive non-financial reporting, aligning with global standards such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), and Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) to enhance transparency and accountability.

Key components of BRSR include general disclosures, ESG policy management, and performance measures related to ethics, environmental management, human rights, and inclusive growth. Aligned with the National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGRBC), it supports broader commitments to the UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Panel:

The Gender Factor in Responsible Sourcing – Unlocking Sustainable Agri Value Chains with ROI

Session Co-hosted with Sattva Consulting



Panelists:

- **Ajay Jalan**, Director, Mokalbari Tea
- **Jyoti Sharma**, Country Director, Organic Cotton Accelerator
- **Rajesh Bhuyan**, Director, Trustea Sustainable Tea Foundation
- **Manisha Majumdar**, Senior Program Manager, Agri-Commodities & Women's Safety Accelerator Fund (WSAF)

Moderator: Aarti Mohan, Co-founder and Partner, Sattva Consulting

The panel centred on the economic implications of gender-based violence (GBV) in the workplace, particularly in India's agriculture sector. The discussion highlighted that GBV is not merely a moral issue but a pressing business concern, affecting productivity and revenue.

The conversation emphasised the importance of empowering women in agriculture, where they play vital roles but hold only 14% of land ownership. Closing this gender gap could boost agricultural yields by

20-30%, enhancing both productivity and community well-being. Stories of women leaders transforming their communities through farmer-producer companies underscored the tangible benefits of gender inclusion.

The discussion also explored how programs like the Women's Safety Accelerator Fund (WSAF) have successfully created safer workplaces, fostered trust, and prevented harmful practices like child marriage. Legal frameworks exist to protect women, but implementation requires collaboration among businesses, governments, and NGOs. Effective partnerships, such as those with Self-Help Groups (SHGs), were highlighted as key to empowering women and tackling structural inequalities.

The panel concluded that reducing GBV and promoting gender equality is not just about social justice—it drives business success. A 10% reduction in absenteeism due to improved safety could lead to a 1% increase in revenue, along with long-term operational efficiency, trust, and collaboration. Gender inclusion in agriculture is therefore essential for sustainable growth and profitability.



I want to highlight three levelling factors: one is embedding gender policies in sourcing criteria. Second, we should applaud companies that already embody gender diversity, walk the talk on decent work, or lead by example—it's important to recognise those leading the way. And lastly, as I mentioned, brands need to prioritise gender equality as a critical aspect of sustainability and truly enhance their sourcing practices.”

- Jyoti Sharma, Country Director, Organic Cotton Accelerator

Release of the Reports by Women's Safety Accelerator Fund (WSAF)



During the session, two resources were released by WSAF

Women's Safety Accelerator Fund Handbook on Addressing Gender Stereotypes: The handbook serves as a practical guide for industry leaders, aiming to increase awareness and reflection on unconscious biases from the boardroom to the fields, fostering gender equity across the value chain.

[Read the full report here.](#)

Towards Establishing Return on Investment (ROI) in the Tea Sector of Assam: The study provides an in-depth econometric analysis of the Assam tea sector, revealing the significant impact of gender-based violence on business outcomes. It details how discrimination and violence lead to productivity and revenue losses, along with increased costs for tea estates. These findings highlight the tangible return on investment when addressing gender-related challenges, making it a vital resource for informed decision-making.

[Read the full report here.](#)

Panel:

Creating an Inclusive Supply Chain Towards Achieving Living Income



Panelists:

- **Sachin Sharma**, Vice President and Head - Agri and Dairy Operations, ITC
- **Ankita Garg**, Co-founder & COO, Varaha
- **Raman Wadhwa**, Director, DAY-NRLM, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India
- **Jurina Bichu**, Small Tea Grower, IDH - Unilever Living Income Project
- **Jatin Bavishi**, Program Manager, Small Tea Growers Sustainability Program, IDH

Moderator: Rajendra Jog, Executive Director, Syngenta Foundation India.

The panel discussion focused on creating an inclusive supply chain to ensure sustainable living incomes for smallholder farmers. It explored various strategies and models that integrate smallholders into value chains, leveraging collaborations, government initiatives, and market-oriented approaches.

A key emphasis was on Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) as a way to aggregate smallholders, helping them overcome challenges like land fragmentation and limited resources. Digital platforms like ITC's eChoupal and ITCMAARS were highlighted for enhancing market access, crop quality, and climate resilience. The session showcased successful rural development initiatives, particularly in women's empowerment through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which have enabled over 10 crore women to become entrepreneurs, benefiting from significant financial linkages.

The conversation also covered carbon offset initiatives that involve smallholders, promoting sustainable farming while providing additional income through carbon credits. The discussion underscored the importance of diversified income sources, as seen in successful examples of farmers integrating different crops and ventures into their operations. The session concluded that achieving a living income requires sustained efforts in innovation, collaboration, and climate-smart agricultural practices, supported by robust data-driven approaches and scalability.



The enhanced use of technology – we call it the phygital ecosystem; a combination of digital and physical. For example, our ITCMAARS, the new agritech platform, which is the new version of eChoupal, incorporates a combination of cutting-edge technologies – we use deep tech, AI/ML, and we have the first-gen AI-based solutions for farmers in Microsoft. So, the enhanced use of technologies increases efficiency in the supply chain and, more importantly, provides personalised solutions to the farmers. For example, today, every farmer can create a personalised crop calendar based on soil type, the crops they want to grow, when they want to sell, and the climatic conditions, along with personalised advisory based on external factors.”

-Sachin Sharma, Vice President and Head - Agri and Dairy Operations, ITC



Visionary Forum:

Responsible Sourcing of Textile Waste through Cluster Level Convening

Opening address delivered by
Smt. Roop Rashi Mahapatra IA&AS,
Textile Commissioner, Government of India



“ I view textiles as an incredible value chain spanning various fibres. The sector has immense potential for employment generation and livelihood support, particularly in our economy, and it also offers opportunities for policy and program integration across central, state, and local administrations, as well as across different departments—whether focused on micro or medium enterprises, farming, manufacturing, or advanced technical textiles. Every initiative we take has a vast scope for collaboration, alignment, and making sustainability truly meaningful.

To me, sustainability goes beyond environmental aspects; it includes sustaining enterprises across the entire value chain, from producer to consumer and back, ensuring value addition while adhering to the planet's needs.

- **Smt. Roop Rashi Mahapatra IA&AS,**
Textile Commissioner, Government of India

Conceptualised and brought together by the Alternate Materials Accelerator Programme, the forum explored adopting a cluster-based approach to improve efficiency, transparency, and investment in the textile sector. With 35 participants from various organisations, discussions focused on integrating diverse domains, engaging stakeholders, and aligning investments to drive sustainable growth.

The session emphasised a holistic model that connects fibres, states, municipalities, and localities, urging investments to address existing gaps. Panelists discussed organising clusters based on jurisdiction, material availability, and infrastructure, drawing from successful models of the landscape approach. Clusters were identified as catalysts for data transparency, crucial for attracting investments and improving supply chain efficiency.

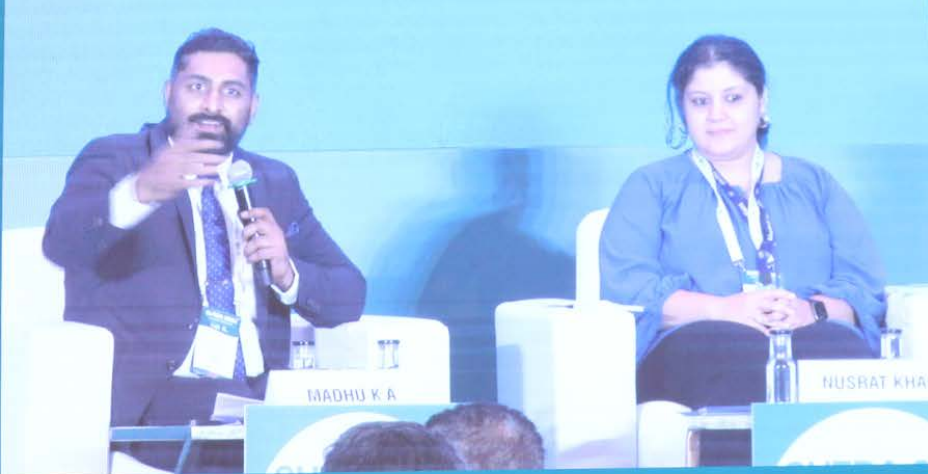
This model offers advantages such as accelerating sectoral growth, adapting to industry changes, and attracting diverse investments, including philanthropic and private capital. The approach supports coordinated actions, efficient resource allocation, and reduced risks, making it a strategic driver for sector-wide transformation and progress.



Panel:

Driving Better Jobs by Developing Safe Working Conditions

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SUTRA 2024
— Sustainable Trade Summit —

**Accelerating Responsible
Sourcing in Indian Markets**

17 - 18 October 2024
The Oberoi, Gurugram

Conceptualized and Hosted by:
idh
transforming markets



Panelists:

- **Nusrat Khan**, Program Specialist, Business & Human Rights / Responsible Business Action, UNDP
- **Dr. Lalit Gabhane**, Director General, National Safety Council
- **Rita Menon**, IAS, Member Stakeholder Committee, LABS and ex-Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India
- **Srinivasa Rao Venkatesh**, Chief Compliance Officer, Shahi Exports
- **Mithileshwar Thakur**, Secretary General, Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC)

Moderator: Madhu K A, Country Manager, LABS Initiative, IDH

The panel focused on enhancing workplace safety across industries, particularly in apparel, footwear and textile manufacturing sectors. The discussion highlighted the need to prioritise safety, shift mindsets from cost to investment, and promote collaborative compliance to create safer work environments.

The panel emphasised that safety should be treated as a core value rather than a mere compliance requirement. It was argued that leadership involvement and active employee engagement are essential to fostering a strong safety culture. Proactive safety management was recommended, where leaders lead by example, workers are encouraged to report hazards, and continuous improvement is prioritised. Safety should be seen not just as a legal obligation but also as a moral responsibility that can boost productivity.

A significant point of discussion was the balance between viewing safety as a cost versus an investment. Investing in safety measures not only reduces accidents but also improves worker morale, operational efficiency, and business reputation. This focus on safety can positively impact business outcomes and enhance global competitiveness.

Collaboration was identified as crucial for driving safety and workers' well-being, especially in export industries like textiles. The panel called for transparent communication between employers, workers, and regulatory bodies to ensure compliance with safety standards. Effective dialogue between factory

owners, workers, and brands was seen as a pathway to better working conditions and improved business performance. Industry associations were encouraged to promote knowledge-sharing and best practices to drive safety and sustainability.

The panel concluded that ongoing training and education for workers and leadership are pivotal in maintaining safety standards and fostering a culture of accountability. Investing in safety protocols not only ensures compliance but also contributes to long-term business value by building trust, credibility, and social licence to operate.

“ Business and factory owners often view safety as a cost, but it’s actually a profit centre. If you create good working conditions, and your employees return home safe every day, their productivity improves, ultimately leading to business growth through increased productivity. This is why GAP, LABS, IDH, and other organisations strive to ensure that brands are sustainable—not only in terms of environment, water conservation, and carbon positivity, but also by being free from accidents.”

- Dr. Lalit Gabhane, Director General, National Safety Council





Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Signing with National Safety Council

The Life and Building Safety (LABS) Initiative and the National Safety Council of India (NSC) signed an MoU to enhance worker safety in the apparel, footwear, and textile sectors. This partnership establishes a framework for knowledge sharing and collaboration, focusing on implementing targeted safety measures. Under this MoU, LABS and NSC will collaborate on sharing best practices, conducting joint training programs, and strengthening safety standards to ensure safer working environments across the industries. This initiative demonstrates a shared commitment to mitigating critical safety risks and fostering a culture of safety excellence.



Panel:

Sustainable Consumption and the Role of Consumers in Driving Change

Session co-hosted with CRB and Rainforest Alliance



Panelists:

- **Dr. Suruchi Mittar**, Senior Vice President / Chief Industry Officer, Invest India
- **Dushyant**, Owner, Cafe Sutra and OTH Jaipur
- **Apoorve Khandelwal**, Senior Program Lead, CEEW
- **Amjad Ali Khan**, Chief Customer Officer & Chief ESG & Investor Relations, FAB India

Moderator: Madhuri Nanda, PhD, Director South Asia, Rainforest Alliance

The panel explored the crucial role of consumer awareness and inclusive value chains in driving sustainable consumption. It highlighted how informed consumer choices and strategic collaborations can reshape industries and promote broader social impacts.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) and social enterprises were emphasised as key to scaling sustainable consumption. A data-driven approach, with consumer insights, was deemed vital for scaling sustainable practices and improving farmer incomes. The panel concluded that achieving resilient, sustainable consumption requires storytelling, collaboration, and strategic production changes to align consumer choices with sustainability goals.

“ The government is providing incentives, taking initiatives for companies working towards sustainability, and also actively promoting these companies. This approach not only introduces technology and manufacturing expertise but also strengthens the domestic market by fostering learning and understanding in sustainable production. Moreover, it gives an edge to potential partners, signalling that we are open to supporting sustainability initiatives.”

- **Dr. Suruchi Mittar**, Senior Vice President / Chief Industry Officer, Invest India

DAY 2

Panel:

Mainstreaming Regenerative Agriculture Sourcing



Panelists:

- **Anukool Joshi**, Director Agro, PepsiCo India
- **Vilas Shinde**, Chairman, Sahyadri Farms
- **Avik Banerjee**, Materials Program Lead, H&M
- **Anuja Kadian**, Government and Industry Affairs Director, Asia Pacific, Corteva Agriscience & Chair FICCI Task Force on Sustainable Agriculture
- **Amol Mishra**, Co-Founder and Chief Executive at Beetle Regen Solutions

Moderator: Jasmer Dhingra, Director Programs, IDH

The panel focused on the strategic importance of regenerative agriculture as a means to reduce resource exploitation while creating positive outcomes for both the environment and farming communities. The discussion underscored regenerative agriculture as a crucial pathway toward sustainability, but it also highlighted the current realities of Indian agriculture, where falling or stagnant farm incomes make the adoption of these practices particularly challenging for smallholder farmers.

The panel emphasised that for regenerative agriculture to be successfully adopted, interventions must ensure that farmers move toward achieving a living income. It was stressed that overlooking farmer incomes poses a supply risk for companies that

depend on agricultural inputs, as low farmer earnings could lead to reduced production capacity. Hence, securing a sustainable income for farmers is not just a social imperative but a critical factor in maintaining reliable supply chains.

A landscape approach was advocated, suggesting that investments should not be limited to a single commodity of interest but rather spread across multiple commodities within a region. This broader investment strategy is necessary to create a significant impact. The role of partnerships and collaborations was highlighted as essential to unlocking financing

opportunities for regenerative landscapes. Individual companies often lack the resources or mandates to invest beyond their core commodities, making multi-stakeholder collaboration key to driving long-term, sustainable change.

In conclusion, the panel called for a holistic, income-driven approach to regenerative agriculture, supported by diverse investments and strong collaborations, that would enhance farmer livelihoods, strengthen supply chains, and promote environmental sustainability.

“Regenerative agriculture is both a commitment to the environment and society – a journey that is still relatively new to India. As resources grow scarcer and challenges like soil degradation, yield losses, and climate change impacting crops, we must ask ourselves: How do we give back more than we consume? Integrating regenerative practices into our strategies is a key focus of our efforts.”

- Anukool Joshi, Director Agro, Pepsico India



Panel:

Decoding Living Wages for the Agriculture and Food Sector in India



Panelists:

- **Ranjit Prakash**, National Coordinator, International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- **Shantanu Kishwar**, Partnerships Lead, Wage Indicator Foundation
- **Deepika Rao**, Executive Director, CIVIDEP India

Moderator: Jagjeet Singh Kandal, Country Director, IDH India

The panel explored the shift from minimum wage to living wage standards, emphasising a holistic approach to ensure that agricultural workers can meet their basic needs. Living wage standards aim to accommodate varying regional costs and essential family needs, such as education, healthcare, and access to services.

The discussion highlighted the importance of a robust methodology to determine living wages at national and local levels, considering region-specific

data. This method allows wages to reflect real living costs across different areas, ensuring fairness and adequacy. The panel stressed that while the central government is responsible for setting regulatory frameworks, effective implementation depends on active participation by state governments.

Institutional oversight was identified as vital for monitoring progress, with a call for regular dialogue between the government, businesses, and worker unions to ensure success. Collaborative efforts among these stakeholders are necessary to create sustainable solutions and adapt to changing economic conditions. The panel emphasised that wages should be viewed not merely as a cost but as an investment in the future of workers, supporting economic growth and reducing disparities.

The panel noted that achieving living wage standards in India's agriculture and food sector will require coordinated efforts across multiple levels, aiming to enhance workers' quality of life. This approach will enable workers to not only survive but thrive, contributing to a more equitable economic landscape.

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Living wages are crucial and well-supported by data. A wage that covers recreation, savings, medical emergencies, and other essential needs can help reduce inequality, improve human development indicators, and boost GDP.”

- Deepika Rao, Executive Director, CIVIDEP India



Panel:

Improving Smallholder Inclusion and Adaptability on Climate Change- Learnings from the Coffee Sector in India



Panelists:

- **Mandeep Singh Tuli**, Procurement Director, Nutrition & Ice Cream, South Asia Hindustan Unilever Limited
- **Anuj Agarwal**, Head of Coffee India, Louis Dreyfus Company
- **Senthil Kumar**, Director of Research, Central Coffee Research Institute, Coffee Board of India
- **K G Rajeev**, Senior General Manager (Diversification), Tata Coffee
- **Srikanth Ambati**, Vice President, Director, Olam Food Ingredients (OFI)

Moderator: Jasmer Dhingra, Director Programs, IDH

The panel addressed the impacts of climate change, promoting sustainable practices, and enhancing the resilience of smallholder farmers. The discussion underscored the critical need for collaborative efforts among government bodies, private companies, and farmers to overcome challenges and seize growth opportunities in the sector.

The session opened with an overview of India's coffee production, primarily concentrated in Karnataka and Kerala, with newer regions starting cultivation. The panelists identified major challenges, including erratic rainfall, rising temperatures, and increased pest infestations—factors driven by climate change that have affected yields and productivity. This situation is especially challenging for smallholder farmers, who make up 99% of India's 4.8 million hectares under

coffee cultivation. The panel emphasised the urgent need for adaptation strategies such as improved irrigation infrastructure, resilient coffee varieties, and holistic pest management.

Sustainability emerged as a central theme, with discussions revolving around compliance with international standards like the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). The panel highlighted that while these regulations promote sustainable practices and market differentiation, they also pose compliance challenges for smallholders. Technological interventions, including mapping and verification tools, are being deployed to ensure traceability from farms to markets, thereby enabling compliance and market access.

The Coffee Board of India's role in research, farmer support, and productivity enhancement was acknowledged as vital for the sector's growth. The panel also underscored the importance of

economic security provided by coffee cultivation, especially for small and tribal farmers. Initiatives from major companies included inclusive supply chains, sustainable sourcing, and programs like farmer training, healthcare, and education to boost livelihoods.

Public-private partnerships were identified as critical for addressing climate challenges, improving R&D for climate-resilient varieties, and enhancing sustainable farming practices. The potential integration of coffee with spice production was also explored as a way to bolster farmer resilience and diversify income.

The discussion concluded with a call for continued innovation and strengthened collaboration among all stakeholders to support sustainable growth in India's coffee sector. Specific action items included enhancing partnerships, promoting sustainable practices, and ensuring smallholder farmers can comply with regulations while improving their livelihoods.

“ Climate change is not a distant threat; it is already disrupting sourcing strategies. For example, tea output is down 15% this year, and tomato crops have been wiped out in recent seasons, leading to higher prices. These shifts demand urgent adaptation and sustainable sourcing improvements. Doing nothing will only create chaos across supply chains, a reality Unilever is addressing proactively.”

- **Mandeep Singh Tuli**, Procurement Director, Nutrition & Ice Cream, South Asia Hindustan Unilever Limited



Panel:

The Future of Palm Oil Amidst Rapid Climate Change



Panelists:

- **Ajeet K Sahu**, IAS, Joint Secretary, Oilseeds and Oil Palm, International Cooperation, Credit, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India
- **Sudhakar Desai**, CEO, Emami Agrotech and President IVPA India
- **Dheeraj Talreja**, President, India, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, AAK
- **Sougata Niyogi**, CEO Oil Palm, Godrej Agrovet
- **Ashwin Selvaraj**, Deputy Director, Market Transformation, Asia, RSPO

Moderator: Tran Quynh Chi, Global Sourcing Director (Palm and Coffee), IDH.

The discussion centered on India's growing demand for palm oil and the need for sustainable cultivation practices to meet this demand responsibly. The discussion focused on the potential of coastal regions for oil palm cultivation and the challenges of balancing irrigation with environmental conservation.

Panelists emphasized the importance of improving productivity through sustainable practices, such as intercropping, while acknowledging the adoption challenges faced by farmers. It was noted that an enabling ecosystem, including financial incentives like RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) credits, is essential to encourage sustainability.

Several action points were proposed to support sustainable palm oil cultivation. These included developing a credit system for planting, establishing a unified policy framework, and creating model farms

to demonstrate sustainable methods across different regions. The need for coordinated efforts to address pricing pressures and financial constraints was also highlighted. Identifying suitable areas for cultivation, such as marginal lands currently used for low-yield crops like rice, was seen as a strategy to boost productivity without compromising high conservation value areas.

The panel emphasised that the palm oil industry must lead sustainability efforts, viewing sustainability as a continuous process requiring strong public-private partnerships. Establishing a sustainability fund was suggested to address the financial needs of the sector. Ultimately, collaboration and a supportive ecosystem are crucial for meeting India's rising demand for palm oil in an environmentally responsible way.



Launch of the IDH Sustainable Palm Oil Manifesto



The **India Sustainable Palm Oil Manifesto** was signed at SUTRA 2024, marking a pivotal move towards sustainable palm oil sourcing in India while enhancing smallholder farmers' livelihoods. With a production goal of 11.20 lakh tonnes of crude palm oil by 2025-26, the manifesto aims to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability. Facilitated by IDH and the **Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)**, and supported by leading companies such as **3F Industries Ltd., Godrej Agrovet, Navbharat, Emami Agrotech, Patanjali Foods - Ruchi Soya, and AAK India**, it emphasises responsible sourcing, smallholder support, transparent supply chains, and increased consumer awareness. This collaboration between industry, government, and civil society sets the foundation for a more sustainable palm oil sector in India.



Panel:

Meeting Responsible Sourcing and Food Safety Commitments in Fragmented and Diversified Supply Chains: The Crossroads for the Spices Sector in India



Panelists:

- **Amarender Y**, Senior Manager, Crop Development, ITC
- **Ramkumar Menon**, Chairman, World Spice Organisation
- **Morup Namgail**, Head Agri Tech, IFFCO Kissan
- **Symala Gowri**, Senior Manager, Sustainability, Jayanti Herbs and Spices

Moderator: Madhuri Nanda, PhD, Director South Asia, Rainforest Alliance

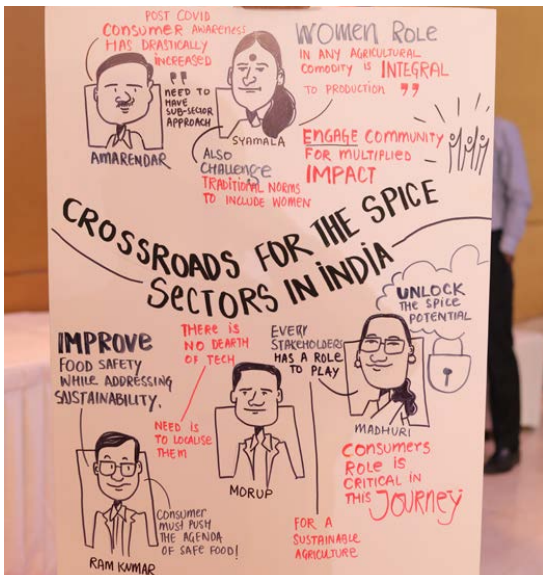
This session delved into the complexities of ensuring sustainable sourcing and food safety in the spices sector. The discussion focused on how climate change, fragmented supply chains, and regulatory challenges affect smallholder farmers and the broader spice industry.

Climate change has led to increased pest attacks and soil degradation, raising production costs and pushing farmers toward greater pesticide use. This, in turn, complicates compliance with stringent Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for both domestic and export markets. The panel underscored the

urgent need for sustainable practices like Integrated Crop Management (ICM), organic farming, and regenerative agriculture to improve soil health, reduce pesticide reliance, and enhance yield quality.

Women's roles in the agriculture sector, particularly in the spices industry, were highlighted as critical yet often underrecognised. Empowering women through education, fair wages, and community initiatives was seen as key to sectoral progress. Technology emerged as a vital tool for enabling responsible sourcing, with IoT-enabled farm monitoring and traceability solutions helping bridge the gap between farmers and buyers. However, issues with infrastructure and farmer engagement persist, making it challenging to fully integrate these technological solutions.

It was noted that after the COVID-19 pandemic, consumer awareness of sustainability and pesticide use has increased, driving companies to adapt by integrating backward sourcing strategies, focusing on ethical procurement, and reducing emissions. Achieving these goals requires policy advocacy, cross-sector collaboration, and capacity-building initiatives to ensure alignment with consumer expectations and regulatory demands. The panel emphasised that ongoing dialogue, partnerships, and knowledge sharing are essential for addressing knowledge gaps and advancing the spices sector toward responsible sourcing and sustainable growth.



Panel:

Harnessing AgriTech for Sustainable Public-Private Partnerships



Panelists:

- **Amandeep Panwar**, Founder & CEO Bharat Rohan
- **Shreejit Borthakur**, Agri Tech Lead, World Economic Forum
- **Bhagyashree Joshi**, India Community Manager, Open Supply Hub
- **Dhruv Sharma**, Sector Lead - Agriculture, Invest India
- **Arindom Datta**, Senior Advisor, Sustainability, Agribusiness, Technology

Moderator: Sneha Maheshwari, Markets and Policy Engagement, IDH

The panel explored how technology can transform sustainable agriculture in India through strategic collaborations between the public and private sectors. The discussion focused on addressing critical challenges like ecological overshoot, increasing food demand, and the need for resource efficiency to support smallholder farmers.

The panel began by highlighting the urgency of balancing rising food demand with sustainable resource use, given that India's agriculture sector employs nearly 50% of the workforce but contributes only 18% to the GDP. It emphasised the role of government initiatives in promoting sustainability, with measures like water-efficient irrigation and low-GHG crop varieties contributing to better resource optimisation.

Agri Fintech was identified as crucial in reducing transaction costs and risks through digitisation of land and farmer data, thus facilitating easier access to finance. The panel proposed the use of blended finance—combining impact and commercial capital—to bridge the financing gap in sustainable agriculture. Drones were discussed as a valuable tool in precision farming, aiding in crop monitoring, pest detection, and advisory services. However, the challenge of farmer skepticism, particularly in adopting early pest detection through drones, was noted, along with the need for trust-building and training.

The Open Supply Hub was presented as a solution for standardizing supply chain data, promoting transparency, and breaking down information

silos. Similarly, AI-driven agricultural tools, such as crop planning based on soil and rainfall data, were showcased, with successful pilots in Telangana scaling from 7,000 to 50,000 farmers due to strong government support.

The session concluded by emphasizing that public-private partnership models are essential for scaling AgriTech solutions. Collaborative efforts across sectors are needed to overcome barriers like high costs, fragmented landholdings, and limited access to finance. Effective partnerships leveraging government support and private sector innovation are key to driving sustainable growth, lowering production costs, and increasing productivity in Indian agriculture.



Panel:

Co-financing Catalytic Investments to Drive Climate Resilience and Adaptation in Agriculture

SUTRA 2024
— Sustainable Trade Summit —

— Sustainable Trade Summit —

Accelerating Responsible
Sourcing in Indian Markets

17 - 18 October 2024

The Oberoi, Gurugram

Conceptualized and Hosted by:



Panelists:

- **Emmanuel Murray**, Investment Director, Caspian
- **Megha Jain**, Senior Advisor, Private Sector, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Aleen Mukherjee**, Senior Lead, Special Projects, Samunnati
- **Raj Kumar**, Impact Investment Consultant, Agri3 Fund and Yunus Business Fund
- **Sriram Appulingam**, General Manager, Banker's Institute of Rural Development (BIRD)

Moderator: Hemendra Mathur, Co-founder ThinkAg & Venture Partner, Bharat Innovation Fund

The panel explored strategies to enhance climate resilience within India's agricultural sector. The discussion centered on the urgent need to unlock financing for smallholder farmers to support both climate adaptation and mitigation, given the destructive impacts of climate change across the country.

Panelists emphasised that climate adaptation efforts must be localized and tailored to specific cultural and environmental contexts. Ensuring that farmers are actively engaged and central to these interventions is critical for the sustainability of these initiatives beyond the funding period. The importance of designing solutions that align with local realities was highlighted as a key driver of long-term success in adaptation efforts.

Philanthropic and public capital were identified as essential sources of initial climate finance, given the agricultural sector's many market failures, such as the lack of accessible and coherent data. These forms of blended finance are valuable in creating demonstration projects and proof-of-concept models. However, to scale these solutions effectively, private capital must be engaged. The panel emphasised that philanthropic finance should aim to make farming profitable, thereby making it an attractive opportunity

for private investors to contribute to climate adaptation efforts.

The discussion concluded that collaboration among public, private, and philanthropic sectors is crucial for sustainable change in the climate finance landscape. Effective co-financing models should ensure that farmers benefit economically, thus encouraging broader investment and achieving long-lasting resilience in agriculture.



Panel:

Responsible Supply Chains - The Measurement Imperative

Session co-hosted by Sattva Consulting



Panelists:

- **Palat Vijayraghavan**, Founder & CEO, LEAF
- **Sasmitha Patnaik**, Technical Assistance Facilitator & Gender Advisor, Tetra Tech
- **Shashank Kumar**, Co-founder & CEO, DeHaat

Moderator: Ambika Jugran, Principal, Impact Measurement Advisory, Sattva Consulting

The panel emphasised the vital role of measurement in building sustainable supply chains, focusing on transparency, data-driven insights, and effective communication to drive trust and behavioral change, particularly among farmers.

Panelists stressed that transparency is crucial as consumer priorities shift toward health and sustainability. Establishing Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) is necessary, but demonstrating

tangible benefits in productivity and soil health is key to fostering farmer adoption. Data should drive measurable action, with cycle-by-cycle monitoring offering clear evidence of sustainable benefits.

The discussion noted challenges in implementing sustainable practices, including farmer resistance and the need for clear metrics to simplify processes and support innovations like crop insurance and carbon credits. While technology enhances efficiency, seamless measurement systems that minimise manual intervention are needed for natural adoption. Bridging data gaps between farmers and consumers can foster trust, with financial and technical support ensuring supply chain sustainability.

In summary, clear metrics, targeted support, and effective data flows were agreed upon as essential for driving transparency, improving communication, and amplifying sustainability's impact across supply chains.



Closing Keynote

Mr. Sanjeev Asthana
CEO of Patanjali Foods



Sanjeev Asthana addressed India's potential and challenges in building a sustainable supply chain. He emphasised the need for a comprehensive policy framework, gender equity, and support for small farmers, calling for responsible practices and strategic interventions for long-term growth.

He outlined that India's journey toward sustainability involves both challenges and opportunities, which can be addressed by developing a comprehensive



policy framework. Such a framework must focus on resolving real concerns within the industry and building capacity for long-term growth. A responsible supply chain should integrate key aspects such as gender equity and the inclusion of small farmers, underscoring the need for detailed analysis and strategic interventions. The speaker emphasised that large industries bear significant responsibility for driving sustainable practices across the supply chain.

The need for institutional mechanisms to promote gender equity was also emphasised, with a call to establish systems that can respond effectively to evolving sectoral demands. Addressing regional imbalances and formalising microfinancing mechanisms were highlighted as crucial steps for equitable development.

In conclusion, the address reinforced that a sustainable supply chain requires a holistic approach, focusing on policy, gender equity, small farmer support, and regional balance, all driven by responsible industry practices and strategic interventions.



Conclusion

SUTRA 2024 was a pioneering and landmark event hosted, designed and facilitated by IDH to ensure responsible sourcing gets the attention it deserves. As the only event of its kind in the country, it was our endeavour to ensure that all stakeholders – businesses, small holders, government, civil society organisations – could contribute to the dialogue on responsible sourcing in an active and engaging manner. SUTRA is more than a standalone summit. It is an ongoing process of learning and development so that all stakeholders can design and implement strategies to make responsible sourcing and sustainable trade a reality. IDH is committed to bring to light multiple editions of SUTRA, in the process also help setting up pre-competitive collaboration initiatives to work across agricultural commodities of relevance to small holders and businesses in India.

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