

Agriculture ministry to push FPOs to work closely with hospitality industry to enhance farmers' income: Agri Secretary

The maiden FPO–Hospitality & Farmers' Benefit Summit, organised by the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) in Delhi, resolved to build strong linkages between the country's farming community and the hotel and restaurant industry to enable inclusive economic growth.

Devesh Chaturvedi, Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Government of India, said that the government will encourage closer partnerships between Food Producer Organisations (FPOs) and the hospitality sector to enhance farmers' income. He emphasised that no other industry has the power tourism has to redistribute income to underdeveloped regions of the country, and urged FPOs to leverage this potential by collaborating with hotels and restaurants. Chaturvedi was speaking at the maiden conference organised by the hotel federation to initiate dialogue between FPOs and the hospitality industry with the aim of creating an inclusive farm-to-fork ecosystem—one that enhances farmers' income while enabling hotels to adopt direct, traceable and ethically sourced produce to deliver wholesome culinary experiences.

Addressing hoteliers and FPO representatives, Chaturvedi said that such partnerships can help eliminate logistical bottlenecks and other challenges faced by farmers, reduce the layers of middlemen, and secure better pricing for their produce. He underlined the importance of FPOs understanding the demand–supply dynamics of the hospitality sector and building a system based on confidence. He added that the ministry will promote FPO–hotel partnerships at the state level through weekly webinars conducted with industry stakeholders. There are over 10,000 government-registered FPOs and another 40,000 operating across the country, he informed.

Citing the support extended by the hotel industry during the International Year of Millets, Chaturvedi urged hospitality businesses to promote India's local ingredients, especially GI-tagged agricultural and processed products, through

their menus. There are more than 250 GI-tagged varieties of exotic food products that require wider promotion. By showcasing or including these products in their offerings, hotels and restaurants can not only command a premium from customers but also bring visibility to these products among domestic and international guests, he said.

Earlier, in his keynote address, Suman Billa, Additional Secretary – Tourism, Government of India, spoke about how FPO–hotel partnerships can elevate the guest experience, particularly the culinary experience, at a time when travellers seek unique memories. While hotel rooms across brands may look similar, it is local experiences that guests cherish, he pointed out. Billa highlighted the successful partnership model between hotels and local communities in Kumarakom, Kerala, developed under the Responsible Tourism initiative. The model bridged the trust gap between the industry and local residents, and today nearly 1,200 farmers from the village are part of the local FPO. He also referenced Kerala Tourism's Village Life Experiences initiative, which tourists value highly and which creates livelihood opportunities for village artisans and craftsmen.

Billa noted that, at a time when governments worldwide face the challenge of job creation due to the rise of AI, service sectors such as tourism must shoulder the responsibility of generating employment and driving value creation. In this context, partnerships between hotels and FPOs can significantly contribute to inclusive economic growth through cross-sectoral collaboration.

In his welcome address, Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, President, FHRAI, said that the convergence of two major sectors of the economy has the power to bring transformational change by empowering rural communities while enhancing customer experiences across the hospitality industry. He said such partnerships would be a win-win for both farmers and hotels. Jaiswal announced that FHRAI will establish a dedicated cell within its secretariat to facilitate coordination between FPOs and hotels at regional, state and destination levels. He also said that FHRAI will soon publish a directory of FPOs for its members.

Also speaking at the summit were M.P. Bezbaruah, Secretary General, Hotel Association of India (HAI); Ajay Bakaya, MD, Sarovar Hotels; Rahool Macarius, MD – Eurasia, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts; Vishwapreet Cheema, President, Lemon Tree Hotels; and Ankita Jaiswal, Chairperson, Sustainable Tourism, HRANI and UPHRA.