

Visit of Hon'ble Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare to ICAR-CCRI Research Farm, Nagpur

Hon'ble Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan-Ji, visited the Research Farm of ICAR–Central Citrus Research Institute (ICAR-CCRI), Nagpur, on 26th September 2026. Dr. N. G. Patil, Director of ICAR-CCRI along with the scientists welcomed him at the research Farm. During the visit, the Hon'ble Minister interacted with scientists and officials of the Institute and inspected the citrus orchards and ongoing research activities at the farm. The Hon'ble Minister took keen interest in the citrus production technologies and orchard management practices being demonstrated at the research farm and also reviewed the scientific experiments being conducted to enhance citrus production. He was briefed by the scientists about the performance of citrus varieties, orchard management practices and the Institute's efforts towards improving citrus productivity and quality.

Regarding high-density planting (HDP) and yield optimization, the Hon'ble Minister observed that while farmers traditionally plant 277 orange saplings per hectare with an average yield of 10 to 12 tonnes per hectare, the experimental HDP models at CCRI accommodate 555 plants per hectare, raising target yields to 20 to 21 tonnes per hectare—effectively almost doubling the yield / productivity. Reviewing ground-cover practices and soil health, he noted that the institute utilizes permeable weed mats rather than non-porous plastic, allowing water penetration into the soil, rapid multiplication of beneficial soil microbes, and effective weed control over a 10-year lifespan, while also praising the Raised-bed (*Bed-paddhati*) layout for proper soil aeration and moisture retention. Inspecting canopy management practices, Hon'ble Union Minister Shri Chouhan-ji highlighted that precision pruning techniques ensure fruit growth is not only restricted to outer canopy branches, but also promoting heavy fruiting on inner branches and significantly increasing overall fruit count and farmer profitability. Examining the biotechnological advancements against the deadly Citrus Greening disease in the near-field containment facilities, the Minister noted that CCRI scientists are incorporating disease-resistant genes extracted from pumpkin seeds into citrus crop lines like acid lime and Mosambi to establish long-term genetic resistance. He expressed appreciation for the institutional framework under the *Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan* and the “One Team, One Task” initiative, where time-bound target tasks are assigned to scientific teams. Emphasizing global market linkages, he underlined the ongoing collaboration with APEDA to produce export-quality, disease-free oranges capable of entering international markets to secure higher profit margins for domestic growers. In conclusion, the Hon'ble Minister commended the scientists and leadership of ICAR-CCRI for their successful field trials and directed the immediate transfer of these validated innovations like high-density planting, raised-bed planting system, non-plastic permeable weed mats, precision pruning, and genetically engineered disease resistance—directly to farmers' fields nationwide.

