



## **BIRD, Mangaluru conducts “FPO–Startup Immersion Programme” in collaboration with a-IDEA, ICAR-NAARM**

The Bankers Institute of Rural Development (BIRD), Mangaluru organised a high-impact ‘FPO–Startup Immersion Programme’ on 13 March 2026 at its campus, in partnership with a-IDEA, the Technology Business Incubator of ICAR-NAARM, Hyderabad.

The programme brought together 100+ participants, including CEOs and Directors of FPOs from Karnataka and Kerala, PACS functionaries, agri-entrepreneurs, and agri-tech startups, to explore digital innovations in agriculture and strengthen value chain linkages.

Shri V. S. Balasubramanian, Joint Director, BIRD, Mangaluru, inaugurated the programme. In his address, he highlighted the pivotal role of FPOs in empowering smallholder farmers through economies of scale, collective bargaining, and enhanced market access. He noted that the Immersion Programme aims to bridge FPOs with innovative agritech startups, fostering a technology-led rural transformation ecosystem.

Shri Ashok, Deputy Director, Department of Agriculture, Dakshina Kannada, emphasized the importance of adopting modern technologies and state government schemes to boost productivity and improve post-harvest management practices.

Dr. Mahantesh Shiroor, Principal Scientist, a-IDEA, ICAR-NAARM, underscored the critical role of startups in making FPOs future-ready and sustainable. He encouraged farmer collectives to leverage the Immersion Programme for adopting practical, scalable technologies.

Startups incubated under a-IDEA, ICAR-NAARM showcased innovative solutions in AI-driven crop monitoring, post-harvest loss reduction, agri-fintech, and agri-waste management, tailored for the needs of FPOs and emerging agripreneurs.

The event received a media coverage in *The Hindu*, highlighting the increasing relevance of technology-enabled solutions in strengthening the FPO ecosystem.

Few Photographs of the event are appended below

**Programme inauguration by Shri Ashok DD, Agriculture Department and Shri V S Balasubramanian,JD,BIRD(M)**



**Cross section of the FPOs, PACS and Startups**





**Startups demonstrating their products at the Exhibition**







# BIRD organises FPO-Startup Immersion Programme

**The Hindu Bureau**

MANGALURU

Bankers' Institute of Rural Development (BIRD), a training establishment of NABARD, organised the 'FPO-Startup Immersion Programme' on Friday, March 13, on its campus, in collaboration with a-IDEA, the Technology Business Incubator of ICAR-NAARM, Hyderabad.

Inaugurating the programme, BIRD joint director V.S. Balasubramanian emphasised the role of FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations) in addressing the challenges faced by smallholder farmers by facilitating economies of scale, collective bargaining power, and direct market access to the farmers' produce.

He said the Immersion Programme intends to bridge the gap between FPOs and innovative agri-tech startups, fostering a sustainable ecosystem for rural transformation.



The Bankers Institute of Rural Development hosting the 'FPO-Startup Immersion Programme' on its campus in Mangaluru on Friday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

He urged farmers' collectives to leverage technology for improved productivity and enhanced income.

The programme brought together over 100 participants, including CEOs and directors of FPOs from across Karnataka and Kerala, functionaries from various Primary Agriculture Cooperative Societies, agri-entrepreneurs, and agri-tech start-ups to explore digital technologies in agriculture and synergies in value chain

management.

While describing the various schemes of the State government, Deputy Director of Agriculture, Mangaluru, Ashok, urged FPOs and farmer members to adopt technology for increasing productivity and in post-harvest management practices.

Mahantesh Shiroor, principal scientist, a-IDEA, ICAR-NAARM, emphasised that startups play a critical role in transforming FPOs into future-ready, sustainable enterprises.