“BY 2020 EVERY DISTRICT AND FARMER WOULD BE LINKED TO THE ENTIRE AGRICULTURE VALUE CHAIN”: DR. S K GOEL

Mumbai, April 13, 2012: Addressing the Conference “AgriVision 2020 : Sustainable Agriculture – Farmer-led Inclusive Growth” organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here today, Dr. S K Goel, Principal Secretary - Agriculture & Marketing, Marketing Cooperation, Government of Maharashtra insisted on the need for a visionary approach for sustainable agriculture by focusing on public-private partnerships, contract farming, formation of farmer Self-Help Groups (SHGs), creating backward linkages, establishing integrated value chains from production to marketing which must see a win-win situation for both the farmers as well as the industry and consumer.

Further emphasizing on the vision for agriculture for 2020, Dr. Goel mentioned that in the state of Maharashtra, in the next eight years, every district and farmer would have linkages to the entire value chain; and at a national level, every farmer should be connected to any one value chain to achieve the desired growth and sustainable agriculture.

Dr. Jimmy Mirchandani, Chairman & Managing Director, Aries Agro Ltd, in his special address, emphasized the need for raising productivity without impacting the environment. “The focus on social and ecological sustainability is very important for agricultural sustainability”, he said.

Dr. Mirchandani mentioned that innovation in the agriculture sector is happening in a piecemeal manner and there is a need to focus on partnership and collaboration for increasing the farm produce and quality. He pointed out the need of short term and long term policies reforms, wherein short term policies should focus on immediate intervention for marketing, extension, export and incentivising corporate for development activities in rural areas and long term policies should focus on infrastructure development and extending knowledge to the farming community especially among the rural youth.

In his address, Dr. Gyanendra Shukla, Director – Mahyco Monsanto Biotech, talked about the real challenges facing agriculture. “Technological interventions and deployment can be a catalyst and is one of the powerful solutions to help farmers feed and clothe the world’s growing population – e.g. Bt cotton doubled production, reduced pesticide usage, improved lives – in short, made cotton farming sustainable.

Sustainable agriculture requires focus on increasing agricultural productivity and improving the social well-being of resource-poor farmers; secondly, technological interventions and deployment, and finally, protecting and even improving the environment through better utilization of input resources,” he said.

Talking about the importance of Bt Cotton, Mr. Dhiren Seth, that Bt cotton has led to the growth of the textile sector in India by doubling cotton production, helping make cotton farming remunerative for the farmer and has helped evolve the Indian cotton industry as a whole.

Earlier, in his welcome remarks, Mr R N Bhaskar, Chairman, E Convergence Technologies Ltd stressed on the need for sustainability in the farm sector. “There is a need for a concerted rejuvenation strategy for Indian Agriculture by maintaining soil fertility and creating awareness of water management”, he said.

More than 200 delegates from the industry, farming community and other key stakeholders attended the event.

As a part of this conference, CII recognized the partners of Maharashtra’s Cotton Revolution, as the
nation and Maharashtra completes a decade of successful Bt cotton farming. The following were the partners who were recognized, representing various sectors -

**Ramrao Sahebrao Shinde**, from Manoli village, Parbhani district has 21 acres of land and grows hybrid cotton seeds with insect protection Bt cotton technologies on 15 acres of his cotton farm, in addition to growing other crops such as maize, chilly and brinjal. According to Shinde, Bt cotton seeds have relieved him from continuous spraying due to its superior bollworm control, higher boll retention which increased cotton production significantly, and gave him a tension-free life. Higher yields of 24 quintals per acre with hybrid Bt cotton seeds has helped him earn more income, with which he built a pucca home and purchased a tractor.

Gulabsingh Bajiraosingh Raghuwanshi, from Sarve village in Dhule district grows cotton on 3 acres, in addition to maize. Over the last few years, cotton farming has turned remunerative and his yield has increased due to effective control of bollworms which earlier used to cause a lot of yield loss. He also saves on cost of pesticides and sprays against bollworms. Hybrid Bt cotton seeds have helped him harvest better quality cotton which has helped him to realize better prices for his farm produce. With the additional income earned, he purchased a motorbike, and importantly, feels he lives a better life.

**Ms. Jayshree Prakahssinh Patil**, from Valki Shendani village, Jalgaon district has 10 acres of land and grows cotton and bananas on 5 acres each. Ms Patil first came to hear of hybrid Bt cotton seeds from Shetkari Sangathan and has been planting them since 2003. With 10 quintals per acre with hybrid Bt cotton seeds as compared to 4 quintals per acre with non-Bt cotton seeds she earns an additional income of Rs. 20,000 per acre. Today, Indian hybrid seeds with Bt cotton technologies have enabled her to invest in her daughter’s education, improved their financial situation, and their overall living conditions.

**Babarao Anandrao Londhe**, from Londhesangvi village, Nanded district has 20 acres of land on which he grows cotton on 5 acres, in addition to soybean, jowar, turmeric and sugarcane. Since 2003, he is repeatedly cultivating hybrid Bt cotton seeds as it gives him approx. 10 quintals per acre as compared to 2-3 quintals per acre from non-Bt cotton seeds. With the additional income of Rs. 16,000 per acre he enrolled his daughter in an English medium school and built a new home in Nanded for his family.

**Shri B M Kale** is a farmer leader from Shetkari Sangathan – one of India’s leading farmer organization and a non political union of farmers formed with the aim to “Freedom of access to markets and to technology”. Shetkari Sanghatan works to improve farmers’ access to cutting-edge agri inputs, remunerative prices for produce, better rural infrastructure and market linkages, and towards farmer-friendly policies that help make farming sustainable.

**Mr. Shembekar** is the Managing Director of Ankur Seeds which specializes in developing high-yielding hybrids seeds across crops. Working for farmers since 1976 headquartered in Nagpur, Ankur Seeds develops seeds for cotton, rice, okra, tomato, wheat, pigeon pea, etc. and is breeding both hybrids and varieties suitable for varied agro-climatic conditions. Ankur Seeds has developed region-specific hybrid cotton seeds which are among the most popular in the country and are helping farmers increase their produce and income.

**Mr. Ramesh Wattanvar** is the Vice President for Marketing, Ajeet Seeds. The company has strong hybrid and varietal seed R&D programme in Cotton, Rice, Maize, Sorghum, Wheat, and is expanding R&D in vegetable crops. The R&D team has developed and collected a large base of novel germplasm in each crop from various institutes. As part of the services for seed companies, Ajeet Seeds provides Bt testing
for cotton from leaf and seeds, leaf tissues; SSR micro satellite based DNA fingerprinting for cotton, okra among others. Ajeet Seeds has also developed region-specific hybrid cotton seeds which are among the most popular in the country and are helping farmers increase their produce and income.

**Dr. Seetharama** is the Executive Director, ABLE-AG (Association of Biotechnology-Led Enterprises – Agriculture Group), India’s agri-biotech industry association. ABLE-AG aims at accelerating the pace of biotechnology in Indian agriculture by enabling strategic alliances between researchers, the Government and the Indian and global biotech industry. Prior to 2002, Dr Seetharama was a research scientist at ICRISAT, Hyderabad since 1973 working on stress biology and biotechnology. Currently, he also services as the member of research advisory bodies of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

Sudarshan Suryawanshi is the CEO of NGO ISAP (Indian Society of Agri-business Professionals) - India's leading network of agriculture and allied sector professionals in the non-profit organization of the country. The NGO ISAP aims to instil economic security and stability among small farming community and have successfully carried out several assignments in the area of agriculture, rural and social development, market linkages, capacity building and extension services. ISAP runs initiatives in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, among other States.

**Mr. Dhiren Seth** is the President, Cotton Association of India (CAI) and is also a Board member of the East India Cotton Association Limited. The Cotton Association of India is engaged in providing cotton testing services, maintaining Indian Cotton Grade Standards, fixing spot rates of all major growths of Indian cotton, among others. It has ambitious plans to set up Cotton Testing Laboratories in upcountry locations, establishing a Cotton School of International standard, undertaking Cotton Promotion Programmes and establishing a Cotton Museum.

**Mr. Prem Malik** is the Deputy Chairman, Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI). He also runs a Management Consultancy in Textiles and is engaged in textile exports. He has a work experience of over 43 years at Top Management level with the companies like Bombay Dyeing & Manufacturing Co. Ltd. and Mafatlal Industries Ltd. He is currently the Managing Committee member of (SRTEPC), Synthetic and Rayon Export Promotions Council of India and a Director of Cotton Association of India. Shri Malik is a Past Chairman of Cotton Textile Export Promotion Council (Texprocil) and a former Deputy Chairman of SRTEPC.

Lastly and equally importantly, the State Government of Maharashtra for partnering in enabling farmers, academics, the agri input and end user industry, and NGOs to create Maharashtra and India’s Cotton Revolution.

The Conference, which brought together key stakeholders in the agriculture sector was organized to collaboratively develop an agriculture vision for 2020 and work out sustainable solutions through farmer education, use of higher-yielding inputs, processing, supply-chain linkages, end-user industries and newer approaches to overcome farming challenges and make Maharashtra a state with a robust infrastructure for agriculture.