

INTERNATIONAL

South Africa's agri minister lauds ICNW's Nandini Azad for empowering women farmers

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Nandini Azad, President of the Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW) presented her views on Agriculture and Nature at World Farmers' Organization General Assembly in Rustenburg, South Africa

[Women](#) (ICNW) – Working Women's Forum presented her views so strongly that drew the serious attention of all delegates including African Farmers Association of South Africa (AFASA); Mcebisi Skwatsha, the Deputy Agriculture Minister of Agriculture & Rural Development of South Africa. Skwatsha lauded the vision and actions of Dr. Azad for empowering women farmers, once he heard from the women Head of AFASA from Cape Town.

The [WFOGA2023](#) took place in Sun City Convention Center, near the city of Rustenburg, South Africa, from May 21 to 24, 2023. The event, with the theme- "Investing in Farmers' Solutions for Resilient Food Systems with a Positive Impact on Nature"- was organised in collaboration with the WFO Members Southern African Agri Initiative (SAAI), AFASA and the Wildlife Ranching South Africa (WRSA).

The WFO 2023 annual meeting focused on the nexus between agriculture and nature, highlighting the critical role farmers and their local solutions on the ground can play to address the global challenges of transitioning to resilient [food systems](#) generating a tremendous and positive impact on nature.

Dr. Azad took to the stage and captivated the audience with her inspiring words on [climate-smart agriculture](#). She shared a remarkable story of empowerment from her organisation, highlighting the experience of a woman named Padmavathy. Padmavathy's journey symbolised the transformation brought about by the ICNW, as it helped bring land ownership to the landless through financial inclusion. From meagre millet wages to

In May 2023, in the vibrant land of South Africa, the [World Farmers' Organization](#) General Assembly (WFOGA2023) was in full swing. Farmers and their representatives from all corners of the world gathered to share their experiences and discuss the future of agriculture. Dr. Nandini Azad, the President of the [Indian Cooperative Network for](#)

become proud owners of their own land, the women of ICNW had achieved something remarkable.

One of the key factors in this success was the adoption of climate-smart technologies by the poor women farmers of ICNW. Dr. Azad spoke passionately about practices such as using a single furrow plough to turn the topsoil, vermin composting, compost pits and establishing an organic seed network. These methods not only improved agricultural productivity but also ensured a sustainable and environmentally friendly approach to farming.

Dr. Azad also shared the stage with representatives from farmer organisations around the world, including Italy, Malawi, Denmark, Chad, the USA, Australia, Vietnam, and Europe. The exchange of ideas and experiences enriched the discussions, showcasing global unity in finding innovative solutions for agricultural challenges.

On 22nd of May, Dr. Nandini Azad presented a detailed Annual Report of the WFO Global Cooperative Working Group on Cooperatives to the General Assembly. Her report shed light on the progress made by cooperatives worldwide and emphasised the importance of collaboration and support for these grassroots organisations.

Impressed by Dr. Azad's expertise and dedication, Mme. Sheela Hean Jima, the Deputy Chair of the Africa Farmers Association of South Africa (AFASA), extended an invitation to Dr. Azad to visit Cape Town. They met to explore potential collaborations and learn from each other's experiences.

To further strengthen the bond between India and South Africa, Mcebisi Skwatsha, the Deputy Agriculture Minister of Agriculture & [Rural Development](#) of South Africa, personally reached out to Dr. Azad. He acknowledged her commitment to assisting poor women's cooperatives in South Africa and expressed his desire to replicate the successful ICNW model in his country.

During this meeting, she commended the Indian Cooperation Ministry's focus on the digitalisation of primary [cooperatives](#) and providing seed capital, which had significantly boosted the cooperative sector.

Mcebisi Skwatsha expressed his deep appreciation for the opportunity to connect with colleagues like Dr. Nandini Azad, who were working towards creating a better globe for all. He was particularly interested in the ICNW's approach to land ownership through financial inclusion and expressed his intention to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for a delegation from South Africa to visit South India. The goal was to see, learn, and discuss the modalities and possibilities of replicating the ICNW-Working Women's Forum model in South Africa, thereby [empowering women farmers](#) and promoting inclusive agricultural practices.