

## **ICAR-IIRR LAUNCH CSR-FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECT ONWHITE-BACKED PLANTHOPPER AND FALSE SMUT**

**Hyderabad, July 10, 2026:** The ICAR–Indian Institute of Rice Research (ICAR-IIRR), Hyderabad, in collaboration with the Agri Biotech Foundation (ABF), Hyderabad, today inaugurated a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)-funded collaborative research project titled “Molecular Profiling of Landraces/Genotypes for Resistance to White-Backed Planthopper and False Smut in Rice”.

The project was inaugurated in the presence of Dr. M. S. Prasad (Director, ICAR-IIRR), Dr. Y. G. Prasad (Director, ABF) and Dr. G. Radhakrishnan (R & D Head, Rasi Seeds Pvt. Ltd.) along with principal investigator Dr. V Chinna Babu Naik and Co- principal investigator Dr. Ladha Lakshmi. The programme marked the beginning of a three-year collaborative initiative aimed at strengthening sustainable rice production through the identification and utilization of novel genetic resources for resistance to two major constraints affecting rice cultivation.

Director of the ICAR-IIRR addressed about Rice is India’s most important food crop, cultivated on nearly 50 million hectares with an annual production exceeding 150 million tonnes. However, increasing incidences of the White-Backed Planthopper (WBPH) and False Smut disease have emerged as significant threats to rice productivity. WBPH alone can cause 35–95% yield loss under severe infestation and also serves as a vector for viral diseases such as Southern Rice Black-Streaked Dwarf Virus (SRBSDV). The project focuses on identifying novel rice germplasm and landraces possessing durable resistance to WBPH and False Smut, thereby broadening the existing genetic base available for rice improvement programmes. The research will integrate conventional phenotyping with advanced molecular approaches to identify new resistance genes and molecular markers that can accelerate the development of climate-resilient and pest-resistant rice varieties.

The programme commenced with a welcome address by Dr. A. P. Padma Kumari, Head, Division of Entomology, ICAR-IIRR. The project overview was presented by Dr. V. Chinna Babu Naik, Senior Scientist (Agricultural Entomology) and Principal Investigator. Dr. G. Radhakrishnan, R&D Head, Rasi Seeds Pvt. Ltd., delivered his remarks on the significance of the CSR initiative. The inaugural addresses were delivered by Dr. M. S. Prasad, Director, ICAR-IIRR, and Dr. Y. G. Prasad, Honorary Director, Agri Biotech Foundation (ABF), who highlighted the importance of collaborative research in developing sustainable solutions for rice pest and disease management. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Dr. G. S. Laha, Head, Division of Plant Pathology, ICAR-IIRR. The event was attended by the Heads of various Divisions of ICAR-IIRR, scientists, technical staff, research scholars, and staff members of the Agri Biotech Foundation.

