INDIAN COUNCIL OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EoI)

Interventions for Prevention of Occupational Biohazards among Agricultural Allied Workers

Under the SEHAT Mission (Science Excellence for Health through Agricultural Transformation)

Context

Agricultural allied sectors such as **poultry, livestock rearing, dairy, fisheries, aquaculture, animal handling, animal markets, feed handling, slaughter and meat processing, egg handling, and other agriculture-linked activities** provide essential support to food production and rural livelihoods. However, workers engaged in these sectors may experience substantial occupational exposure to biological hazards through direct contact with animals, birds, fish, animal secretions and excreta, manure, litter, contaminated water, organic materials, wastewater, biological waste., airborne dust, workplace toxins and other potentially contaminated materials.

The **SEHAT Mission (Science Excellence for Health through Agricultural Transformation)**, a joint national mission of ICMR and ICAR, seeks to strengthen the evidence linking agriculture, food, nutrition and health. As an integral workforce supporting India's agricultural and food-production ecosystem, allied-sector workers are an important component of the SEHAT Mission, and protecting their health is essential for achieving sustainable, resilient and health-oriented agricultural transformation. Despite their importance, occupational health interventions specifically designed for these worker groups remain relatively limited. Workers in small-scale, informal and resource-constrained settings may have limited access to appropriate personal protective equipment, hygiene facilities, safe work practices, training and occupational health services

Existing research has often focused **on identifying hazards, estimating disease burden** or documenting exposure. There is a **need to move beyond description** and generate **evidence on practical, affordable and scalable interventions that can reduce occupational exposure to biological hazards and protect the health of allied-sector workers.**

Under the SEHAT Mission, ICMR invites **Expressions of Interest (EoIs) for innovative intervention-oriented research addressing occupational biohazards among**

agricultural allied workers, with emphasis on interventions that can be implemented in real-world, resource-constrained settings.

The proposed research may include, but need not be limited to,

The focus of **the EoI is specifically on scalable interventions**. Proposals centred primarily on **descriptive research will not be considered** under this call.

Research Question

Which feasible, acceptable, affordable and scalable interventions can effectively reduce occupational exposure to biological hazards and associated health risks among workers in agricultural allied sectors in India?

Objectives

The proposed research may aim to:

1. **Develop, implement or evaluate interventions** to reduce occupational exposure to biological hazards and associated health risks among allied-sector workers.
2. Determine the effectiveness of **engineering, personal protective, hygiene, sanitation, environmental, behavioural and workplace interventions in reducing biological exposure and associated health risks.**
3. Develop **occupation-specific interventions** suited to workers in sectors such as poultry, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture and animal handling.
4. Identify interventions that are **feasible, affordable, acceptable and sustainable** in small-scale, informal and resource-constrained workplaces.
5. Evaluate factors influencing **adoption, adherence and sustained use** of protective interventions.
6. Generate evidence to support **scaling-up and integration of effective interventions** into existing agricultural allied-sector, occupational health, veterinary, fisheries and public-health programmes

Scope of the EoI

The EoI will focus **exclusively on agricultural allied workers**, including but not limited to:

- **Poultry workers** – poultry farmers, bird handlers, workers involved in collection and handling of eggs, litter/manure management, cleaning, feed handling and poultry processing.
- **Livestock and dairy workers** – workers involved in cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat, pig and other livestock rearing, handling, milking and manure management.

- **Fishermen and fish handlers** – workers involved in fishing, fish handling, cleaning, transportation and processing.
- **Aquaculture workers** – workers involved in fish/shrimp farming, pond management, harvesting, handling and related activities.
- **Animal handlers and workers in animal markets** – workers with occupational contact with live animals, animal secretions, excreta and contaminated environments.
- **Slaughterhouse and meat-processing workers** – workers involved in animal slaughter, carcass handling and meat processing.
- **Other allied-sector workers** with substantial occupational exposure to biological materials.

Priority Intervention Areas

Proposals may address one or more of the following:

1. **Low-cost and locally adaptable technologies** for reducing biological exposure.
2. **Integrated intervention packages** combining different measures such as engineering, hygiene, environmental and behavioural, etc
3. Environmental interventions including workplace designs
4. Digital or mobile-based interventions for training, monitoring, risk communication or improving adherence.
5. Innovative approaches for **implementation, monitoring, sustainability and scale-up** of occupational biohazard-control measures.

Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the proposed intervention is expected to **interrupt or reduce a specific occupational biological exposure pathway**.

Who Can Apply?

Researchers and institutions across India, including ICAR and CSIR institutes, DBT-supported institutions, universities, medical colleges, agricultural universities, engineering and technical institutions, public research institutions, and other eligible research organisations, are invited to submit Expressions of Interest (EoIs).

ICMR scientists are not eligible to apply under this call as PI. However, ICMR scientists can be a co-investigators in these projects, but no funds will be given for ICMR institutions or scientists in these cases.

Multidisciplinary collaborations involving occupational health, public health, veterinary sciences, fisheries, microbiology, environmental health, behavioural sciences, engineering, implementation science and other relevant disciplines are encouraged.

Suggested Study Approaches

Proposals may employ appropriate intervention-oriented designs, including (But not limited to)

- Randomised controlled trials;
- Cluster-randomised or workplace-based intervention trials;
- Controlled before-and-after studies;
- Stepped-wedge intervention designs;
- Community or workplace-based intervention studies;
- Participatory intervention research;
- Behaviour-change interventions;
- Occupational hygiene and environmental interventions;
- Mixed-methods implementation research and scale-up studies;
- Innovative technology-based interventions
- Any other relevant study approach to the call

Duration of the project: 3 to 5 years

Budget: upto 8 crore.

Review and Selection

EoIs will be assessed based on:

- Scientific merit and methodological rigour;
- **Novelty and innovation of the proposed intervention**;
- Relevance to **occupational biohazards among allied-sector workers**;
- Potential for measurable reduction in biological exposure or health risk;
- **Feasibility in real-world allied-sector settings**;
- Affordability and suitability for small-scale and informal workplaces;
- Worker acceptability and adherence;
- Potential for **sustainability and scale-up;**
- **Multidisciplinary strength**;
- Potential for translation into occupational-health practice and allied-sector programmes
- Alignment with the objectives of the **SEHAT Mission**

Proposals limited to descriptive assessment of prevalence, exposure or disease burden without an intervention component will not be prioritised.

Shortlisted applicants may subsequently be invited to develop a **detailed research proposal** for further consideration under the SEHAT Mission.

What Should the EoI Include?

The EoI should be brief and include:

1. Title of the proposed research
2. Name and affiliation of Principal Investigator and collaborating investigators
3. Target allied-sector worker group
4. Occupational biological hazard and exposure pathway
5. Existing gap or problem requiring intervention
6. Proposed intervention and its novelty
7. Proof of concept/Available evidence, if any
8. Brief methodology: Proposed study design and intervention strategy
9. Expected Outcomes
10. Expected public health relevance and Potential for translation/scale-up
11. Expected contribution to occupational health and the SEHAT Mission
12. Key references

Please submit the EoI online through the Google Form**:**

https://forms.gle/HTdoPWbzKd2m9Pr38

Please note: ***Only shortlisted PIs will be contacted via email for data submission***.

Submission Timeline:

Start Date: 2nd November 2026
End Date: 20th November 2026

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