International Online Webinar on
Smart Tribal Farming: Achieving Sustainable Agriculture and Livelihood Opportunities

To Commemorate UN World Rural Development Day

July 06, 2025 (Sunday) | 11:00 AM − 02.15 PM (IST)

ORGANISED BY

Shobhit
Institute of Engineering & Technology
Deemed to-be-University
EDUCATION EMPOWERS

Shobhit University
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SHOBHIT INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY
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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Cooperation for Sustainable Development

African – Asian Rural Development Organisation
(AARDO)
New Delhi

Centre for Integrated Rural Development
for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP),
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Shri Narendra Modi Ji
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

Vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister

Our Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, has envisioned a future where technology and innovation are at the forefront of agricultural development. His vision of 'Digital India' and initiatives like 'Make in India,' 'Skill India,' and 'Startup India' are aimed at transforming the agricultural landscape. The Prime Minister's emphasis on doubling farmers' income and promoting sustainable practices underscores the importance of digitalization in achieving these goals. By integrating digital technologies into our farming practices, we can enhance productivity, ensure better resource management, and improve the overall quality of life for our rural communities.

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Background

India supports about 16% of the World's Population in a land area of about 2.4 % of the World and has a total geographical area (TGA) of 329 Million Hectares (MH). Out of this about 265 MH area represents varying degrees of potential for biological production. It is reported that more than 50% of TGA is threatened by various types of land degradation, such as soil erosion, gully & ravine formation, salinity, water logging, shifting cultivation, etc. The existence or absence of favourable natural and technological resources can facilitate or retard the process of economic development.

Agricultural and rural development are closely linked at the grassroots level (block level), extensively on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm activities. Despite numerous efforts over the past three decades, the development gap in India as reported by various surveys has widened. Government Institutional Delivery Systems operationalize 6,500 blocks and 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats, providing agricultural and rural development services through various public sector schemes. There is a need to synergize various government schemes (both Central and State) at the village level, by utilizing the best available technologies, coordinated by digitalization.

The digitalization of agriculture and rural management, as recommended by the Ashok Dalwai Committee on Doubling Farmers' Income by 2022, aims to establish about 2.5 lakh AgriTech startups/scale-ups, one in each Gram Panchayat. Each Gram Panchayat will have 1 GBPS internet bandwidth (scalable up to 10 GBPS) through PM-WANI, connecting villages across the country.

The Volume XII (B) of Dr. Ashok Dalwai Committee on DFI-2022 Report 2018 (www.agricoop.gov.in) has suggested strategic use of Digital Technology in the Farming System Life Cycle, through **seven DFI-2022 Mission Mode Programmes** in its Chapter-10 as given below:

1. Digitalised Agriculture: Digital Technology and Innovation in Agriculture: Digital India, Make in India, Skill India and StartUps India Programmes for Transformational Reforms in Agricultural Sector (SMART Irrigated Farming, SMART Rainfed Farming and SMART Tribal Farming);

2. Digitalised Agro-Met Advisories & Agricultural Risk Management Solution;

3. **Digitalized Agricultural Resources Information System (AgRIS) and Micro-Level Planning for achieving SMART VILLAGE & SMART FARMING;**

4. Digitalized Value Chain for about 400 agricultural Commodities;

5. Digitalised Access to Inputs, Technology, Knowledge, Skill, Agricultural Finance, Credit, Marketing and Agribusiness Management, to Farmers;

6. Digitalized Integrated Land and Water Management System – Per Drop More Crop;

7. Digitalized Farm Health Management for Reduction of Farmers' Losses.

This needs a **robust digital framework** for data organization, seamless integration of agricultural and Rural Development information systems by adopting open data standards, and structured approach for decision-making process system, for effective service delivery to farmers, in 22 constitutionally recognized Indian languages. The digitalisation of Agricultural and Rural development system facilitates achieving many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN and its Agenda 2030.

Advancing the digital transformation of agriculture and rural areas through national strategies, e-government systems, and Digital Villages is warranted now. Digitalization has opened new possibilities for efficient data collection, management, and analysis, often leveraging geospatial technologies. It is critical to encourage stakeholders to make meaningful **agricultural data openly available as public-good data and democratizing them to become relevant to farmers while addressing data protection risks.**

The agriculture sector generates about 18% of India's GDP and accounts for more than 50% of the total workforce and it is highly dependent on farmer's manual labour and rainfall. In such circumstances, it is of paramount importance to **help farmers to take full advantage of new technologies such as digital agriculture, biotechnologies, precision agriculture, innovations in agroecology, 5G, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to increase food production whilst respecting the environment.**

It also needs underlining that India has "1.45 lakh tribal villages, with more than 25 percent of the Tribal population", who do practice agriculture but at a very primitive level of the value chain. Digital Agriculture will facilitate achieving **Sustainable Agriculture and livelihood opportunities** based on the Agricultural resources available to the Tribal Communities, by 2030 and becoming a part of Viksit Bharat 2047. This would also help preserve and secure our precious eco-system.

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It is thus required to establish a National Mission on **SMART TRIBAL FARMING** (Digital Transformation of Agriculture in Tribal Areas for Manifolding Tribal Farmer's Income) as recommended by the DFI-2022 Committee in the Country. On the advice of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs during a presentation on Smart Tribal Farming Pilot Project Initiatives, the Shobhit Institute of Engineering and Technology (Deemed to be University) Meerut, in association with local NGOs and other Higher Educational Institutions from 2022 onwards has undertaken Smart Tribal Farming Projects in a cluster of 10-15 Tribal Villages, in many States. Various project proposals are likely to be submitted through State Tribal Welfare Departments to the Central Ministry of Tribal Affairs, in due course of time, for approval and sanction.

Webinar Objectives:

1. To explore the role of digital tools and technologies in empowering farmers and transforming agricultural practices, with a focus on Smart Irrigated Farming, Smart Rainfed Farming, Smart Tribal Farming practices.

2. To exchange ideas and experiences among participants on the need to enhance agriculture extension services - Farm Extension 4.0

3. To discuss the integration of precision agriculture technologies.

4. To facilitate an interface between experts, policymakers, researchers, schools and colleges, and farmers to share insights and practices.

5. To share case studies and models of public-private partnerships in agriculture and rural development.

6. To emphasize the need for establishing AgriTech StartUp, one at each Gram Panchayat level to assist small and marginal farming communities.

7. To discuss strategies for creating a conducive environment for AgriTech Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

8. To develop robust networks and platforms for village voices and community engagement.

9. To advance the digital transformation of agriculture and rural areas through national strategies, e-government systems, and Digital Villages.

Proposed Outcomes:

1. Policy recommendations for Central and State Govts. to support digitalization and sustainable rural development and innovation and submission of a White Paper to the Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Tribal Affairs

2. A framework for establishing Centers of Excellence (COE) at Shobhit University to nurture innovation and entrepreneurship in rural areas to support AgriTech StartUps and AgriTech Ventures.

3. Signing of MOUs with AgriTech StartUps and AgriTech Ventures.

4. Framework for implementing Smart Farming Practices specifically for tribal communities.

5. Feedback and insights into necessary policy reforms to enhance agricultural extension services and rural infrastructure.

6. Actionable steps for implementing precision agriculture and data analytics at the grassroots level.

7. Compendium of conference proceedings, and case studies for a broader audience.

8. A Collaborative Platform/network for promoting digitalization and sustainable rural development.

International Online Webinar on Smart Tribal Farming:
Achieving Sustainable Agriculture and Livelihood Opportunities
To Commemorate UN World Rural Development Day – 6th July 2025

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

TIMING (IST)	Session Details
10:50 – 11:00 AM	**Delegates Joining and Networking**
11:00 – 12:00 PM	**Inaugural Session -**
	◆ Virtual Lamp Lighting
	◆ Welcome by Prof. Moni Madaswamy (Chairman, CAIRS)
	◆ Special Address by H.E. Dr. Chandra Shekara (DG, CIRDAP)
	◆ Special Address by H.E. Dr. Manoj Nardeosingh (SG, AARDO)
	◆ Inaugural Address by Hon'ble Kunwar Shekhar Vijendra (Chancellor, Shobhit University)
	◆ Vote of Thanks by Ms. Hurain Jannat, Communication Officer , CIRDAP
12:00 – 2:00 PM	**Special Session:**
	Theme: Smart Tribal Farming: Achieving Sustainable Development and Livelihood Opportunities
	Partner Institutions and NGOs:
	◆ Dr. K. Gopalakrishnan
	◆ Dr. Sr. Mary Fabiola
	◆ Dr. J. Rathinamala
	◆ Prof. Pauchungnung Vaiphei
	◆ Dr. S. V. Reddy
	◆ Mr. Y.L.J.B. Jayaraj
	◆ Mr. Ramaswamy Ranganathen
	◆ Mr. Muzaffar Kareem
	◆ Mr. Pranjal Barua
	◆ Dr. S. Felix
2:00 – 2:15 PM	**Valedictory Session**
	◆ Remarks by Dr. Vinod Kumar Tyagi (VC, SIET Meerut)
	◆ Remarks by Dr. Ranjit Singh (VC, SU Gangoh)
	◆ The Way Forward by Prof. M. Moni (Chairman, CAIRS)

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Registration at: **https://bit.ly/4liuuKF**

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Kunwar Shekhar Vijendra
Co-founder & Chancellor

Message on the Occasion of UN World Rural Development Day
6th July 2025

The designation of **6th July as World Rural Development Day** by the United Nations, following the collective advocacy of CIRDAP and its 15 member states, marks a moment of strategic and symbolic importance for the Global South. More than an observance, this day acknowledges the foundational role of rural development in building resilient nations, sustainable economies, and socially cohesive societies. It also commemorates the Foundation Day of the **UN Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP)**—an institution whose vision aligns with India's own development ethos rooted in equity, community, and cooperation.

In today's geopolitical context, rural development is no longer a domestic welfare strategy—it is a global imperative. The architecture of food systems, migration flows, climate resilience, and economic equity is shaped in the fields and forests of our rural heartlands. For the Asia-Pacific region—home to the largest rural population globally—true prosperity demands the empowerment of rural communities not as passive recipients of aid, but as active architects of sustainable futures. The 2025 theme- **"Family-Oriented Policies for Sustainable Development"**- is a timely call to restore the family unit as the centrepiece of development: where well-being, dignity of labour, and generational transformation converge.

At **Shobhit University**, we have embedded this philosophy into our institutional mission. We believe universities must transcend the traditional boundaries of instruction to become **developmental engines**—where academic knowledge is applied to solve real-world problems, where policies are informed by field realities, and where innovation uplifts the last-mile citizen. Rural and tribal transformation is not an extension of our agenda—it is its core.

To actualise this vision, we have created a **networked institutional framework** of **five interdisciplinary Centres of Excellence**, operating under the leadership of Prof. M. Moni, Professor Emeritus and former Director General of NIC. Each Centre addresses a vital dimension of rural development. The **Centre for Agricultural Informatics & e-Governance Research Studies (CAIRS)** focuses on building digital ecosystems for precision agriculture and rural governance. The **Centre for Agribusiness and Disaster Management Studies (CADMS)** fosters climate-resilient farming, rural entrepreneurship, and disaster-preparedness models. The **Centre for Informatics Development Solutions and Applications (CIDSA)** advances open-source digital public infrastructure tailored to grassroots needs. The **Centre for Industry 4.0 Technology Studies and Applications (CITSA)** works on skilling, automation, and decentralised manufacturing to stimulate rural job creation. And the **Centre for Health Informatics and Computing (CHIC)** addresses health equity through telemedicine, AI-driven diagnostics, and health awareness in underserved regions.

These centres work collaboratively to deliver **integrated, evidence-driven, and community-centric solutions**, bridging the critical gaps between technology and tradition, data and decision-making, grassroots need and governance design. One of our flagship initiatives is the **Smart Tribal Farming Project**, launched in August 2022, which translates the recommendations of the **Ashok Dalwai Committee Report (2018)** on Doubling Farmers' Income into a living reality. As contributors to Volume 12B of the report-focused on **Digital Technology in Agriculture**—we proposed frameworks for digitally transforming over **14.5 crore farm holdings** across India. This project, piloted across clusters of **10–15 tribal villages**, applies precision tools like **soil health analytics, multilingual mobile advisories, integrated pest management, digital agri-market connectivity, and value-chain enhancement for forest products.**

These initiatives are **grounded in local knowledge systems,** place **women and youth at the centre**, and are designed to deliver **food, nutrition, health, and livelihood security** at the household level. The emerging outcomes—higher productivity, improved market access, lower input costs—are not isolated gains but signals of scalable, systemic transformation. We regard this not as rural outreach, but as **knowledge diplomacy**—where India's grassroots innovation becomes a regional asset.
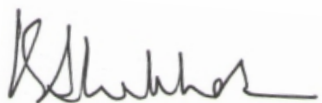
Our institutional partnership with **CIRDAP**, formalised through an **MoU in November 2024**, reflects our commitment to **South-South collaboration**—a future where India's rural insights and informatics frameworks contribute meaningfully to CIRDAP member nations sharing similar agro-ecological and socio-economic challenges. As our engagement with **AARD**O and other global stakeholders expands, we envision building a **regional coalition of higher education and policy institutions** dedicated to rural regeneration, innovation, and social equity.

To commemorate this year's World Rural Development Day, **Shobhit University**, in partnership with **CIRDAP** and **AARDO**, will host an **International Webinar on "Smart Tribal Farming: Achieving Sustainable Agriculture and Livelihood Opportunities"**. This platform will not only showcase successful models but will also co-develop a **roadmap for regenerative agriculture, decentralised food systems, local processing infrastructure, and circular economies.** It will also emphasise **open digital ecosystems** to connect farmers with real-time services in health, finance, education, and marketing—transforming survival economies into resilient, value-based rural enterprises.

In essence, **rural development is the foundation of sovereignty, prosperity, and peace**. It is in our villages that resilience is born, dignity is preserved, and sustainable futures are cultivated. India's aspiration to become a **Viksit Bharat by 2047** must be rooted in the inclusive rise of its rural and tribal heartlands.

On this World Rural Development Day, let us reaffirm our shared resolve—to place the rural family, the tribal community, and the smallholder farmer at the very centre of development. For in empowering them, we do not merely serve them—we strengthen nations, elevate humanity, and honour our civilisational values.

Jai Hind.

(Kunwar Shekhar Vijendra)

Smart Tribal Farming: Facilitating Digital Transformation to unlock Opportunities in 1.45 Lakh Tribal Villages of India by 2030 facilitating to be part of Viksit Bharat by 2047

Prof. Moni Madaswamy
Professor Emeritus and Chairman
Centre for Agricultural Informatics and e-Governance Research Studies (CAIRS)
Centre for Smart Tribal Farming Programme Initiative (CSTFPI)
Centre for Agribusiness and Disaster Management Studies (CADMS)
Centre for Health Informatics and Computing (CHIC)
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The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared **July 6th as World Rural Development Day**, to highlight the importance of Rural Development and its impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to recognize the crucial role of Women in rural areas and their contribution to Agricultural development, Food security, and Poverty eradication.

Agricultural sector is the backbone of Indian economy and it continues to employ more than 50 per cent of India's workforce since its independence, and of late, contributes almost 17–18 per cent of its GDP. Indian Agriculture confronts with its sheer complexity, inadequate factors of production, weather uncertainties, multiplicity of schemes and multiplicity of institutions, at farm level. India has delineated its geographical area into 15 Agro-Climatic Regions and more than 127 Agro-Climatic Zones, having different farming practices, evolved over the centuries, with changes in weather and climatic conditions, technological innovations and socio-cultural practices. By 2050, it is pronounced that there will be more than 2 billion additional people on the planet, requiring 50% more food from the same agricultural footprint.

Strategic Use of Digital Technology in Farming System Life Cycle

In India, the Irrigated farming is practiced with assured water supply from sources of irrigation (canals, tanks and wells), whereas the Rainfed farming is practiced under a wide variety of soil type, agro-climatic and rainfall conditions ranging from 400 mm to 1600 mm per annum. Overall, the rainfed areas produce 40% of the food grains, support two-thirds of the livestock population, and are critical to food security, equity, and sustainability. Watershed development has become a trusted tool for the overall development of the village and people living within a watershed area under rainfed conditions. However, the Tribal farming in Tribal Areas is a risk-minimizing system and its relevance has increased, in view of ongoing climate change and erratic weather occurrence.

The Sustainable Food Production Systems for Self-Reliant and Climate Resilient Agriculture requires intensive application of Science and Technology within a well-defined framework to adopt "strategic use" of Digital Technology in Farming System Life Cycle, through seven DFI-2022 Mission Mode Programmes. This is detailed in the Chapter-10 of the Ashok Dalwai Committee on Doubling Farmers Income by 2022 Report 2018, in a time bound manner, for the benefit of more than 14.5 Crore operational farm holders in India and their farming activities viz.

◆ Digitalised Agriculture: Digital Technology and Innovation in Agriculture: Digital India, Make in India, Skill India and StartUps India Programmes for Transformational Reforms in Agricultural Sector **(SMART Irrigated Farming, SMART Rainfed Farming and SMART Tribal Farming);**

◆ Digitalised Agro-Met Advisories & Agricultural Risk Management Solution;

◆ Digitalized Agricultural Resources Information System and Micro-Level Planning for achieving SMART VILLAGE & SMART FARMING;

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◆ Digitalized Farm Health Management for reduction of Farmers' Losses.

Tribal Farming - A Risk-minimizing System in harmony with Nature

India is a land of more than 6.50 Lakh Villages. The Tribal population of India constitutes about 8.9% of the total population in India, and spread, predominantly, across the forest and hilly regions of the country. The tribal economy is mainly concentrated around the collection and processing of Minor Forest Products (MFP) and cultivation largely for the purpose of domestic

Smart Tribal Farming: Facilitating Digital Transformation to unlock Opportunities in 1.45 Lakh Tribal Villages of India by 2030 facilitating to be part of Viksit Bharat by 2047

consumption. The Tribal Community usually struggle to meet their economic needs mostly through the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNEGA) Programme. On rainy and inclement Weather days, the Tribal Community living in forests and hilly regions, face various difficulties.

India has about "1.45 lakh Tribal villages, with more than 25 per cent of the Tribal population in such village", who do practice agriculture but at a very primitive level of value chain. In fact, the tribal economies lack organized markets as well as financial institutions to promote tribal products. There is a huge demand for tribal produces, which are especially organic and natural food products, but the supply side of this economy is way below the demand side, and the community fails to profit from its produce. Tribal farming is recognized, traditionally, a risk minimizing system providing at least some food, even in adverse weather conditions.

SMART Tribal Farming – Achieving Sustainable Agriculture and Livelihood Opportunities towards VIKSHIT Bharat by 2047

Another Proactive and Development Initiative in 2022, has been in visualizing a S**MART TRIBAL FARMING Initiative - A Digital Transformation of Agriculture in Tribal Areas for Manifolding Tribal Farmers Income**, as pilot project in a cluster of 10-15 Tribal Villages in various Districts of India, in association with NGOs working with Tribal Communities and Higher Educational Institutions with digital infrastructures. This pilot project initiative (in Kerala, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, J&K, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Assam and Manipur) is gaining its attention to facilitate for food, nutrition, health, livelihood security and economic productivity in Tribal Areas. Brochures detailing its project objectives are published for open innovation and value creation networks, for each project location.

Under the **"Smart Tribal Farming Project"**, the following benefits, among the others, will accrue for the Tribal Communities in the Project Area:

- Empowering the Tribal Communities through Digital Transformation of Tribal Agriculture (Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Floriculture, Apiculture, Livestock, Fisheries, etc.)
- Establishing Agricultural Commodity Value Chains.
- Operationalising Digitalised Agro-Met Advisories and Agricultural Risk Management Solutions such as Open Insurance System.
- Digitalized Agricultural Resources Information System and Micro-Level Planning to ensure optimum nutrients in soil and harvested agricultural products (food products) to minimise human diseases, based on AI/ML, GIS Technology and Data Analytics methods
- Digital Mapping of Tribal Villages Cluster forming into "Digital Twin Tribal Villages".
- Validation of ethno practices in Farming Practices, Veterinary Health Services and Public Health Services through Digitalised Integrated Farm Health System.
- Sustaining Natural Farming Practices.

India is endowed with about 4500 Engineering Colleges, 45000 Non-Engineering Colleges (Higher Educational Institutions - HEIs) and about 1500 Deemed to-be Universities offering Digital Technology related Courses and its applications in the area of **GRIN (Genomics, Robotics, Informatics and Nano Technologies) Revolution** facilitating ever-green revolution.   This can be achieved by establishing a COE – Centre for Agricultural Informatics and e-Governance Research Studies (CAIRS) in HEIs across the Country to usher in Agriculture 4.0 in India, aligning with Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0. Adopting 10-15 Villages by each HEI for 5 Years, will make 6.5 Lakh Villages as "Smart Village", "Smart Farming" and "Smart Farmer" in India by 2030, **the terminal Year of the UN Decade of Development.**

The **SMART Tribal Farming Initiative** is towards achieving "Food, Nutrition, Health, Livelihood Security and Economic Productivity of Tribal Communities" in India, facilitating Digital Transformation to unlock opportunities in 1.45 Lakh Tribal Villages of India by 2030 facilitating to be part of Viksit Bharat by 2047. **This Project Initiative is a Research Outreach Programme of Shobhit Institute of Engineering and Technology (Deemed to-be University) Meerut, India.**

Its impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) viz., SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), will be tremendous. It recognizes the crucial role of Tribal Women in rural areas and their contribution to Agricultural development, Food security, and Poverty eradication.

This Project Initiative will be a "Change Maker" impact in about 1.45 Lakh Tribal Villages in India by 2047 (VIKSIT Bharat 2047). This will serve as a scalable and replicable model.
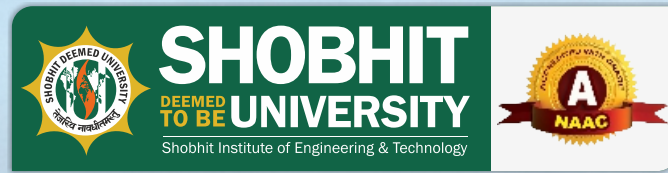
Mission Statement of Shobhit University

At Shobhit University, our mission is to foster excellence in education, research, and innovation while serving as a catalyst for societal development. We are committed to equipping our students with knowledge, skills, and ethical values that empower them to address global challenges and contribute meaningfully to society.

Through initiatives like the National Conference on "Digitalization of Agriculture & Rural Management," we aim to actively engage in transformative dialogues and initiatives that impact our nation's agricultural landscape. By promoting digital literacy, innovation in agri-tech, and sustainable rural development, we strive to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring our contributions lead to tangible improvements in the lives of farmers and rural communities.

Aligned with national priorities and sustainable development goals, Shobhit University seeks to pioneer advancements in digital agriculture, empower rural communities, and foster inclusive growth. Our mission underscores a commitment to academic excellence, social responsibility, and the holistic development of individuals who are prepared to lead and innovate in an ever-evolving global landscape.

Through collaborative partnerships, cutting-edge research, and a dedication to community service, Shobhit University continues to shape the future of agriculture and rural management, driving positive change and sustainable development across India and beyond.

NAAC   UGC   AICTE   AIU   BCI   NCTE   SIRO   TBI   AICTE IDEA Lab   NCC