

New AI platform will connect farmers and scientists over phone, aid in pest control

Launching the system, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said NPSS seeks to inculcate a scientific approach among farmers and reduce their dependence on pesticide retailers

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Centre launched the AI-based National Pest Surveillance System (NPSS) that will help farmers connect with agriculture scientists and experts on controlling pests. File | Photo Credit: AM Faruqui

The Union Government on Thursday (August 15, 2024) launched the AI-based National Pest Surveillance System (NPSS) that will help farmers to connect with agriculture scientists and experts on controlling pests using their phone.

Launching the programme, Agriculture Minister **Shivraj Singh Chouhan** said the aim of NPSS is to reduce the dependence of farmers on pesticide retailers and inculcate a scientific approach among them towards pest management. NPSS will analyse the

latest data on pests using AI tools to help farmers and experts in pest control and management.

At the launch event in Indian Council of Agricultural Research here, Mr. Chouhan said the Centre's effort is to take new technological innovations in agriculture to the farmers. "All new developments in the field of agriculture should be beneficial for the farmers," he said and added that increasing yield is a priority for the Narendra Modi government. "Farmers need better seeds for increasing productivity. Our scientific community is working with farmers towards this," he said.

The Minister said technology should reach the fields and NPSS is one such effort. "If we know the pest attack immediately and at the beginning of the attack, it will help in curing. This system will help in identifying the pests and controlling it. The benefit of the technology must go to farmers," he said, adding that the Ministry will make efforts to strengthen the connect between scientists and farmers.

The Ministry said NPSS will help about 14 crore farmers in the country. The Centre envisages connecting scientists with the fields using the platform. Farmers can take photos of the infested crops or the insect using the NPSS platform and these will reach scientists and experts, it said.

"Using the correct quantity of correct pesticide at the correct time is the challenge and this system helps the farmers to address this challenge," Union Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi told *The Hindu*. He said it will help in addressing the problem of using excessive pesticides.

"This system cures the diseases at proper time using technology. It will help in accurate diagnosis and accurate treatment. This will build the confidence among farmers and production will also increase. It will save the soil too. It is a technological platform and it needs no additional funding," he said.

Mr. Chaturvedi said the technology will be sent to States who can propagate this using their outreach programmes. "We have successfully done pilot schemes on this system and it was released based on proper trials," he said.