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## News Release

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Bayer and the S M Sehgal Foundation announce a new project:

### **Supporting livelihoods and nutrition of smallholder farmers in India**

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**Monheim, December 14, 2018** – Bayer and the S M Sehgal Foundation (SMSF) – a non-profit organization supporting smallholder farmers in India – have announced the “Sustainability of Agriculture and Smallholder Development” project. Aim of the project is to improve farmers’ incomes by introducing them to easy-to-learn-and-adopt best agronomic practices.

The project in 25 villages in Rajasthan, a state of northwestern India, aims to conserve water through efficient irrigation practices and rainwater harvesting and improve productivity of pearl millet crop through promotion of better agronomic practices in farms between 4 and 8 hectares. This will help farmers achieve better incomes and higher productivity and to make their farms more resilient in times of water scarcity. The project will work with farm families, directly benefitting 1,000 farmers and indirectly impacting about 5,000 villagers. Bayer will support the project with 100,000 Euros.

Most Indian farmers lack knowledge on improving the micronutrient balance of the soil. Agriculture extension activities in the region are virtually non-existent, and farmers do not have any access to agricultural information and know-how. The average rainfall in the region is very low. Water is scarce and every drop counts.

To address the existing challenges of the farmers and help them have better farm yield; the project aims at improving water infrastructure through rejuvenation of ponds, building an anicut (dam) which enables rain water to penetrate into the ground and to refill groundwater reservoirs. SMSF’s experts will train and showcase bunding techniques which reduce erosion and run-off.

“This project leverages the diverse expertise of both Bayer and SMSF to support marginal and smallholder farmers in remote villages to improve crop productivity. Small interventions such as timely and correct information about crop production, appropriate technologies and exposure can have a big impact,” said Anjali Godyal, Director and Fundraising (North) from SMSF. In rain-fed agriculture, the foundation promotes in situ water conservation practices that significantly increase the current productivity growth with better water-harvesting techniques.

Pearl millet is a very valuable choice for small farmers in difficult agro ecological areas. It grows in adverse conditions, on arid and poor soils, it needs very little inputs and it is very nutritious. The crop is grown for a dual purpose – as food for human consumption and feed for livestock. The grain is converted into flour and used for making bread while the stems are used as feed for cattle. The project will plant demonstration plots to showcase the efficiency of improved practices and appropriate inputs and will train farmers in good agricultural practices.

Bayer India has a comprehensive portfolio of high-quality seeds and crop protection products for pearl millet farmers in the country, including varieties which deliver higher yields, are more drought tolerant and are more resistant to downy mildew, a highly destructive plant disease.

“As Bayer, we are committed to making a contribution to the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and we are dedicated to sustainability of agriculture and food security for families. Projects like this can have a lasting, positive impact in these challenging areas,” said Stefan Heinke, Senior Sustainable Development Manager at Crop Science, a division of Bayer. “With SMSF we have found a trusted partner with a proven track record in this field,” Ajeet Chahal, Head of Product Management Seeds at Bayer India added.

During the first year of the project, the progress will be tracked by both partners. Key success factors will include productivity gains in pearl millet, availability of surface water for irrigation purpose and in the use of micro irrigation systems.

### **About the Sehgal Foundation**

SMSF is a public, charitable trust registered in India since 1999 with a mission to strengthen community-led development initiatives to achieve positive social, economic,

and environmental change across rural India. The foundation creates integrated, sustainable grassroots programs for developing greater agricultural productivity, managing water resources, strengthening rural governance, with emphasis on innovation, impact and sustainability. SMSF's agriculture program is designed to increase the crop productivity and livelihoods of these small and marginal land holders, improve their water-use efficiency in agriculture, provide doorstep agricultural extension services, increase farmers' knowledge and awareness of scientific farming practices, and strengthen their linkages with government departments and academic institutions. The program improves farmers' incomes by introducing them to easy-to-learn-and-adopt best practices that boost agricultural productivity and optimize the cost incurred on inputs such as fertilizers, plant protection chemicals, water, and labor.

In rain-fed agriculture, the foundation promotes in situ water conservation practices that significantly increase the current productivity growth with better water-harvesting techniques. The work includes allied agricultural activities such as horticulture and livestock management, as these interventions also contribute significantly to household incomes in rural India. More information at [www.smsfoundation.org](http://www.smsfoundation.org)

### **About Bayer**

Bayer is a global enterprise with core competencies in the life science fields of health care and agriculture. Its products and services are designed to benefit people and improve their quality of life. At the same time, the Group aims to create value through innovation, growth and high earning power. Bayer is committed to the principles of sustainable development and to its social and ethical responsibilities as a corporate citizen. In fiscal 2017, the Group employed around 99,800 people and had sales of 35.0 billion euros. Capital expenditures amounted to 2.4 billion euros, R&D expenses to 4.5 billion euros. For more information, go to [www.bayer.com](http://www.bayer.com).

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