

Beyond Production: Transforming Asian Agribusiness for a Sustainable Future

Editorial | The Scholarly Lens

Asia's agricultural future is at a defining crossroads. The region's food systems must respond simultaneously to changing consumption patterns, resource pressures, climate change, technological disruption, market complexity and the need for resilient livelihoods. The central question is therefore no longer simply how much food can be produced, but how agricultural value can be created and sustained across the entire food and livelihood system.

This question provides the intellectual foundation for the present Special Issue, *"Transforming Asian Agribusiness for a Sustainable Future: Economics, Entrepreneurship and Innovation."*

From Food Production to Food Systems

Agriculture today must be understood as part of a broader system connecting production with inputs, finance, technology, processing, storage, logistics, marketing, consumption and waste management. Sustainability depends upon the resilience and inclusiveness of these connections.

India's agricultural journey demonstrates how scientific research, policy intervention and technology dissemination can transform productivity and food security. The eastern region of India, including Odisha, has also benefited from the work of important agricultural research institutions. The original draft for this Editorial rightly draws attention to the National Rice Research Institute at Cuttack and the Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture at Bhubaneswar, as well as the "Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India" experience.

Odisha as a Research and Innovation Setting

Odisha provides a particularly relevant setting for examining the relationship between agriculture, rural livelihoods, technology and enterprise. The presence of major agricultural and fisheries research institutions provides an important scientific backdrop; the next challenge is to connect research capability with entrepreneurship, market access, skills and community-level adoption.

This challenge is especially significant in a region where agriculture, fisheries, natural resources and rural livelihoods are closely interconnected. It calls for approaches that do not treat productivity, sustainability and livelihoods as separate objectives, but as dimensions of the same development challenge.

CUTM: Connecting Knowledge, Skills and Enterprise

It is within this landscape that Centurion University of Technology and Management assumes particular relevance. CUTM's emphasis on skill-based and experiential learning, entrepreneurship, innovation and community engagement provides an institutional environment in which agriculture can be approached not simply as production, but as an ecosystem of knowledge, enterprise and social value.

The University's role is especially important for a generation that will encounter agriculture through increasingly diverse pathways: climate-smart production, digital platforms, Agri-finance, food processing, supply-chain innovation, market access, value addition and technology-enabled entrepreneurship.

CUTM's research ecosystem further strengthens this orientation. The University has developed specialised research centres working across areas including smart agriculture, genetics and genomics, aquaculture and fish processing, data science and machine learning, phytopharmaceutical research, design and manufacturing, and waste-to-wealth. Supported by industry-sponsored laboratories, these capabilities create opportunities for research to move from academic investigation towards practical applications.

The breadth of this research activity is important because the most consequential agricultural challenges rarely belong to a single discipline. For example, the development of smarter agricultural practices may require the integration of biological knowledge, digital technologies, data analytics and economic decision-making. Likewise, aquaculture and fisheries require connections between scientific research, resource management, processing, markets and livelihoods. Such intersections illustrate why the future of agribusiness must be approached through interdisciplinary scholarship and innovation.

CUTM's community-oriented approach adds another important dimension. Its Community Action Learning Program enables students to work directly with local communities to address technical problems as part of their learning. Initiatives such as Project Atal, which focuses on improving the incomes of small and marginal farmers, and the Innovation Agriculture Project, which has provided training to farmers in tribal-dominated areas of South Odisha and North Coastal Andhra, demonstrate how skills, technology and community engagement can be connected to agricultural livelihoods.

Research with International Reach

CUTM's commitment to impactful research is also reflected in its international conference activities, which create platforms for researchers and practitioners to exchange knowledge. In the specific instance documented in the supplied photograph, the conference proceedings were published by Taylor & Francis. This is an encouraging example of internationally visible research dissemination, and CUTM hopes to carry forward this practice in other conference proceedings as well.

Photo 1. Connecting CUTM research with international scholarship: from right to left, Prof. Anita Patra, Registrar, CUTM; Prof. Supriya Pattanayak, Vice Chancellor, CUTM; Chief Guest Professor Moni Madaswamy (Former Director General at National Informatics Center, Government of India); and Prof. Rabi Subudhi, President, ORSI, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, at the inaugural function of an international conference whose proceedings were published by Taylor & Francis.



International dissemination is important because research achieves wider significance when ideas are exposed to scholarly dialogue beyond institutional and national boundaries. For Asian agribusiness in particular, comparative learning across countries and regions can help identify approaches that are adaptable to different ecological, economic and social contexts.

Agribusiness, Entrepreneurship and the SDGs

The future of Asian agribusiness is inseparable from the Sustainable Development Goals. Food security, poverty reduction, climate action, responsible production and the protection of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems are interconnected. The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2026 material supplied for this Special Issue records CUTM at #44 globally for SDG 2, Zero Hunger; #43 for SDG 1, No Poverty; #27 for SDG 13, Climate Action; #65 for SDG 15, Life on Land; and #51 for SDG 14, Life Below Water. CUTM is reported as participating in 15 SDGs, excluding SDGs 6 and 16.

These results provide an institutional context for examining agriculture, entrepreneurship and innovation as mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development. The goal is not innovation for its own sake, but innovation that is adoptable, responsible and capable of creating durable value.

CUTM's research and innovation initiatives illustrate how this principle can be pursued in practice. Work involving smart agriculture, aquaculture, waste-to-wealth and other applied areas demonstrates the potential for university-based research to respond to environmental and livelihood challenges. The University's broader innovation ecosystem, including its Centre for Innovators and Entrepreneurs, further seeks to connect ideas with incubation, prototyping, mentorship and pathways towards enterprise creation.

For agribusiness, this connection between innovation and entrepreneurship is particularly significant. A technology that remains within a laboratory has limited social reach; when it becomes accessible, affordable and commercially or socially viable, its potential impact expands. Sustainable agribusiness therefore requires not only researchers and technologies, but also entrepreneurs, institutions and market systems capable of carrying innovations into communities.

Why This Special Issue Matters

The contributions brought together in this Special Issue respond to these emerging realities from different perspectives. Collectively, they examine dimensions of sustainable agribusiness, economics, entrepreneurship, innovation, technology, market access and agricultural transformation.

The proposition underlying this collection is simple but consequential: sustainable agriculture requires sustainable agribusiness ecosystems. Production must be economically viable; innovation must be environmentally responsible; technology must be accessible; markets must create opportunity; entrepreneurship must generate value; and research must ultimately contribute to stronger livelihoods and more resilient communities.

This requires interdisciplinary scholarship and collaboration across universities, industry, government, entrepreneurs and communities. It also requires universities to become more active bridges between knowledge and implementation.

The journey from farm to future will require more than higher yields. It will require better ideas, stronger institutions, responsible innovation and entrepreneurs willing to create value where society needs it most. That is the transformation this Special Issue seeks to advance.

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Guest Editors, CUTM-Horizon JHSSR 2026 Special Issue
Horizon Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (JHSSR)

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CITE THIS ARTICLE

Supriya Pattanayak et al. Beyond Production: Transforming Asian Agribusiness for a Sustainable Future: Editorial | The Scholarly Lens. *Horizon J. Hum. Soc. Sci. Res.* **8 (S)**, xxviii–xxxi (2026).

<https://doi.org/10.37534/bp.jhssr.2026.v8.nS.id05S81.pxxviii>