SFGC may bring path breaking solutions to sugarcane farming

The Smart Farm Grant Challenge (SFGC) was launched on 9th May 2022 in the presence of Shri Arvind Kumar, Director General, Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) and other key dignitaries in virtual mode. STPI is a premier S&T organization under MeitY engaged in promoting IT/ITES Industry, innovation, R&D, start-ups, product/IP creation in the field of emerging technologies. NEURON is a CoE in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Data Analytics (Big Data), Animated Visual Graphics (AVG) and (IoT).

Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) has announced the SFGC to identify impactful solutions from startups to address the problem statements identified for sugarcane harvest and designated STPI as the implementation agency with Neuron Centre of Entrepreneurship (CoE) as the anchor CoE for this challenge programme.

On the occasion Shri Arvind Kumar, Director General, STPI underlined, "Agriculture is a significant contributor to Indian economy; it contributes around 16% of GDP. SFGC will help identify challenges to sugarcane harvesting & other related issues and build innovative solutions, which will lead to enhancing yield. Use of technology gives cost-effectiveness & also increases the production. India's agriculture technology has the potential to grow manifold to reach $24.1 bn in the next 4-5 years. Any innovation in harvesting tech can be game changer in agri sector."

Shri Roshan Lal Tamak, Executive Director & CEO, DCM Shriram Limited in his speech said, "We sincerely believe that technologies like AI, ML, IoT, remote sensing, satellite imagery have benefited other sectors, so agriculture sector should also explore these technologies. Through SFGC program, we will provide technical inputs, knowledge of sugarcane cultivation & farms so that startups can build some breakthrough solution in this space."

Through SFGC, Start-ups are expected to develop the solution which:

(a) Should predict optimum time of sugarcane harvest in a given plot area with reasonable accuracy.
(b) Estimate the sugar content of all the plots in its catchment area remotely.
(c) Should identify the plots which are mature/ ready to harvest.
(d) Ensure insights easily interpretable in formats viz graphs, images etc.

For the participating and selected Start-ups at various stages, significant financial support and funding are being provided as follows:

S.No	Financial Assistance / Funding Support	Total
(A)	Ideation to prototype stage: 10 selected teams @ Rs 5 Lakh each	₹ 50,00,000
(B)	Prototype to product stage: 4 selected teams @ Rs 20 Lakh each	₹ 80,00,000
(C)	Prize Money to the Winner	₹ 50,00,000
(D)	Operation and maintenance charges for next two years @ 10 Lakhs to the winning team	₹ 20,00,000
	Total	**₹ 2,00,00,000**

The selected Start-ups at various stages would be supported by MeitY, MeitY Startup Hub (MSH), STPI, Neuron CoE, DCM Shriram Sugar Mills & Directorate of Sugar Mills, in addition to the various mentors and industry experts. The challenge is open for participants till 8th June 2022 and final winner of final stage would be announced on 3rd May 2023.
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