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Bayer, Superplum to develop crop protection models at Indian Horticulture

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Bayer, a global enterprise with core competencies in agriculture and healthcare has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Superplum, an agri-tech start-up building a digitised farm-to-customer traceable supply chain. Over three years, the program aims to benefit 15 thousand smallholder farmers in India by delivering definable economic benefits to all stakeholders.

A fully traceable, MRL-tested alternative has been developed to offer consumers better fresh produce choices. Providing full traceability to consumers backed by a modern supply chain and a technology-first approach will ensure full transparency for consumers and farmers. By improving post-harvest technology and managing the supply chain digitally, farmers will reduce wastage and increase their incomes.

The collaboration aims to build and implement a sustainable crop protection model for fruit growers based in the Indian states of UP, Bihar, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. The program will be expanded to other states as the seasons progress.

The partnership will focus on guiding partner farmers toward better fruit quality and advisory to increase productivity. Additionally, they will ensure that Bayer's crop protection management practices are implemented properly. Superplum's proprietary multi-faceted approach increases the shelf life of a range of fruits. IoT-driven Fresherator, a cold-chain transport

system that carries fruit remotely monitored and controlled, helps reduce wastage and increases shelf life without requiring expensive temperature-controlled transportation.

As part of the collaboration, Bayer will provide support for domestic and export compliance, and implementation of a product schedule to ensure improvement in the quality and productivity of the produce, helping in achieving incremental growth in farmer income. Bayer will also focus on developing crop protection packages for fruit crops and training farmers in the implementation of these practices.

To make it easier to track farmer progress, they will be provided with a *passport*, to record crop management practices being implemented. Superplum provides consumers with full traceability through its scannable QR code and will incorporate farmers' information into its own supply chain.

D Narain, President, South Asia, and Global Head of Smallholder Farming for Bayer, said, "Nutritional security along with food security is a critical national and global imperative for the growing population. To this effect, Bayer has launched a global 'Nutrient Gap Initiative' that aims to expand access to essential nutrients to 50 million people in underserved communities by 2030. However, we do recognize that to achieve this at scale a collaborative ecosystem is required and to further this critical agenda we have partnered with Superplum to create a holistic ecosystem that will help improve fruit growers' incomes by sustainably enhancing market linkages and ensuring healthy produce for the end consumers."