

The SFE, India *i-Connect*: Business Meet

The *i-Connect* business was conceived by SFE-India in 2023 as a strategic initiative to bridge the long-standing divide between academic research and industrial application in ethnopharmacology and traditional-medicine sciences. Its founding vision was to ensure that the vast body of Indian research on medicinal plants and formulations could be translated into scalable, globally compliant products and technologies. The program aligns with national priorities articulated in *Viksit Bharat* and *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan*, supporting India's emergence as a leader in the herbal and natural-product bioeconomy.

Our Mission & Vision

Mission

To create a collaborative ecosystem that connects academia, industry, policymakers, and entrepreneurs — accelerating the translation of traditional medicine and ethnopharmacological knowledge into scientifically validated, commercially viable, and globally competitive innovations. Through shared values of integrity, inclusiveness, and sustainability, *i-Connect* nurtures partnerships that transform India's botanical wealth into evidence-based healthcare solutions for the world.

Vision

To position India as a global hub for traditional-medicine-based innovation and bio-entrepreneurship fostering a sustainable bioeconomy that aligns traditional wisdom with cutting-edge research, digital technology, and international standards. We envision a future where every medicinal plant cultivated, every formulation developed, and every product exported carries the stamp of scientific validation, ethical sourcing, and Indian excellence.

Strategic Pillars of the Vision

Pillar	Description	Outcome
Evidence	Promote rigorous pharmacological, preclinical, and clinical validation of herbal formulations.	Strengthened scientific credibility and acceptance worldwide.
Entrepreneurship	Empower start-ups and MSMEs with access to mentorship, funding, and regulatory guidance.	Creation of scalable business models rooted in ethnopharmacology.
Sustainability	Encourage biodiversity conservation, fair trade, and green chemistry.	Ecological balance and farmer empowerment.
Globalization	Align Indian herbal products with WHO, EU, and USFDA regulatory pathways.	Expansion of India's herbal export footprint.

Education	Build next-generation expertise through training and cross-disciplinary collaboration.	Skilled human capital driving future innovation.
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Evolution and Impact

Each successive edition has expanded the scope and influence of the program:

- ***i-Connect 2023 (Imphal, Manipur)***: Initiated regional bio-enterprise development and highlighted North-East India's biodiversity.
- ***i-Connect 2024 (Jammu & Sikkim)***: Fostered collaboration between CSIR labs, academia, and industries on phytopharmaceutical development.
- ***i-Connect 2025 (Belagavi)***: Focused on start-up incubation, MSME support, and rural herbal entrepreneurship.
- ***i-Connect 2025 (New Delhi)***: Marks the program's national consolidation under SECON 2025 bringing together **policy, science, and business** under one unified theme: "*Indian Botanicals for Global Markets – Challenges & Opportunities.*"

Strategic Objectives of *i-Connect*

1. **Bridge Academia and Industry**: Convert laboratory knowledge into validated commercial products.
2. **Encourage Entrepreneurship**: Foster start-ups rooted in traditional medicine and local innovation.
3. **Promote Evidence-Based Practices**: Strengthen research quality, reproducibility, and data transparency.
4. **Enhance Regulatory Readiness**: Guide industries through AYUSH and FSSAI compliance frameworks.
5. **Advance Sustainability**: Link herbal supply chains to biodiversity conservation and fair-trade models.
6. **Facilitate Global Competitiveness**: Enable Indian companies to meet EU, USFDA, and WHO standards.

Why it Matters

India possesses one of the richest repositories of ethnopharmacological knowledge in the world, yet a significant portion remains underutilized. The *i-Connect* platform empowers stakeholders to transform this intellectual capital into socioeconomic assets generating employment, encouraging local innovation, and ensuring global recognition for Indian botanicals. Through dialogue, collaboration, and strategic action, *i-Connect* demonstrates how science, policy, and enterprise can converge to build a future where traditional wisdom fuels sustainable modern industry.

Verticals

Stalwarts of herbal industries in India will share their knowledge and experience on the following verticals:

Vertical 1: Extract Manufacturers & Exporters

Raising India's Standards in Herbal Extraction and Global Trade

India ranks among the world's top five producers of botanical extracts. However, inconsistent quality standards, limited traceability, and insufficient clinical validation continue to hinder export growth. This vertical unites leading extract manufacturers, analytical chemists, and regulatory experts to establish a national blueprint for quality, sustainability, and global competitiveness.

Strategic Context

Indian companies export over 600 types of botanical extracts to more than 120 countries. With the global nutraceutical market projected to exceed USD 500 billion by 2027, India's ability to supply scientifically authenticated, sustainably sourced extracts will determine its strategic position in the global herbal economy.

Core Objectives

- Advance quality and standardization of herbal actives.
- Strengthen India's export capabilities through global certifications (GMP, ISO, USFDA).
- Encourage innovation in advanced extraction technologies.
- Promote collaborations for value-added, clinically backed ingredient development.
- Build stronger linkages between manufacturers, marketers, and global buyers.
- Foster sustainability and traceability across the extract supply chain.

Vertical 2: Medicinal & Aromatic Plant (MAP) Cultivation and Sustainable Supply

Empowering Farmers, Sustaining Nature

Over 80 % of raw materials used by India's herbal industries are still sourced from the wild. This vertical focuses on sustainable cultivation, ethical trade, and farmer empowerment through cooperatives, digital traceability, and inclusive supply-chain development.

Strategic Context

By enabling structured MAP cultivation, India can ensure biodiversity protection while strengthening rural livelihoods. The vertical aims to build resilient, vertically integrated supply chains linking cultivators to industries.

Core Objectives

- Build resilient, vertically integrated supply chains.
- Enhance value for primary collectors, farmers, and marginalized communities.
- Promote contract farming, buy-back mechanisms, and bioresource sustainability.
- Foster training, joint ventures, and women-empowerment initiatives.
- Reduce dependence on wild collection through planned cultivation.
- Address bottlenecks in infrastructure, planting material, and post-harvest stages.
- Advocate for government support for domestic and export growth.
- Form a *National MAP Task Force* to engage central and state agencies.

Vertical 3: Start-Up & Entrepreneurship Development

Translating Research into Enterprise

India's academic ecosystem generates thousands of herbal research outputs annually, yet few reach commercialization. This vertical nurtures ethno-entrepreneurs by connecting innovators with investors, mentors, incubators, and policymakers.

Core Objectives

- Organize entrepreneur-focused panels and networking mixers.
- Bridge the gap between product innovation and technology scalability.
- Strengthen compliance education for herbal start-ups.
- Promote scientist-founder collaborations for translational success.

Vertical 4: Manufacturing of Ayurveda, Siddha & Unani (ASU) Drugs

Modernizing Tradition through Quality and Compliance

The ASU sector forms the backbone of India's traditional medicine industry. This vertical focuses on harmonizing classical formulation wisdom with modern quality management, digital traceability, and global regulatory readiness.

Core Objectives

- Strengthen supply-chain integrity and raw-material traceability.
- Promote Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP).
- Facilitate compliance with export regulations and documentation.
- Discuss emerging trends and challenges in formulation development.
- Enable funding, cluster formation, and technology transfer.
- Encourage commercialization of validated herbal products.
- Safeguard IP rights and traditional knowledge heritage.

Vertical 5: Nutraceuticals, Functional Foods & Ayurveda Āhār

Nutrition Meets Tradition for Preventive Health

India's nutraceutical sector is expanding at over 20 % CAGR, driven by growing consumer awareness and faith in natural remedies. This vertical integrates Ayurvedic dietary principles with modern food and nutrition science to create evidence-based, preventive-health solutions.

Core Objectives

- Strengthen scalable infrastructure for herbal and natural-product manufacturing.
- Establish Ayurveda Āhār as a key pillar in preventive healthcare.
- Utilize codified Ayurvedic knowledge in product development.
- Leverage traditional ingredients and food-based formulations.
- Advance bioavailability and formulation technology.
- Develop guidelines for health claims aligned with global standards.

Vertical 6: Medical & Regulatory Affairs of Herbals

Building Trust through Evidence and Ethics

This vertical strengthens confidence in herbal medicine through robust clinical validation, pharmacovigilance, and regulatory convergence. It emphasizes the role of science, ethics, and transparency in earning global trust for Indian botanicals.

Core Objectives

- Clarify regulatory pathways for herbal and traditional medicine products.
- Strengthen medical-affairs practices in ethnopharmacology-based products.
- Establish clinical-trial design frameworks suitable for herbals.
- Enhance regulatory documentation and intellectual-property protection.

What Awaits You at *i-Connect* 2026

Build Industry–Academia Partnerships

Experience India's most vibrant interface between science and enterprise. *i-Connect* serves as a dedicated bridge linking researchers, innovators, and key players from the herbal, nutraceutical, and pharmaceutical sectors. Through purposeful dialogue and collaboration, it transforms laboratory discoveries into market-ready solutions that meet global standards.

Expected Outcomes:

- Joint R&D and technology-transfer initiatives
- Industry-supported validation and standardization programs
- Collaborative pathways for clinical research and commercialization

Learn from Top Industry Experts

Engage with leading panelists and thought leaders from over fifteen prestigious Indian and international organizations across herbal pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, biotechnology, and regulatory affairs. These experts will share insights on innovation pipelines, evolving market dynamics, and global best practices—helping participants understand how science and business converge in the herbal domain.

Key Learnings:

- Case studies on successful herbal and natural-product ventures
- Comparative insights into global quality and pharmacopoeial standards
- Strategies for scientific communication and evidence synthesis

Unlock Ethno-Entrepreneurship Opportunities

The program is a launchpad for innovators and start-ups seeking to translate traditional wisdom into sustainable enterprises. Participants gain access to investor networking, incubation support, and founder–scientist collaborations that promote ethical, evidence-based entrepreneurship.

Highlights:

- Dedicated Start-up Pavilion and mentorship clinics
- Interactive investor roundtables and pitch sessions
- Workshops on intellectual property, funding access, and regulatory readiness

Explore Specialized Verticals

Engage with domain experts across six focused verticals—from extract manufacturing and MAP (Medicinal and Aromatic Plant) cultivation to ASU (Ayurveda–Siddha–Unani) manufacturing, nutraceutical innovation, start-up development, and regulatory affairs. Each vertical offers targeted discussions, case studies, and collaboration opportunities tailored to participants' professional interests.

Focus Areas:

- Quality and sustainability in herbal supply chains
- Innovation in nutraceutical formulations and Ayurvedic Āhār

- Regulatory compliance and international market access strategies

Gain National and Global Exposure

Affiliated with the International Society for Ethnopharmacology (ISE), *i-Connect* attracts delegates, entrepreneurs, researchers, and policymakers from across India and abroad. It offers unmatched visibility within international forums on herbal research and bio-trade, enabling participants to forge global partnerships and enhance their professional stature.

Key Gains:

- Inclusion in the SFE-India × ISE global collaboration network
- Opportunities for cross-border research, training, and fellowships
- Exposure to CSR alliances and sustainable bio-trade initiatives

Contribute to National Missions

Aligned with Viksit Bharat and Atmanirbhar Bharat, *i-Connect* champions sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and inclusive growth within India's herbal bioeconomy. It highlights how traditional medicine can advance national objectives in healthcare innovation, rural livelihood creation, women's empowerment, and circular-economy models.

Opportunities for Impact:

- Participation in policy dialogues with AYUSH, FSSAI, and CSIR
- Collaboration on white papers and strategic recommendations
- Contribution to the *National Roadmap for Indian Botanicals 2030*

Advance Your Career and Network

Whether you are a student, researcher, clinician, or industry professional, *i-Connect 2025* provides unparalleled opportunities for mentorship, skill enhancement, and professional visibility. Build lasting relationships with key leaders, engage in collaborative projects, and join curated networking sessions designed to accelerate both career and personal growth.

Benefits:

- Direct mentorship from academic and industry experts
- Recognition for innovation and research excellence
- Access to exclusive career-building and collaboration platforms

Access Global Thought Leaders

Learn from distinguished international scholars and practitioners who will share visionary insights on the evolving future of herbal and traditional medicine. Their sessions will explore regulatory harmonization, clinical research design, quality assurance, and the integration of traditional knowledge into contemporary healthcare.

Insights to Gain:

- Emerging trends in global herbal markets
- Scientific frameworks for standardization and validation
- Pathways to enhance the global credibility of Indian botanicals

A Movement Beyond a Meeting

i-Connect 2065 is more than a business meet; it is a mission-driven movement to empower India's herbal sector, enhance its global competitiveness, and transform ancient wisdom into sustainable, evidence-based healthcare solutions.

This platform stands as a catalyst for innovation, policy advancement, and entrepreneurship, positioning India at the forefront of ethnopharmacology and natural-product sciences.

Join us to collaborate, innovate, and grow together toward a future where Indian botanicals become a cornerstone of global health and sustainable prosperity.

Impact & Legacy of Past *i-Connect* Events

From Regional Dialogue → National Framework → Global Recognition

Since its inception in 2023, the *i-Connect* Program of the *Society for Ethnopharmacology, India (SFE-India)* has grown from a modest regional initiative into India's foremost industry–academia bridge for ethnopharmacology and herbal innovation. Each edition has contributed distinct insights together forming the backbone of SFE-India's translational-science mission.

Evolution of *i-Connect*: A Chronological Journey

***i-Connect* Program: Business meet, ISE SFEC 2023**
22nd International Congress ISE & 10th International congress SFE

Theme: Bioeconomy from Bioresources – Development of Entrepreneurship



Panel lists: Industry leaders and experts from 15 renowned companies including foreign experts in ethnopharmacology and healthcare participated as panelists.

Focus Areas: Bioeconomy of northeast region, Ethnopharmacology and herbal drug development, Entrepreneurship and regulatory insights.

February 25, 2023
Manipur, Imphal, India

Academia – Industry collaboration for the development of value-added product/process/technologies

11th International Congress of Society for Ethnopharmacology, India (SFEC 2024)

Theme: "Development of Phytochemical Drugs - Tradition to Translational"



Panelists: Experts from more than 20+ industries including foreign guests have joined this program to share their insights for better Industry – academia collaborations.

Focus Areas: Phytomolecule enriched drugs, traditional knowledge, research commercialization, and Industry-Institute Partnership

February 16, 2024
CSIR-IIIM, Jammu, India

i-Connect Program During SECON 2024 "Dr. Muhammed Majeed Memorial Session"

11th Convention of Society for Ethnopharmacology, India & International Conference (SECON 2024)

Theme: *Industry experts discuss innovation, research, and collaboration in ethnopharmacology and herbal medicine.*



November 15-16, 2024
Chintan Bhawan, Gangtok, Sikkim

Panelists: Industry leaders from more than 27 reputed industries have joined this program and shared their opinion in fostering industry academia collaborative efforts.

Focus Areas: Traditional knowledge inspired drug development, extraction techniques, research commercialization, and regulatory insights.

Industry-Academia partnership Program During SFEC 2025

12th International Congress of Society for Ethnopharmacology,
India (SFEC 2025)



*Theme: Ethno-Entrepreneurship
with Natural products for
Atmanirbhar Bharat*

Panelists: Industry leaders from more than 15 reputed industries have joined this program and shared their opinion in fostering industry academia collaborative efforts.

Focus Areas: Traditional knowledge inspired drug development, extraction techniques, research commercialization, and regulatory insights.

March 06, 2025
Belagavi, Karnataka, India

Closing Note

From Seeds of Knowledge to a Sustainable Future

The *i-Connect* 2025 Business Meet represents the culmination of years of collective learning under the Society for Ethnopharmacology, India (SFE-India). It embodies the transition from isolated research efforts to an integrated, multidisciplinary ecosystem that unites science, policy, and commerce for the betterment of humankind. The 2026 edition, hosted at NIPER, Mohali, brings together over 1,000 delegates, 50 industries, and 25 international experts, symbolizing India's growing role as a global knowledge partner in herbal medicine. The event's outcome documents including, "*The National Roadmap for Indian Botanicals 2030*" and the "*Green Extraction Charter 2025*", will serve as guiding references for policy, academia, and enterprise in the years ahead.

"The spirit of i-Connect is not confined to conferences; it lives in collaborations that continue long after the event has ended."

As we close this year's edition, we celebrate the synergy of traditional wisdom, scientific integrity, and entrepreneurial courage. Together, these values will enable India to build an herbal ecosystem that is globally competitive, ethically grounded, and economically empowering.