# MAHARASHTRA SUGAR MILLS TO PROMOTE AI IN FARMING

TO promote the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in sugarcane production, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Vasantdada Sugar Institute (VSI) and the Agricultural Development Trust (ADT), Baramati on Monday. VSI brought the Maharashtra State Cooperative Sugar Factory Federation, the West India Sugar Mills Association, and the ADT, Baramati together to take the AI technology to the sugarcane fields

"VSI and the Agricultural Development Trust have today entered into an MoU. Through this agreement, the focus will be on ensuring that this technology reaches as many farmers as possible. In this endeavour, the West India Sugar Mills Association and the National Cooperative Sugar Factories Federation will also be of significant assistance. Today, even though the area under sugarcane cultivation is large, there are several shortcomings in terms of production. Efforts need to be made to address these shortcomings," said VSI President and Former Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar speaking on the occasion.

## TACKLING ISSUES

He said most factories do not have enough sugarcane supply, leading to crushing seasons of just a hundred days or even fewer. This means the factory machinery is not being fully utilised, and that adversely affects their finances. "Hence, we must find a solution and that solution lies in increasing the yield per acre of sugarcane – that is the most important answer. To achieve this, AI must be used to increase sugarcane production. Along those lines, increasing the production of sugar and by-products like ethanol will be the key solution," he said.

The Agricultural Development Trust in Baramati has already started using AI to increase sugarcane yield. Ajit Gavkar of the University of Oxford and Microsoft Executive Director Dr Ranveer Chandra facilitated the experiment at Baramati.

The ADT, with the help of VIS, will now take the experiment to all farmers across the State and address the problems of sugarcane cultivation using, AI technology.

Since 2023, an AI experiment has been unfolding in Baramati under the banner of Project Farm vibes, a revolutionary suite of farm-focused technologies developed by Microsoft Research. With the recent open-sourcing of these tools, researchers, data scientists, farmers and students now have the opportunity to transform raw agricultural data into actionable insights that promise to boost yields and slash costs dramatically.

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