Soon, ‘smart foods’ to keep future generations fit
ICRISAT, University of Reading join hands to conduct joint research

After finding ways to address the challenge of food security, researchers in agricultural and nutrition space are now developing crops fit for future generations. The research would also look at the issues of malnutrition and food scarcity faced by over 65 crore people across the world.

The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the UK-based University of Reading have signed an agreement to jointly conduct research on tackling crops that will provide a healthy and sustainable diet for future generations.

**Focus area**

The joint research would focus on the role of gut microbiome in human nutrition, the effect of diet on human health and the implications for plant breeding.

‘Smart foods’ such as the millets, sorghum, chickpea, pigeonpea and groundnuts would be covered by the researchers.

Researchers from both institutions will develop scientific understanding and training resources to address key questions on the value of food crops. It will focus on the requirements of future generations that might face multiple challenges, including climate change and growing problem of obesity. The university had been doing research on the relationship between diet and chronic disorders such as cardiovascular disease.

This has extended into the relationship between diet and more detailed predictors of disease risk including effects on brain function, a complex story also involving the gut microbiota, said Ian Givens, Director of the Institute of Food, Nutrition and Health at the University of Reading.

“An important aspect of modern nutrition is obtaining a clear understanding of the nutritional characteristics of foods, both in terms of traditional nutrients and their impact on our physiology and cognition,” he said.

“This approach to modern nutrition is one of the key areas that we will be working with Icrisat in their fight to provide food fit for future generations,” he said.