



KENYA INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

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KIRDI NEWSLETTER

DRIVING INDUSTRIAL INNOVATION AND
ENTERPRISE GROWTH



FEATURED STORIES

KIRDI Strengthens Kenya's Manufacturing Sector Through Research and Innovation. This edition highlights KIRDI's continued efforts in supporting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through technology transfer, product development, industrial training, quality assurance, and value addition initiatives.



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The WIPO Director General, accompanied by the KIRDI Director General, Board Chairperson, Board Directors, and other officials, walks to a meeting session during the official visit to KIRDI.

Kenya Industrial Research & Development Institute (KIRDI) had the distinct honor of hosting World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Director General, Mr. Daren Tang, in a landmark visit that placed innovation and entrepreneurship at the center of Kenya's industrial transformation.

The visit was a vibrant showcase of Kenyan MSMEs, who presented groundbreaking products ranging from smart farming solutions to eco-friendly manufacturing technologies. Mr. Tang engaged directly with innovators, testing prototypes and encouraging them to view intellectual property (IP) not just as legal protection, but as a powerful tool for commercial success.

During the event, KIRDI Director General, Dr.-Ing. Calvin Onyango, highlighted the institute's role in supporting innovators and SMEs through:



SMEs participating in the exhibition pose for a commemorative photo during the visit.

- Capacity Building
- Common Manufacturing Facilities
- Equipment Design and Fabrication
- Industrial Incubation
- Providing labs for product testing
- Guiding on patents & trademarks
- Linking innovators to markets and investors

Every year, KIRDI transforms 1,500+ innovative ideas into thriving businesses, demonstrating its pivotal role in powering Kenya's industrialization journey.

This visit reaffirmed the value of global partnerships in unlocking Africa's innovation potential and underscored the importance of IP-driven growth for sustainable economic development.

Message from the Director General

"This year has been a milestone in our pursuit of research, innovation, and industrial transformation. Together with our partners, we have strengthened MSMEs, supported women in business, built sustainability initiatives, and nurtured future leaders. We thank our staff, collaborators, and entrepreneurs who continue to make KIRDI a hub of innovation." Dr.-Ing. Calvin Onyango

"These entrepreneurs prove IP is more than legal protection – it's the key to commercial success,"

– WIPO DG, Daren Tang



Mama's Gold, one of the SMEs supported and trained by KIRDI, showcases her value-added products during the event.



The WIPO Director General interacts with an SME entrepreneur during a product exhibition.

STRENGTHENING IP-DRIVEN INNOVATION: KIRDI SIGNS MOU WITH KIPI



KIRDI hosted a team from KIPI on 10th July 2025 where they worked towards a collaborative agreement. One of the topics discussed was establishment of the TISC, including how researchers, innovators, MSMEs will benefit from IP services and patent information.

A successful capacity-building workshop for both the staff was held on 19th August in preparation for the establishment of TISC at KIRDI. A key highlight of the workshop was the signing of a collaborative agreement between the two institutions led by former KIRDI Director General, Dr.-Ing Calvin Onyango, and the Managing Director of KIPI, Mr. John Onyango

KIRDI and the Kenya Industrial Property Institute (KIPI) formalized a partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding to set up a Technology & Innovation Centre (TISC) at KIRDI.

The new TISC, to be hosted under KIRDI Industrial Linkages, Policy and Intellectual Property Department, is aimed at strengthening innovation, facilitating protection of intellectual property rights, and improving commercialization of research outputs.

This collaboration is part of the wider network of TISCs that KIPI is coordinating nationally. The goal is to deepen innovation ecosystems in Kenya by enabling institutions to better harness research for socio economic development



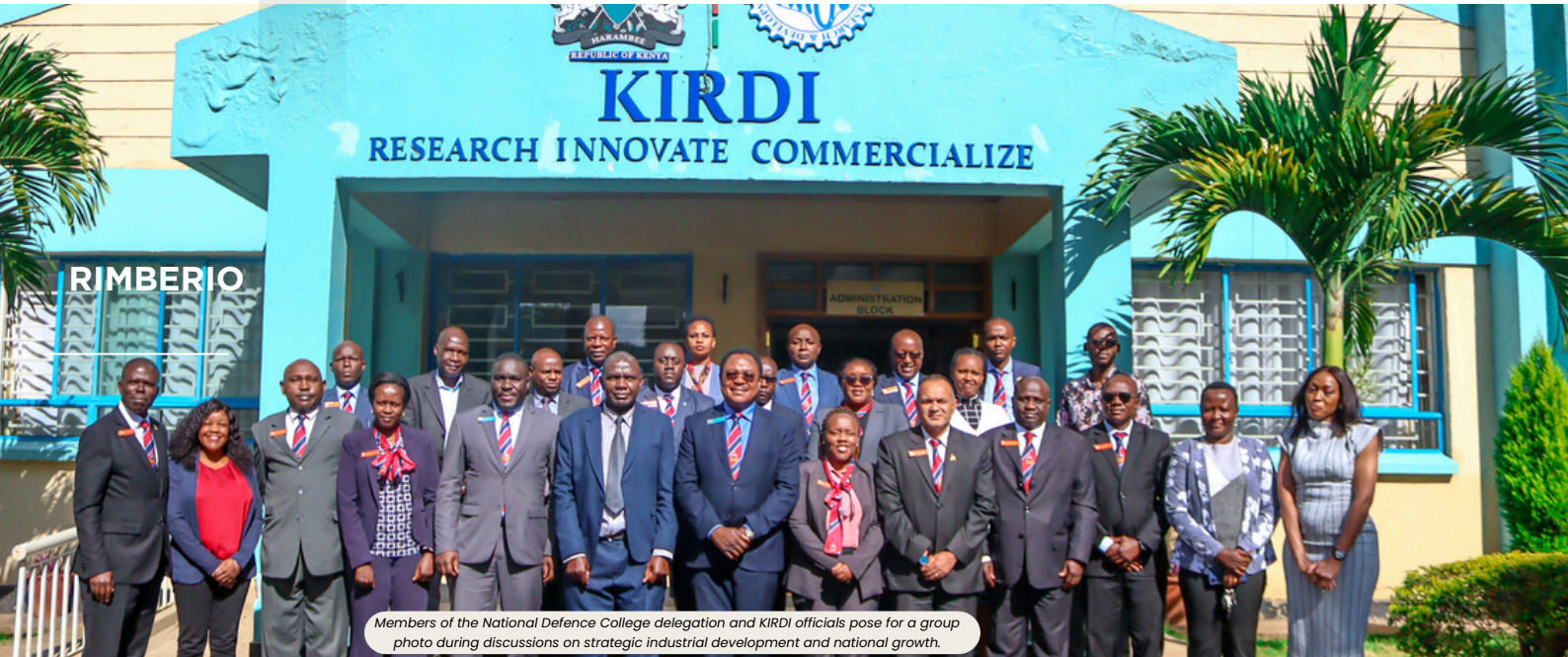
Dr.-Ing Calvin Onyango(Right) and KIPI Managing Director, Mr. John Onyango, during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between KIRDI and KIPI.



Officials from KIRDI and KIPI celebrate the formalization of their partnership during a group photo following the MoU signing.

Under the agreement:

- KIPI will provide capacity building in intellectual property (IP), including training, awareness raising and support in patent processes.
- The TISC will give researchers, investors and other stakeholders affiliated with KIRDI access to technical and scientific resources
- It will act as a bridge between industrial research and IP administrative systems



Members of the National Defence College delegation and KIRDI officials pose for a group photo during discussions on strategic industrial development and national growth.

KIRDI Hosts National Defence College Delegation for Strategic Industrial Development Discussions

Kenya Industrial Research & Development Institute (KIRDI) hosted a high-level delegation from the National Defence College (NDC) for a strategic engagement aimed at strengthening Kenya's industrial ecosystem through research, technology, and multi-sector collaboration.

The discussions highlighted key national priorities, including value addition in the blue economy, waste management solutions, and the promotion of biodegradable and environmentally friendly technologies—areas where KIRDI's applied research continues to drive sustainable industrial growth.



The head of the National Defence College delegation presents a commemorative book to KIRDI Ag. Director General, Dr. Kelvin Khisa.

Through its continued focus on research, innovation, and technical services, KIRDI reaffirmed its role in transforming ideas into practical solutions that empower industries, stimulate economic growth, and contribute to Kenya's long-term industrial and sustainable development goals.

KIRDI appreciated the visit by the National Defence College delegation and the valuable insights shared toward strengthening the country's industrial and innovation landscape.

Dr.-Ing Calvin Onyango(Right) and KIPi Managing Director, Mr. John Onyango, signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between KIRDI and KIPi.



Dr.-Ing Calvin Onyango(Right) and KIPi Managing Director, Mr. John Onyango, during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between KIRDI and KIPi.

The engagement further emphasized the importance of supporting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through capacity building, access to Common Manufacturing Facilities, product development support, and technology transfer to enhance competitiveness, scale enterprises, and reduce production costs.



Dr.-Ing Calvin Onyango(Right) and KIPi Managing Director, Mr. John Onyango, during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between KIRDI and KIPi.



KIRDI Hosts Gates Foundation to Showcase Women's Economic Empowerment Hub Impact

Kenya Industrial Research & Development Institute (KIRDI) hosted a high-level learning session with senior officials from the Gates Foundation to showcase the achievements of the Women's Economic Empowerment Hub (WEE Hub) Programme, implemented in partnership with the University of Nairobi – African Women Studies Centre (AWSC).

The session was graced by Dr. Juma Mukhwana, CBS, Principal Secretary, State Department for Industry, who reaffirmed government commitment to MSME development, county-level industrial hubs, and supporting women and youth access to value addition technologies.



Principal Secretary for Industry, Dr. Juma Mukhwana, CBS, interacts with women entrepreneurs during the WEE Hub product showcase.

Through KIRDI's training, research, and technical support, women entrepreneurs gained practical skills in product development, packaging, quality standardization, and commercialization, enabling them to grow and scale their businesses. This hands-on guidance has empowered women-led SMEs to produce competitive, market-ready products while enhancing their livelihoods and economic independence.

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**CONGRATULATIONS
BATCH 2022!**





187 MSMEs Empowered Through the KIRDI-KIEP Project

Kenya Industrial Research & Development Institute (KIRDI), in partnership with the Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry (MITI) and with support from the World Bank, successfully concluded the KIRDI-KIEP Project, a transformative initiative aimed at strengthening Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) across Kenya.



Delegates interact with MSMEs showcasing the impact of the KIRDI-KIEP Project on enterprise growth and product quality.



Launched in 2023 and concluded in June 2025, the project focused on enhancing innovation, productivity, and competitiveness among MSMEs through research, technical support, and capacity-building programs. Over the course of the initiative, 187 MSMEs from 39 counties—with a focus on youth, women, and persons living with disabilities—benefited from training and mentorship designed to grow their enterprises.

A total of 187 MSMEs from 39 counties, with a focus on youth, women, and persons living with disabilities, benefited from the initiative. Many participants have successfully obtained Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) certification, giving them the credibility to produce high-quality, market-ready products that meet national standards and can compete regionally.

During the visit, the delegation witnessed firsthand the achievements of the MSMEs, who showcased their certified products and shared inspiring success stories. The program has not only enhanced business skills but also fostered economic empowerment, enabling entrepreneurs to expand their enterprises and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

MIRACLE IN A MUG? RETHINKING THE HERBAL INFUSION CRAZE

“Ultimately, herbal infusions should be viewed as “supportive wellness beverages, not pharmaceutical substitutes.”

Herbal infusions have transitioned from traditional household remedies to commercially packaged products in supermarket shelves. What used to simmer quietly in home kettles is now branded, boxed, filtered, and sold as ‘detox’, ‘slim’, ‘calm’, or ‘immunity’ tea. The wellness world can’t get enough. But as we take a sip, one question we should ask ourselves is: are we reviving traditional health wisdom, or just repackaging belief with better branding?



Teapot with herbal tea a



Maringa Christine
Senior Research Scientist, Food Technology Research Centre

Across Africa and many parts of the world, herbal infusions were never products. They were part of daily living. For instance; ginger for colds; lemongrass for relaxation; hibiscus for refreshment; neem, mint, chamomile, moringa, etc. Each plant had a role rooted in culture, observation, and generational knowledge. No influencer campaigns; no miracle promises; just practical, experience-based use. Fast forward to today, and herbal infusions sit at the center of the global wellness economy. This shift is not entirely a bad thing; in fact, it brings some powerful positives.



Dried Tea leaves

First, people are replacing sugar-loaded sodas and artificial drinks with plant-based alternatives. That alone is a major public health win. Second, the growing demand is opening income streams for farmers, processors, and small brands; especially in regions rich in medicinal and aromatic plants. Herbal infusions are creating a bridge between agriculture, health, and enterprise.

But here’s where the question arises; is marketing moving faster than science? A cup of herbal infusion can support health. It can hydrate, soothe digestion, provide antioxidants, and promote relaxation. What it cannot do is magically cure chronic diseases, burn fat overnight, or detox the body in ways our liver and kidneys already do naturally. When labels and social media claim otherwise, we step into dangerous territory; not just for consumers, but for the credibility of traditional knowledge itself.

The other uncomfortable truth is: “natural” does not automatically mean “safe.” Some herbs interact with medications; some are not suitable during pregnancy; others can be contaminated if poorly handled. As this sector grows, we can’t rely on tradition alone. We need proper identification of plant materials, hygienic processing, standardization, and honest labeling. Tradition deserves respect but also needs protection through quality and regulation.

One often overlooked issue in the herbal infusion conversation is variability. Unlike conventional pharmaceuticals, which are standardized to deliver precise doses of active compounds, herbal infusions can vary significantly depending on plant variety, growing conditions, harvest time, drying methods, and brewing strength. .

Two cups labeled as the same ginger or hibiscus infusion may differ markedly in phytochemical concentration. This variability makes it difficult to generalize health effects or establish consistent outcomes. Without clearer guidance on preparation methods and standardized extracts, both consumers and researchers are left navigating a space where composition and therefore efficacy is far from uniform



The real value of herbal infusions lies in balance. They should be seen as supportive wellness beverages, not pharmaceutical substitutes. They are supportive, preventive, comforting which is part of a healthy lifestyle that includes good nutrition, movement, sleep, and medical care when needed. When positioned this way, they build trust. When exaggerated, they become just another fading health trend.



Fresh herbs

Therefore, the future of herbal infusions depends on a deliberate choice. Do we prioritize compelling narratives, or do we invest in measurable substance? Do we amplify attractive marketing claims, or do we commit to building a credible, sustainable industry anchored in both traditional knowledge and scientific validation? The path we choose will shape consumer trust, regulatory response, and long-term market stability.

Evidence-based research, transparent labeling, and responsible communication are not barriers to growth; but foundations for durability. Ultimately, the contents in the cup are important but the accuracy of the claims, the context in which they are presented, and the credibility behind them carry more weight.

EU-EAC LEATHER TRAINING



KIRDI Board Chairperson, Board members, management, trainers, and participants pose for a group photo during the EU-EAC MARKUP II Leather Manufacturing Training.

The intensive program focused on practical, hands-on training in design, assembly, finishing, quality control, and modern leather manufacturing techniques. Participants honed their expertise in edge painting, skiving, prototyping, splitting for uniform thickness, and lining for structure and durability, ensuring their products meet high-quality, market-ready standards.



KIRDI Board Chairperson, Board members, and management officials during the EU-EAC MARKUP II Leather Manufacturing Training at KIRDI.



Kenya Industrial Research & Development Institute (KIRDI) proudly conducted the 5-day EU-EAC MARKUP II Leather Manufacturing Training at its Industrial Materials Research Centre (IM-RC), equipping 32 participants from Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania with advanced leather craftsmanship skills.



A participant proudly displays a handcrafted leather bag produced during the EU-EAC MARKUP II Leather Manufacturing Training.

The closing ceremony was presided over by KIRDI Board Chair Hon. Eng. Peter Korinko Mosite and Director General Dr.-Ing. Calvin Onyango, who commended the participants for their dedication, creativity, and commitment to advancing leather manufacturing in the region.

“This training has not only sharpened our skills but also exposed us to state-of-the-art machinery and techniques that will allow us to craft luxury leather products for regional and international markets,” shared one of the participants.

KIRDI’s EU-EAC leather program demonstrates the institute’s commitment to supporting the leather sector through research, innovation, technical training, and incubation, fostering a new generation of skilled artisans ready to drive industrial growth and competitiveness in East Africa.

Special thanks to the International Trade Centre and facilitators Essangui Mbaitjongue and Ketty Daribo for delivering this impactful program.



KIRDI SHOWCASES MSME INNOVATIONS AT CHANGAMKA SHOPPING FESTIVAL 2025

Kenya Industrial Research & Development Institute (KIRDI) proudly showcased the ingenuity and entrepreneurial potential of its supported Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) during the Changamka Shopping Festival 2025, held at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC). The five-day exhibition provided a platform for entrepreneurs to market innovative, value-added products developed through KIRDI's research, technology transfer, incubation, and product development programmes.



The PS for Industry, alongside the KIRDI Board Chair, engages with MSMEs at the KIRDI booth during the Changamka Festival.

Running alongside the 3rd Kenya Industrialization Conference 2025, the festival attracted key government leaders, development partners, industry players, and members of the public. The conference was officially opened by the Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry, Hon. Lee Kinyanjui, who later toured the KIRDI exhibition booth.

During his visit, the Cabinet Secretary interacted with KIRDI-supported SMEs, applauded their innovative products, and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to strengthening Kenya's manufacturing sector through innovation, industrialization, and enterprise development.



A KIRDI-trained MSME presents locally made products to the Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry during the Changamka Festival.

The KIRDI exhibition also received a visit from the Principal Secretary for the State Department for Industry, Dr. Juma Mukhwana, who was received by KIRDI Board Chair Hon. Eng. Peter Korinko Mositet. The Principal Secretary engaged with entrepreneurs, learned about their product development journeys, and commended KIRDI for empowering MSMEs through research, value addition, and commercialization support.



KIRDI SHOWCASES MSME INNOVATIONS AT CHANGAMKA SHOPPING FESTIVAL 2025

As a key partner in the conference, KIRDI demonstrated how research and innovation are driving industrial transformation by showcasing a diverse range of products from SMEs that have benefited from the Institute's technical expertise. The exhibition further highlighted KIRDI's role in promoting locally manufactured products and creating market access opportunities for Kenyan enterprises.

Adding to the significance of the event, KIRDI's Ag. Director General, Dr. Kelvin Khisa, participated in a high-level panel discussion on Innovation, Research, Development and Commercialization, where he emphasized the importance of translating research into market-ready solutions and strengthening collaboration between research institutions, industry, and government.



KIRDI Ag. Director General interacts with KIRDI-trained MSMEs showcasing their innovative products at the Changamka Festival.

partnerships in accelerating industrial growth and supporting innovation-led enterprises.



UNIDO Country Representative, Ms. Tally Einav, interacts with KIRDI-supported SMEs during a visit to the KIRDI exhibition booth.

The five-day exhibition concluded successfully, with participating SMEs recording impressive sales, expanding their business networks, and increasing the visibility of their products. The festival once again demonstrated KIRDI's commitment to nurturing competitive enterprises, promoting Made in Kenya products, and advancing the national agenda of Buy Kenya, Build Kenya through research, innovation, and commercialization.



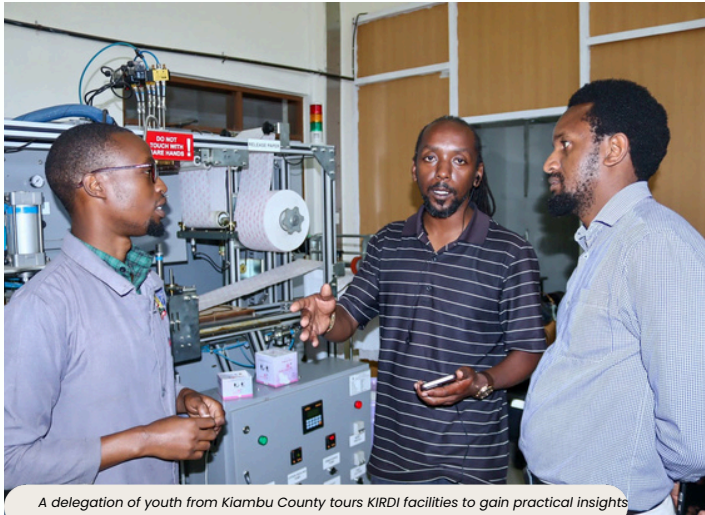
The Institute also welcomed Ms. Tally Einav, Country Representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), who visited the KIRDI booth and interacted with entrepreneurs, reaffirming the importance of strategic

KIRDI Engages Kiambu County Youth Delegation on Innovation and Manufacturing Opportunities

Kenya Industrial Research & Development Institute (KIRDI) engaged a delegation of youth from Kiambu County, providing them with a hands-on experience of industrial research, innovation, and manufacturing processes. The initiative aimed to expose young innovators and entrepreneurs to practical knowledge that can transform ideas into viable products and enterprises.



A delegation of youth from Kiambu County tours KIRDI facilities to gain practical insights into industrial innovation and enterprise development.



A delegation of youth from Kiambu County tours KIRDI facilities to gain practical insights into industrial innovation and enterprise development.

During the visit, the youth toured KIRDI's state-of-the-art research centres, including the Engineering and ICT Research Centre, the Industrial Materials Research Centre, and the Chemical Engineering and Allied Processes Research Centre. They observed cutting-edge processes such as prototyping, fabrication, leather value addition, and product development. KIRDI researchers and technical staff guided them through interactive demonstrations, showing how research outputs can be translated into commercial solutions that drive industrial growth.

The delegation, comprising 14 youths involved in county-led vocational and entrepreneurial programs, engaged in discussions on the role of technology transfer, innovation, and industrial skills in creating employment and supporting enterprise development. The youth also explored strategies to scale products, understand market needs, and develop capabilities to compete effectively in the industrial sector.

The engagement underscored the importance of linking research institutions with the next generation of innovators. By providing access to modern laboratories, technical expertise, and mentorship, KIRDI continues to play a pivotal role in nurturing youth-led innovation, empowering young entrepreneurs, and contributing to Kenya's industrial and economic development.



Youth from Kiambu County interact with KIRDI researchers at the Food Technology Research Centre during an educational tour of the Institute.

NEWSLETTER



KIRDI SIGNS TECHNICAL COLLABORATION AGREEMENT WITH TMF INVESTMENT COOPERATIVE SOCIETY

The Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute signed a Technical Collaboration Agreement with TMF Investment Cooperative Society, marking a significant step toward strengthening innovation, value addition, and enterprise development among cooperative members. The partnership is designed to enhance the capacity of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through access to research, technology, and technical expertise.



KIRDI and TMF Investment Cooperative Society formalize their partnership through the signing of a Technical Collaboration Agreement.

Through this collaboration, KIRDI will provide technical support in product development, quality improvement, and value addition processes, enabling members of TMF Investment Cooperative Society to transform raw materials into competitive, market-ready products. The agreement also focuses on enhancing production efficiency, improving standards compliance, and supporting commercialization efforts.

This collaboration highlights the growing importance of strategic partnerships between research institutions and cooperatives in driving inclusive industrial growth. By bridging the gap between research and enterprise, KIRDI continues to play a key role in empowering local businesses, fostering sustainable livelihoods, and contributing to Kenya's broader industrialization agenda.



KIRDI and TMF Investment Cooperative Society officials during discussions on strengthening technical collaboration and enterprise development.

Members of the cooperative will benefit from KIRDI's training programs, research facilities, and advisory services, equipping them with practical skills to scale their businesses and access wider markets. The partnership further seeks to promote innovation-driven entrepreneurship, particularly among youth and women within the cooperative movement.

Gallery





Vision

Quality industrial research for
competitive and sustainable
industries

Core Values

Integrity – Sustainability – Team work
– Creativity – Customer focus



Mission

Provide innovative technologies for
industry through research and
dissemination of findings

Motto

Research – Innovate – Commercialize

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