

Himalaya Wellness and Arunodaya Merecon Pvt. Ltd. come together to improve the bio-yield of *Bhringaraj*

Himalaya Wellness Company has shortlisted the proposal from Arunodaya Merecon Pvt. Ltd (AMPL), to join the former's mission on the development of high-yielding hybrid seeds of *Eclipta alba* (syn: *Eclipta prostrata*). Himalaya had shared with the Division of Strategic Alliances, Office of PSA to Government of India, a call for proposals. Following that, the team at the office reached out to a network of start-ups and research institutes. The process has been concluded by shortlisting the proposal from AMPL.

Rapid industrialization has largely reduced the available area (wastelands and forest lands) for medicinal plants to grow. Known health benefits of medicinal plants have maintained a high demand for them. There is, thus, an immediate requirement for higher cultivation varieties of medicinal plants. The cultivation of medicinal plants should also sustain the livelihood of farmers, and businesses in industries.

Many of the medicinal plants yield very low biomass which is not sustainable for either the farmers or the industries. This makes the case for a strong requirement of hybrids that yield more biomass.

Eclipta alba, also called *Bhringaraj* in Hindi, is a medicinal plant with high market demand. The National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), India estimates that around 2000 to 5000 tonnes of the dried herbal material of *E. alba* are traded annually. Though the plant is found throughout India, it is harvested in very few states. The present demand for the plant is fulfilled with the wild collection only; its commercial cultivation is not known so far.

Himalaya Wellness sent out the call for proposals on the development of high-yielding varieties of this medicinal plant in India. In response to the call from Himalaya, the proposal from AMPL aims at developing high yielding through multiple modifications to the plant morphology, physiology, and biochemistry, and improving the growth rate and total biomass without altering the phytochemical profile and/or medicinal properties. It is also aimed to develop hybrids adaptable to a wide range of environmental factors (from wetlands to semi-arid lands or barren lands). Aligned with the requirements of the Himalaya Wellness, the hybrids developed by AMPL will not be genetically modified. The expected output will be not less than 500 kgs per acre, per season, per harvest.