Dr. Hiresha Verma

Founder & CEO, **Han Agrocare LLP**

Managing Director, **Hi Shroomz – Han Agri Innovations Pvt. Ltd.**

Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India



Recognized as “Mushroom Queen of Himalayas”

Executive Introduction

Dr. Hiresha Verma is an acclaimed Indian entrepreneur, social innovator, and agritech leader, known for transforming rural livelihoods through science-driven, women-led enterprise. As Founder & CEO of Han Agrocare LLP and MD of Hi Shroomz (Han Agri Innovations Pvt. Ltd.), she has pioneered the introduction and commercial cultivation of medicinal mushrooms in India, while building one of the country's largest grassroots networks for female farmer empowerment.

Driven by the conviction that "**Nothing is Impossible for a Willing Heart**," Dr. Verma's work has directly improved the incomes and independence of more than 5,000 women, tribals, and landless farmers across the Himalayan region. Her impact has been recognized at the highest levels of government and civil society, and she continues to be a mentor, advisor, and inspiration for rural transformation in India and beyond.

Key Facts

Field	Details
Name	Dr. Hiresha Verma
Title	Founder & CEO, Han Agrocare LLP; MD, Hi Shroomz (Han Agri Innovations Pvt. Ltd.)
Location	Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India
Education	PhD, Mushroom Farming (Rai University); MBA, International Business (ICFAI); MSc, Botany & Chemistry; HR
Notable Recognitions	NITI Aayog Top 75 Innovators; ICAR National Award; Nari Shakti Puraskar; "Himalayan Queen of Mushrooms" (2025); Medicinal Mushroom Lady of India (2025); Pride of Uttarakhand; CII; MSME
Impact Reach	5,000+ women, tribals & landless farmers trained; 50+ direct jobs; active operations in 6+ Indian states

1. The Turning Point—From IT Leader to Social Innovation

There are moments in life when the ground beneath your feet changes forever. For Dr. Hiresha Verma, that moment arrived in the summer of 2013, when raging floods swept through the hills of Uttarakhand. She watched from the window of her home as the waters erased fields, homes, and—most painfully—the fragile security of thousands of women. For many, everything familiar was gone overnight. Yet, it was not just the floodwaters that left a mark. It was the silence of the women who came to her doorstep, seeking work, advice, or just a kind word. They carried sorrow, yes, but also a glimmer of trust—perhaps someone could help.

At that time, Dr. Verma's world was built on fiber-optic cables and computer screens. She ran a successful IT and outsourcing business—a world of schedules, clients, and growth charts. But as the floodwaters retreated, her heart would not let her return to "business as usual." She asked herself: **What could I possibly do that would outlast a flood?** What could give these women—not just relief, but real independence?

One evening, as she sat at her kitchen table, surrounded by reports and research, a single idea began to take shape. **Mushrooms.**

Not the ordinary kind, but specialty varieties—rich in nutrition, able to grow in the hilly climate, needing little land, yet offering the hope of real income. To most, it sounded odd, even laughable. But to her, it was a chance.

Armed with ₹2,000, she bought 25 bags of mushroom spawn. She turned her servant quarter into a laboratory of hope. Each morning, she checked the temperature, the humidity, the tender white threads creeping through the bags. She failed more than once. But when the first harvest came—a clutch of fresh, perfect oyster mushrooms—she felt something shift inside her.

She was no longer just an entrepreneur; **she was a woman with a mission**!!

Not long after, she travelled to Solan to train at the ICAR-Directorate of Mushroom Research. She was a student again, hungry for every secret of this living science. She learned not just to grow, but to teach, to build, to inspire. With each lesson, she saw her own story reflected in the women she would soon mentor: starting small, daring greatly, dreaming beyond their own circumstances.

It was the beginning of a new life—for her, and for thousands who would soon call her "Didi"—big sister, mentor, and architect of new beginnings.

2. Building Empire—Empowering Women and Scaling Impact

After acquiring technical mastery in mushroom cultivation, Dr. Hiresha Verma's focus shifted from individual success to systemic change. She founded **Han Agrocare LLP** with a clear mission: to create scalable, sustainable opportunities for rural women, tribals, and landless farmers—transforming them into skilled entrepreneurs and leaders within their communities.

Empowerment Through Training and Guaranteed Market Access

Dr. Verma launched community training programs across Uttarakhand and neighboring states, using a practical, hands-on curriculum. These programs covered every stage of the mushroom value chain:

- Substrate preparation and scientific cultivation methods
- Environmental management (moisture, temperature, hygiene)
- Harvesting, grading, and packaging
- Value addition (processing into teas, cookies, nutraceuticals)
- Financial planning, business management, and quality standards

Central to the Han Agrocare model is the **"train-and-buy-back" system**. All women and smallholder trainees are guaranteed technical support as well as a committed market for their produce. This significantly reduces risk, ensuring economic security and stable cash flow from the outset.

Widening the Circle: From Local to Regional Impact

What began as a grassroots initiative quickly gained momentum. Word-of-mouth, community demonstrations, and early financial success stories inspired more women to join. Han Agrocare's model was intentionally designed to be inclusive:

- **No prior agricultural experience** was needed
- **Small, low-cost infrastructure** (often a spare room or converted shed) was sufficient
- Ongoing mentorship and peer-to-peer learning built a collaborative culture

Over the past decade, this approach has trained and empowered **more than 5,000 women, tribals, and landless farmers**—with direct and indirect benefits to thousands of households across Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.

Advancing Gender Equity and Rural Prosperity

Through Han Agrocare, participants have achieved:

- **Doubled and even tripled household incomes** through year-round, value-added production
- **Enhanced access to education and healthcare** for their children
- **Leadership roles in community cooperatives and self-help groups**
- Increased confidence, decision-making power, and social recognition

The success of this model has made Han Agrocare a recognized leader in rural women's entrepreneurship, earning Dr. Verma accolades from both state and national institutions.

Impact Metrics

- **Women, Tribals, and Landless Farmers Trained:** 5,000+
- **Permanent Jobs Created at Han Agrocare Facility:** 15+
- **States Reached:** Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh
- **Indirect Employment:** Thousands through the extended value chain and micro-entrepreneur network



3. Innovation, R&D, and International Recognition

As Han Agrocare matured, Dr. Hiresha Verma's vision extended beyond primary cultivation to **scientific innovation and global competitiveness**. She strategically led the organization into advanced R&D, intellectual property creation, and the development of value-added products—making Han Agrocare a benchmark for impact-driven agribusiness in India and South Asia.

Driving Innovation in Medicinal and Functional Mushrooms

Recognizing the limitations of commodity agriculture, Dr. Verma guided Han Agrocare to shift from widely grown varieties like button and oyster mushrooms to high-value, health-promoting species such as **Shiitake, Ganoderma (Reishi), Cordyceps, Lion's Mane, Maitake, and Turkey Tail**. These mushrooms, globally recognized for their nutritional and medicinal benefits, were previously imported to India.
Dr. Verma's localized cultivation model not only improved farmer income but positioned India as a new source for these specialty crops.

Value Addition, Patents, and Zero-Waste Circularity

Under Dr. Verma's leadership, Han Agrocare became a pioneer in mushroom-based product innovation. The company developed and launched a diverse portfolio, including:

- **Mushroom teas, coffees, and ginger ale**
- **Nutraceutical and wellness products**
- **Healthy cookies, snacks, and even mushroom wine**

Han Agrocare's **biotech division** focuses on extracting bioactive compounds for pharmaceutical and nutraceutical use, advancing Indian research and opening new international markets.

Intellectual Property:

- **7 patents filed** for novel cultivation techniques, processing, and product development
- **3 trademarks registered**
- Ongoing collaborations with academic and research institutes

The enterprise practices a **zero-waste approach**: agricultural by-products are reused for substrate and compost, while spent compost is repurposed as organic manure or clean fuel—demonstrating both environmental responsibility and economic efficiency.

Recognition and Global Engagement

Dr. Verma's work has been recognized by major national and international organizations, including:

- Recognized as top 10 Women Enterpreneurs in Exports by Niti Aayog's – Govt of India on 10th June 2026.
- Women of Eminence Award 2026 by Times of India
- ISHRD Gangotri Udyamita award - 2026

- Awarded Himalayan Queen of Mushrooms by Better India – 2025
- Awarded Medicinal Mushroom Lady of India by Danik Jagaran – 2025
- Got awarded by Times of India as most Promising Agriculture award 2025
- Mushroom Lady of Uttarakhand – 2023.
- Awarded the Best Enterprising Women Farmer – by Agriculture Today – 2025
- Awarded Pride of Uttarakhand – 2025.
- Uttarakhand Nari shakti purskar – 2024.
- Awarded the Best Women Enterpreneur by CII – 2024
- Awarded Farm and Food – Best Female Farmer Award by Times Group 2024.
- Enterprising women entrepreneur 2024
- Represented Govt of India in the APO meet in Singapore in August 2023.
- Represented Govt of India in the Bankok Expo backed by Embassy of Thailand in July 2023.
- Selected by Niti Ayog – Govt of India as the top 75 Innovative Company of India – A Compedium was inaugurated by Honarable Amit Shah on Home Ministry Portal.
- Given the Award of being the Judge in MSME Forum Women -Exporter India in August 2023.
- Best Industrial Award by Uttrakhand Govt – Amar Ujala – 2023.
- Samunati Manage Award - 2022
- Enterprising Women Entrepreneur – MSME – ICAR 2022
- Best Women Entrepreneur – Mahila Dept- Govt of Uttarakhand - 2022
- Accelerator in AWE – Banasthali & US Embassy - 2022
- Selected as BEST PROGRESSIVE FARMER – ICAR 2021
- Enterprising Women Entrepreneur – MSME 2021
- BEST Social Enterprise Award - Action for India - 2019
- Selected in top 25 Women for Ambassador Programmed by Goldman Sachs and ISB – 2019
- Selected among 100 Women Transforming India by NITI AYOG - 2019
- Selected as Top 10 AGRI Companies in Agri Udaan – 2019
- Incubator in RABIS from ICAR- Govt. of India – 2019
- Incubator in NEXUS from US – Embassy – USA – 2019
- Certificate for Innovation Readiness Series by University of Texas Austin – USA – 2019

- Honored as Agri Input Company by DBS – 2019.
- Certificate for Innovation Readiness Series by University of Texas Austin – USA – 2019.
- Awarded Tech Camp – Changing Women Changemakers – US Embassy – USA – 2018.
- WE CAN AWARD – US Embassy – USA – 2017.
- Award from Cherie Blair Foundation for Mentoring Women in Business – 2017.
- CII Innovation Award – 2017.
- National Award for MUSHROOM FARMING by GOVT OF INDIA-ICAR – 2016.
- Awarded Udyog Ratna Award – 2015.
- Awarded Successful Business Women of Uttarakhand in Social Entrepreneurship – 2015.
- State Award for Mushroom Farming – Uttarakhand – 2015.
- Certificate for Training Programme on Medicinal Mushrooms held at ICAR – Directorate of Mushroom Research – Solan – 2015.

Her leadership and advocacy have inspired young women, policymakers, and entrepreneurs across South Asia, positioning Han Agrocare as a role model for inclusive, science-driven rural enterprise.



4. Results, Social Impact, and Vision

Transforming Communities Through Measurable Impact

Over a decade, Dr. Hiresha Verma's work has resulted in significant, quantifiable improvements in rural prosperity, women's empowerment, and community health:

- **Over 5,000 women, tribals, and landless farmers trained** in scientific mushroom cultivation, many achieving financial independence for the first time.
- **15+ permanent jobs created** at Han Agrocare's facility in Dehradun, with thousands of indirect jobs through a robust micro-entrepreneur network.
- **Doubled or tripled incomes** reported by many participants, resulting in better nutrition, education, and healthcare access for their families.
- **Production capacity** now exceeds 1 ton per day, with operations established in six Indian states.
- **Household transformation**: Stories abound of women who have become leaders in their communities, rebuilt homes, and enabled their children's higher education—turning generational challenges into new opportunities.

Advancing Gender Equity and Rural Resilience

Dr. Verma's model addresses the intersection of **gender equality, economic opportunity, and environmental sustainability**. By embedding women at the heart of the value chain, she has accelerated progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including:

- **SDG 1:** No Poverty
- **SDG 5:** Gender Equality
- **SDG 8:** Decent Work and Economic Growth
- **SDG 12:** Responsible Consumption and Production

The approach emphasizes not only income but also **confidence, community leadership, and social recognition**—ensuring that impact is both deep and enduring.

Significant Contributions in the Field of Mushrooms

Dr. Hiresha Verma's leadership and innovation have brought transformative change to India's mushroom industry, with notable contributions including:

1. **Pioneering Medicinal Mushroom Cultivation in India:**
    - Introduced and scaled the cultivation of high-value medicinal mushrooms such as Shiitake, Ganoderma (Reishi), Cordyceps, Turkey Tail, and Lion's Mane—replacing the country's dependence on Chinese imports.
    - Established one of India's first commercial farms dedicated to medicinal mushrooms, achieving a production capacity of two tons per day.
    - Raised national awareness through educational webinars, exhibitions, and outreach, mainstreaming the benefits of medicinal mushrooms for health and wellness.
2. **Empowering and Training Women, Tribals, and Landless Farmers:**
    - Trained over 5,000 women, tribals, and landless farmers in scientific mushroom cultivation and value addition.

- Developed a buy-back program to guarantee income, technical support, and sustainable livelihoods—enabling participants to double their household earnings and achieve self-reliance.

3. **Promoting Entrepreneurship and Grassroots Innovation:**
   - Conducted training and awareness programs at leading colleges and universities, inspiring youth and rural communities to pursue entrepreneurship and become job creators in the agritech sector.
4. **Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment:**
   - Enabled women in rural regions to achieve monthly incomes of ₹10,000–₹15,000 through independent mushroom enterprises, fostering financial independence and social mobility.
5. **Converting Agricultural Waste into Nutrition:**
   - Implemented sustainable practices to transform agricultural waste into protein- and vitamin D-rich superfoods, addressing malnutrition and providing affordable nutrition to local communities.

Recognition:

- Winner, MANAGE Startup Awards 2022 (Government of India), for exemplary impact as an agri-entrepreneur driving innovation, sustainability, and empowerment in the Indian agriculture ecosystem.

Reference and Media Links

1. Empowering Women in Medicinal Mushroom Cultivation Across India – AESA Network
2. How a Woman in Uttarakhand Built a Mushroom Farming Enterprise – The Better India
3. Inspiring Story of Hiresha Verma – World Republic News
4. Success Story Coverage – News Express
5. Media Feature – Zee News (Hindi)
6. Television Interview – YouTube
7. Success Story – Kisan of India
8. Techie Turned Entrepreneur Empowering Women Farmers – YourStory
9. Media Feature – Facebook Story
10. Video Feature – YouTube

Vision for the Next Decade

Looking ahead, Dr. Verma aims to:

- Scale her training and enterprise model to reach **100,000 women and families** across India and South Asia.

- Make India a global hub for innovation, production, and export of medicinal mushrooms and functional food products.
- Mentor and inspire the next generation of rural women entrepreneurs, researchers, and change-makers.

Mentorship, Advocacy, and Global Leadership

Dr. Verma regularly advises policy-makers, educational institutions, and multilateral organizations on grassroots entrepreneurship and inclusive innovation. Her legacy is seen not only in statistics, but in the personal stories of transformation—and in the growing movement she has inspired across regions and sectors.

Her guiding philosophy remains:

"Nothing is impossible for a willing heart. Empowering women is the most sustainable way to build resilient communities and drive national progress."

5. Contact

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Closing Message

"Nothing is Impossible for a Willing Heart.

I do not just grow mushrooms—I grow dreams, resilience, and the belief that every woman, no matter where she starts, can change the world."