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Future food and nutritional challenges are greater than earlier—Prime Minister

"The National Agriculture Research System needs to be strengthened to meet the challenges of the years ahead. One requirement of this is financial resources. Our Government is committed to raising R&D spending on the whole to at least 2% of the GDP by the end of XII Plan from the current level of about 1%. Given the importance that agriculture has in achieving our national goals, we have to ensure that a significant proportion of increased R&D spending is directed to this sector" said the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh at the Golden Jubilee Convocation ceremony of Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), Pusa, New Delhi on 20 February 2012. The Prime Minister said that his government has been pursuing a policy to revitalize the farm sector and these policy incentives have resulted in turning the balance of trade in favour of agriculture.



He, however, pointed to the inadequacies in farm extension system saying the at least research and farm practices are not reaching the farmers with the speed or efficiency that is required.

The PM said that Indian institutions are large repository of knowledge and research which could be of interest to private sector and that private sector must be involved as partners in agricultural research and innovations.

Dr Manmohan Singh was awarded Doctorate of Science by IARI which was presented to him by Union Minister for Agriculture and Food Processing Industries, Shri Sharad Pawar. Mr Pawar was guest of honour at the ceremony.

The Prime Minister also pointed out that our farm economy needs greater injection of science and a knowledge-based approach to increasing incomes and productivity. "Both land and water productivity is limited and it is vital that we make progress in



agricultural technology which raises land productivity while allowing a significant reduction in water use per unit of output. We need to develop varieties which can ensure high yield while economizing on water and are also capable of withstanding water stress."

Acknowledging the contribution and involvement of women in farm sector, Dr Singh said that special efforts have to make the entire R&D chain more gender sensitive and give priority to technological options that reduce drudgery of women working in the farm.

Dr Singh congratulated Ph.D and M. Sc awardees students and wished them all luck in their future endeavour. Dr Singh also congratulated IARI for setting up new 'Centre for Environmental Science and Climate Resilient Agriculture.'

PM also presented the first Dr A B Joshi award instituted by IARI, Pusa New Delhi to Dr R S Paroda, Chairman, Haryana Farmers Commission on the occasion.

Shri Harish Rawat, Union Minister of State for Agriculture, Food Processing Industries and Parliamentary Affairs; Dr Charan Das Mahant, Union Minister of State for Agriculture, Food Processing Industries, Dr M S Swaminathan, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), Dr S Ayyappan, Secretary, DARE and Director General, ICAR, Deputy Director Generals of ICAR, Directors of ICAR institutes and senior officials were present on the occasion of Golden Jubilee of IARI.

Earlier, welcoming guests to the ceremony, IARI Director Dr H S Gupta said that the Institute has taken several steps to increase the food grain production and to expand food basket, while simultaneously promoting conservation agriculture. He appealed to the PM to increase investments in agriculture R&D so that our infrastructure is able to compete globally. Dr Gupta also pointed out that the Institute was committed to increasing the food security of the country as it had done by planting the seed of the First Green Revolution.

Conference of ICAR Directors and VCs of Agricultural Universities

'Globally, there is an increased interest in agricultural research and development because of the food concerns around the globe and escalating food prices', said Shri Sharad Pawar, Union Minister for Agriculture and Food Processing Industries. While inaugurating two-day Conference of ICAR Directors and Vice Chancellors of Agricultural Universities on 17 Feb 2012. He further added, in India, we have been constantly upgrading our resources to meet these challenges.

Shri Sharad Pawar congratulated Dr K L Chadha and Dr V P Singh for having been conferred with the prestigious Padma Shri award this year. It is a matter of great pride and honour for ICAR and I would like all of you to join me in giving a big round of applause for them, he said.

Speaking on the occasion Shri Pawar said that over 75% of the farmers are small or marginal land holders who depend on farming for livelihood. He also said, dry land agriculture which accounts for about 65% of total agriculture production including livestock is another major challenge at times when we are facing increasingly adverse effects of climate change.

Apart from financial support of Department of Agricultural Research and Education to the agricultural universities which has been increasing over periods, there is a need to enhance investment on agricultural research, education and extension by the respective State Governments, said Shri Pawar.

Union Minister emphasised that ICAR is devising innovative called 'Farmers First and Students Ready' programmes to improve the technology delivery and agricultural education with enhanced emphasis, he hoped, it would greatly improve the entrepreneurial skills of the agricultural graduates.



The Union Minister stated that life-cycle approach in research and development involving input-delivery, knowledge exchange, capacity building, post-harvest management and market linkage is an option for empowering the small holders with adequate income and livelihood security. In fact the Global forum for Agricultural Research Roadmap has proposed an inclusive, rolling process of reform and capacity development that aims to mobilize the full power of agricultural knowledge and innovation, towards meeting agriculture and food-related development needs, he said.

He appreciated the efforts of scientists who have decoded the pigeonpea genome, that would provide for development of tolerant and resistant varieties. Starch based films with nano cellulose from cotton waste, linseed bio-village concept, buffalo genomics and breeding of the marine fish, Silver Pompano are some of the other accomplishments, said Shri Pawar.

Dr Charan Das Mahant, Union Minister of State for Agriculture, Food Processing Industries conferred the Performance Prizes to four Agricultural Universities. The first prize conferred on Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur. Second prize was won by Central Agricultural University, Imphal. GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar and Dr Panjab Rao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola is joint winners of third prize.

Dr S Ayyappan, Secretary, DARE and Director General, ICAR highlighted the major achievements of the Council in agricultural research, education and extension during the year. Dr Ayyappan briefed various initiatives taken by the Council. Enhanced production coupled with productivity spurts has led the country to witness a record production of food grains during the year, he said.

Best Annual Report Awards were conferred upon Central Institute of Fresh Water Aquaculture, Bhubaneswar and National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy, New Delhi, for best annual reports under large and small institute category, respectively.

Sri Rajiv Mehrishi, Additional Secretary, DARE & Secretary, ICAR proposed vote of thanks. Vice-Chancellors of Agricultural Universities, Directors of ICAR institutes, Deputy Director Generals of ICAR, Zonal Project Directors, Project Coordinators and senior officials of the Council participated in the Conference.

Use new frontiers in nano-technology for specialized areas of agriculture and health—Shri Harish Rawat

'The new frontiers in nano-technology, for precise and result-oriented delivery systems, can help us in many specialized areas of agriculture and health. Issues like environmental safety and sustainability, through integrated pest management approaches are very important. Increased global awareness, and trade-linked compulsions on good agricultural practices, is required for Global Gap standards, for our farmers and entrepreneurs alike,' said Shri Harish Rawat, Union Minister of State for Agriculture, Food Processing Industries and Parliamentary Affairs. He was inaugurating Second International Conference on 'Agrochemicals Protecting Crops Health and Natural Environment—Role of Chemistry for Sustainable Agriculture (15-18 February)' organized at Pusa Campus.

'Demand of food grains in our country would be 257.35 million tons in 2016-17 and 294.97 million tons in 2026-27. The use of chemicals in agriculture and its adverse impact on the ecosystems is further complicating the overall scenario of food production, safety and sustainability. We have to tread the path with utmost dedication and commitment,' he added.



Shri Rawat also felicitated agricultural experts and Industrialists in the conference.

Earlier, Prof. V L Chopra, Former Member of Planning Commission urged to look into three major areas of concern—increasing load of agricultural chemicals causing soil and environmental problems, gradual increase in use of pesticides and lack of general awareness. He called for greater attention of scientists and academicians to address these issues. Dr John Unsworth, Chairman, International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry Committee on Crop Protection Chemistry highlighted the role of IUPAC.

Use Biotechnology tools to increase agricultural productivity

Prof. M S Swaminathan, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and Chairman, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation urged scientists and researchers to demystify the potential of biotechnology. He was chairing inaugural function of 'International Conference on Plant Biotechnology for Food Security: New Frontiers' (21-24 February). Conference was organized by the Society for Plant Biochemistry and Biotechnology (SPBB).

Prof. G S Khush, World Food Prize Laureate called for using bio-technology tools to increase agricultural productivity and getting nutritional security for the world. While presenting his overview on 'Role of Biotechnology in World Food Security' he emphasized on more use of biotechnology for more yield and crop protection.

Prof. S L Mehta, President, SPBB in his welcome address provided a glimpse of society and conference. He hoped that recommendations of conference will help in shaping sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture.

Dr H S Gupta, Director, IARI opined that more productivity can be achieved by breaking yield barriers and improving quality of crops by using new technology.

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