

English Translation of Speech delivered by

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

on

86th Foundation Day of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delh
(29 July 2014)

My dear colleagues from cabinet Shri Radha Mohan Singh Ji, Dr Sanjeev Ji, all dignatries present on the dais and agricultural science researchers! I humbly accept the respect given through the standing ovation by this august gathering, yet I feel that millions and millions of farmers of India who work hard to feed the nation deserve it more rightfully. We should honour those, today, who won awards and are involved in developmental activities in the nation. I feel privileged in honoring them and greet them from the bottom of my heart. Dr S Ayyappan gave a brief presentation on the achievements of ICAR. I have full faith that agriculture will move forward under his able guidance.

I have very high regards for the Indian farmers. Technologies developed after years of hard work of researchers are not immediately acceptable to farmers; they observe the results for one or two years only then they adopt these in their fields. The farmers are to be informed about the benefits of the technologies in a very simple, understandable language so that the new innovations are widely acceptable. Indian agriculture is handed over from generation to generation and very few farmers dare to break the traditional mold. Until and unless the farmer is sure that his experiment with new technologies will prove beneficial, he is not ready to adopt the new technologies. He observes the new agricultural practices adopted by the other co-farmers and if found these remunerative, adopts immediately. The scientific organizations have to be more careful and develop new technologies keeping in view the changing scenario. The climate is changing, resulting in amendments in earlier delineated climatic zones. The further agricultural research has to be done in view of this background.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research is completing 86 years of its existence. My suggestion is that the organization should set the goal, today itself, for the Centenary celebrations. In this endeavour the whole national agricultural research system, i.e. all the institutes, universities and agricultural colleges should work towards this goal of taking science to the farmers' fields in the next fourteen years. In these years the system should be able to achieve more than what has been achieved in the last 86 years because the resources, the scientific advancements and our capabilities have improved a thousand-times.

Science has touched new heights in recent years and similarly the matrix of global exchange of ideas has changed. Our farmers are working very hard and are able to feed the national as well as international population, but this profession has to be remunerative enough to fill their pockets also. If our farmer is able to feed the masses, but is not earning enough to fulfill his own family necessities, the conditions will not change as per our vision. We have to work towards this goal.

There would not be any increase in our agricultural land, but the number of families and the needs are ever increasing. To address these challenges we have to improve the soil fertility. There have been the traditional ways to make the land more fertile, but in this era the farmers cannot afford to apply these methods due to time and economic constraints. This needs the

scientific intervention. If a soil fertility improvement method involving traditional as well as scientific technique is developed it will be more acceptable to farmers. We have not only to improve the soil productivity in per unit area but also to reduce the crop duration time, say harvesting within 35 days instead of 45 days. We should be able to grow more crop from a unit area in lesser time without eroding the quality; like in case of short duration moong bean, productivity improved but the size of beans was smaller than normal crop resulting in a lower market price because the consumer has a set concept about the size and appearance of a crop and any reduction in that reduces the consumer acceptance. This is unacceptable from the farmers' point of view. Development of short- duration crops and improvement in farm productivity should be done without the erosion in the quality.

Water scarcity is the next big global challenge. Weather cycle is also changing. Now the challenge before us is to balance the water cycle and weather cycle. We have to manage the water scientifically. Rainwater harvesting, water conservation etc., are the issues in which we have to stir the common persons' conscience. The scientific discourses and seminars do serve some purpose, but it is public awareness about the water saving that can fully achieve the target. We go to a temple and feel that we should not spill the sacrament because it has God's blessings, similarly we have to safeguard the water and should not spill even a drop, water is in deed a blessing from the God. Every person should be aware of role of water conservation in life. In early 1930s, Gandhiji was residing near Sabarmati river, which flowed to the full brim at that time, he always said that if you require only half a glass of water do not fetch full glass and waste the rest of the half glass, should not waste water, it is blessing of God. The more the water conservation awareness among the masses the more will be the water availability. Our mission motto should be more crop per drop of water.

Besides land productivity, we have to improve production of the livestock also. We have a large population of dairy animals, but production of milk is not in the same proportion though the demand for milk is increasing and we do not have enough to supply. High milk producing animals should prominently feature in our general agricultural policy. Our veterinary scientists have done well in the area of animal health and production research but there is some gap in translating the technologies into real life scenario.

Scientific interventions and advances have changed the world but how to repeat the same in India is the challenge before us. If we are not able to connect the lab with land, whatever has been developed in the labs will not become part and parcel of common farmers' agricultural practices and would not be of good use. The increasing demand of agricultural produce is an opportunity for us and we should move fast and grab it. We have to strengthen the link through which the technologies available in the universities are made available to farmers. The faith that a scientist has for his technology should be reciprocated by the farmer also because only then he will be ready to take the risk and that would be the real return for the investment in agricultural research. Connect with the progressive farmers to transfer the new technology in the first place as a farmer has the risk taking trait engraved in his DNA. He is ready to experiment, but needs clear instructions. Is it possible for the universities to develop Progressive farmers' talent pool? Programmes can be developed by involving this talent pool and the universities should develop such network of talent pools in each area to use the same as as nodal agency for development. An agricultural university can have a radio station for broadcasting agricultural information. Students can also be involved in this programme. Farmers can be informed about the latest

findings. Through radio, information can be given to farmers on local weather, market intelligence and about any epidemic in the fields on an hourly basis. A student-driven agricultural programme can prove to be more powerful in reaching the end users than a costly one prepared by unconcerned multi-million media initiative. Taking steps in this direction will prove beneficial. Our students did serious research in last 50 years and if all these theses and research papers are digitized and made available for analysis, we can surely draw good results benefitting the nation. This whole research is an asset for the nation.

Even today our country is facing a shortage of pulses and edible oil. Ours is an agriculture- based economy but we are still importing edible oil. This problem should be approached in mission mode with “zero edible oil import” target. All the stakeholders should work towards the success of this mission.

Green and White Revolutions are our proud moments in agricultural research. By bringing in the Blue Revolution if fisheries and aquaculture, we should pay our respect to the blue colour of the wheel in our Tricolour. We should harvest the ocean wealth also. Seaweeds can be used as good organic manure in our fields and plan should be made for full utilization of the coastal areas for seaweed cultivation. There is great potential for harvest of new pharma chemicals from the sea weeds. Ornamental fishes and pearls, having big export market need to be cultured at mass scale.

We are gifted with the vast Himalayas bestowed with herbs having unique medicinal values. China having a lesser area of Himalayas is one of the top countries in ethenic medicine market and we the Ayurvedic medicine pioneers are sliding down. We should utilize the Himalyan states for scientific medicinal plant cultivation.

With hard work, proper vision and planning for the future we can achieve spectacular goals at national and global levels. The awardees deserve accolades for their achievements. I thank ICAR for giving me the opportunity to be amongst you. Best wishes for the future. Thank you!
