



Three Day National Seminar on Higher Education in India : Challenges and Prospects

13,14,15 December,2011



AGRICULTURAL HIGHER EDUCATION AND FOOD SECURITY

Though independent India has not had large scale famines, wide spread hunger prevails. According to one estimate almost 87 per cent of the rural population gets less than the rural cut – off of 2400 calories/day, and 64.5 per cent of the urban population gets less than the urban cut-off of 2100 calories/day. According to the multiple poverty index the levels of poverty in the country are alarming, in the range of 64.5 crores or 55.4 per cent of the population. The dominant trends in Indian Agriculture are the following:

1. Growth rate in cereal production reduced from 4 % in 1980's to 1% now.
2. Indian population will be 153 crore superceding China's likely population of 146 crore by 2030.
3. Public investment in Agriculture dropped from 3% to GDP in 1980 to 1% now.
4. Growth rate in Agriculture reduced from 5% in 1980 to 1.8% now.
5. Contribution of primary sector to GDP declined from 56% in 1980's to 18% now.
6. To meet the increasing food and nutritional requirements of the population, production of foods including cereals, pulses, oil seeds, vegetables, fruits, tubers and roots will have to be augmented.

India has a very strong agricultural education system in the country consisting of one Central Agricultural University, forty-five State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) and four National Institutes of Indian Council of Agricultural Research having the status of Deemed to be University.

The 20th century witnessed radical developments in Science and Technology. These

Developments had an impact on the social and economic changes that took place in the world. Such changes gradually influence the day to day life of people at the grassroots levels. Agriculture related science and technology had a major impact. Agricultural education and

extension have been geared to harness the modern science and technology for higher productivity and production. This substantially helped to reduce the food scarcity in India. But sustainable food production is still the primary pursuit. Economic liberalization and WTO regime pose a big challenge to Indian agriculture. To cope up with changed global scenario, agricultural education and extension would have to be redefined. This is a major concern for academics and policy makers. Approach to our own problems will have to be worked out. This, in turn, warrants reforms in agricultural educational systems.

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