OPENING REMARKS*

Revered Vice-President, distinguished delegates and friends,

It gives me great pleasure to be present here today on the happy occasion of the inauguration of the Silver Jubilee Session of the Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics. This Society has been very fortunate in having the late Dr. Rajendra Prasad as its founder President. Rajendra Babu, not only founded this Society but also took a personal interest in guiding and encouraging its activities over a period of 15 years since its inception in 1947. I took over the Presidentship of this Society in 1968 when I was the Union Minister for Food and Agriculture. I found that the Society had been doing good work for the cause of agricultural statistics. In the course of the years I watched with great interest the deliberations of this Society.

The objectives of this Society are to promote the study as well as research in statistics as applied to agriculture, animal husbandry, agricultural economics and other related fields. The membership of this Society includes among others agricultural statisticians and economists who are interested in improving the role of statistics in the context of agricultural research and development. The Society has been bringing out a journal of its own which on the completion of 25 years today is appearing in its Sliver Jubilee number on the occasion. The Society also encourages research workers in statistics by awarding prizes on the publication of articles of sufficiently high standard and merit in its journal. It has set up a research unit for undertaking the analysis of valuable data in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry statistics. It has been organising annual conferences in different parts of the country wherein besides the presentation of scientific papers by research workers, symposia are also arranged for the mutual discussion of all those interested in them. The Society also organises from time to time seminars for discussing various problems involved in the planning of agriculture. It maintains a collaborative spirit by associating other societies such as the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics.

*Opening remarks by Shri Jagjivan Ram, Minister of Defence and President of the Society at the inauguration of the Silver Jubilee Session of the Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics at New Delhi on 24th March, 1972.

I am very happy to find that the Society remembers its founder President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad by instituting a lecture known as "Dr. Rajendra Prasad Memorial Lecture" which is delivered on the occasion of the annual conferences of the Society. I am also very happy to know that the Society has recently instituted another memorial lecture called "Dr. Panse Memorial Lecture" to perpetuate the memory of late Dr. V.G. Panse in recognition of his valuable services to the Society and for playing a significant role in the research and development in agricultural statistics. It is heartening to see that in this session two top-most scientists in the country are delivering these two lectures on topics which are of great importance in the context of the present situation in our country.

We have made a great headway in agricultural development in our country. The food production has increased, thanks to the introduction of high yielding varieties of seeds. We are also heading towards a similar break-through in milk production by introducing cross-breeding of the Indian Cattle with exotic breeds. The Government has introduced various intensive agricultural development programmes like Intensive Agricultural District Programme, Intensive Cattle Development Programme and Intensive Poultry Development Programme. In all these efforts which are aimed towards the improvement of agriculture and animal husbandry in our country, the responsibilities of Agricultural Statisticians have tremendously increased. This is because for a proper planning of any research and development programme as well as for a critical appraisal of the data flowing therefrom, the statistical principles and appropriate statistical methods are required to be used. The Society can serve as a very useful forum for enabling the Agricultural Statisticians and others to discuss and solve these problems.

India is predominantly an agricultural country. In rural areas more than 80 per cent of the population directly depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Most of these people are either small or marginal farmers with five acres or less of land to cultivate. Unless the economic status of these farmers are improved we cannot hope to achieve what is called these days "growth with social justice". In order to achieve this task it is very essential to know the distribution of such farmers at a micro-level according to the size of holding, their cultivation practices, their income and employment potential. It is also desirable to work out optimum income plans for such farmers which may be altogether different from those of big farmers.

The statisticians with background in economics can conduct sample surveys to provide information on the problems of small farmers.

While the Green Revolution has made the country nearly self-sufficient in foodgrains, we are still very much deficient in milk production. I am told that while the per capita availability of milk is only 126 gm. per day, the recommended requirement of protein as well as energy by milk can be met if each adult takes about 280 gm. of milk per day. This obviously calls for increasing the milk production rapidly. This can be achieved by a rapid improvement of the genetic potential of animals through adoption of scientific cross-breeding with exotic breeds. A basic question in this effort is to find out how much of exotic blood should be introduced in the new cross-bred animals. Agricultural Statisticians well-versed in genetics and breeding can play an important role in answering this question, as well as in devising suitable statistical techniques for measuring the amount of genetic improvement affected by these efforts. Similar remarks also apply to sheep, pigs and poultry.

At present dairy farming is not profitable to farmers since the cost of producing milk is substantial. With the introduction of high yielding animals, this cost is likly to decrease. However it can also he decreased by supplying nutrients to animals through fodder. In our country there is hardly any systematic method for production of feed and fodder required for the animals. It is very necessary to gather reliable information on the extent of area under grazing available in the existing pastures as well as to take steps for introduction of cultivated fodder production in the country. The Statisticians can be of great help in developing techniques for estimating the area under grazing land and its utilization by conducting appropriate sample surveys. They can also evolve techniques for the estimation of production of cultivated fodder crops for livestock consumption. These efforts will go a long way in inducing farmers for taking up dairying.

A serious draw-back in the present method of compiling and publishing agricultural statistics is that there is a considerable delay in bringing out the results obtained. The compilation of these statistics can, however, be expedited if a certain amount of automation is introduced in compilation work with the help of the present day computers.

I am sure the Society which has been furthering the cause of agricultural statistics in the country will serve a very important forum for mutual exchange of ideas and discussion in regard to the current

problems confronting the country, some of which I have outlined above. I hope the deliberations of this conference will help in bringing home to the agricultural statisticians and all those attending this conference, the need for pursuing study and research in Agricultural Statistics with a greater zeal and enthusiasm than in the past. I extend to you all my best of wishes in your endeavour.