PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS*

By

O. P. Gautam**

Hon'ble Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Hon'ble Agriculture Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Dr. Prem Narain, Mr. Negi, distinguished guests, participants, ladies and gentlemen;

First, on behalf of the Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics, as also on my own behalf, I wish to extend a very warm welcome to you all to this 37th Annual Conference of the Society. We are particularly greatful to the Hon'ble Chief Minister and Hon'ble Agriculture Minister for their gracious presence.

I feel greatly privileged to have this opportunity to participate in this Conference of Agricultural Statisticians. As an user agronomist I have greatly benefitted from my association with Agricultural Statisticians.

A word about the Society : This Society was founded in 1947. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then Union Minister of Food and Agriculture and later the President of India was its founder President. It is one of the best managed professional societies in the country today. Its main objectives are to promote the growth of agricultural statistics and its use in agriculture and allied fields. The Society has lofty traditions and by all accounts the Society has done commendable work over past 35 years. In addition to organising Annual Symposia and Conferences, the Society brings out the Journal of Agricultural Statistics which has large number of subscribers from both within and outside the country. The Society also brings out ad-hoc publications from time to time and has conducted studies about a dozen topics of national importance. The Society has a research unit which carries out investigations on problems of national importance under the guidance of a Research Direction Committee.

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* at the 37th Annual Conference of the Society held in October, 1983 at Shimla (Himachal Pradesh).

** President of the Society and Director General, ICAR.

The Society organises two symposia every year at the time of the annual conference. This year the Symposium deals with the statistical problems associated with Hill Area Development Programme and, design and selection procedures in animal experiments. These are obviously very topical and relevent themes.

Perhaps you are aware that the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, is the appex body at the national level, with principal mandate to promote, aid and coordinate research and higher education in the areas of agricultural and animal sciences, fisheries and agricultural engineering etc. From the very beginning the Council has been taking active interest in application of statistical methods to agricultural research. The statistical section in the Council was created as early as 1930 which later developed into a full-fledged Statistical Research Institute (IARS) in 1959. Further re-organisation was done in 1970 and the Institute was renamed as the Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute (IASRI). The Institute offers post-doctoral degree programmes at MSc and Ph.D levels. The degree is being awarded by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute which has a deemed University status. IASRI also offers Post-graduate Diploma and Certificate Courses as well as training programmes for both professional and in-service candidates.

The Institute deals with areas such as experimental designs, sampling methods, computer programming etc. The Institute also participates in a number of All India Coordinated Research Projects along with Agronomists and Soil Scientists etc. The Institute has trained a large number of statisticians who man various positions in the Government departments, Agricultural Universities and other institutions all over the country.

The Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics has had the fullest support both from the IASRI as well as from the ICAR. In fact the contributions made by the Society and those made by the Institute have been complementary. With the establishment of the departments of Agricultural Statistics in the Agricultural Universities, the Society has had new linkages and new relationships to establish.

Permit me to express my appreciations of the role the agricultural statisticians have played by providing powerful support and service to agricultural research and planning. Soon after

Dr. Fisher made his monumental contribution in agricultural statistics, India was one of the first countries to initiate and organise research and training programmes in agricultural statistics. Dr. Mahalanobis, Dr. Sukhatme and Dr. Panse made significant contributions in the areas of sample survey and experimental designs. They effectively applied mathematical approaches for the solution of biological problems.

Today, we have entered an era of fast developing science and technology; of complex agricultural research and experimentation. We are very much in the computer age. Computer simulation techniques, mathematical programming methods and optimisation techniques are being increasingly adopted. On the one hand the use of more complex experimental designs and more sophisticated statistical tools is on the increase, on the other, there is demand to simplify experimental designs and techniques so that more and more biologists may be able to utilise statistical techniques without necessarily depending on statisticians.

It would appear that future advance may not be possible unless we ensure greater integration and compatibility between mathematical approaches and biological objectives and bring about a re-orientation in our training programmes. I hope this aspect will receive some consideration at this conference.

Since we are at the threshold of the Seventh Plan, I am reminded of the inadequacy of some of the basic data and information that we need for proper planning and programming. Perhaps we need to break away from our conventional approaches and devise newer approaches and methodologies to cope up with the complexities of future research and development. There are many fields which have not felt the impact of statistics. There is immense scope for application of statistical methods to study problems in animal sciences, fisheries resources, monitoring, low utilization of irrigation potential, improvement of live stock, incidence of pests and diseases, Crop-weather relationship and viability of crop/cattle insurance scheme etc. Hill agriculture itself has special features such as excessive soil and water erosion, perinnial trees, terraced fields, mixed farming and the complex toposequence. These characteristics would necessiate development of suitable statistical methods.

We are all aware that usefulness of the data is lost if these are not processed, interpreted or utilised in time. Lack of equipment

for fast processing and analysing the data used to be one of the handicaps hitherto. With the availability of the fast data processing equipments and computers it shall be possible to ensure timely utilisation of available data and information and to advice suitable systems for research management, resource management and institutional management. I am sure that this and many other aspects would receive your consideration during these two days.

I wish the deliberations of the Conference all success. I thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen for your patient hearing.