INAUGURAL ADDRESS

by

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President of India

at the inauguration of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the

INDIAN SOCIETY OF AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

It gives me immense pleasure to associate myself with the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics. It is a happy coincidence that the establishment of your society coincided with the dawn of the era of freedom and renewal in India.

Our national leaders were deeply conscious of the centrality of agriculture and the rural sector in our economy, indeed, in the life of our nation. Mahatma Gandhi had said in "Bapu Ke Aashirvaad" on 12th July, 1945: "Just as the universe is contained in the self, so is India contained in the villages". On several occasions, while referring to eighty five percent of India's population which lived in the villages, Bapu had stressed the need to remove the "deep and ever-deepening poverty among the masses".

A similar sentiment was expressed by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, then Minister of Food, while presiding over the first annual meeting of the Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics on 11th December, 1947: [I quote]

> "The greatest problem with which India is faced is the problem of food, but when we approach that problem with the view to finding a solution, the very first difficulty which we meet is the lack of statistical knowledge..." [Unquote]

The Government of free India was acutely aware that India would prosper and progress only if her village life was transformed. It was, thus, natural for our rural sector to receive priority, national focus and attention.

During the five decades after Independence, our agricultural sector has received sustained attention. Agrarian reforms initiated in the 1950s and the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s sought to effect a material improvement in the lives of the people in vast regions of our country. The use of high yielding varieties of seeds, particularly of wheat and some other foodgrains, has been possible because the importance of harnessing science and technology in agricultural production is increasingly being appreciated.

We are also developing a reliable and wide-ranging information base comprising a critical input in policy formulation and decision-making in agricultural growth. The lack of statistical knowledge, which Rajendra Babu referred to in 1947 has been made up to an appreciable extent.

Yet, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels and remain complacent. The Green Revolution needs to be sustained. The rapid growth of our population has eroded some of the fruits of the green revolution and even today there is widespread malnutrition and undernourishment in our population. The urgent task before us is to maintain the momentum generated by the green revolution. We have to expand the spatial spread of high yielding varieties of seeds, develop new and more productive seeds for different crops, devise more efficient cropping patterns, sustainable and sensitive to agro-climatic conditions of specific regions of our country. We also have to enhance production in related areas of agriculture, including animal husbandry, horticulture, floriculture and aquaculture. The immense possibilities which exist in the field of bio-technology and tissue culture need to be tapped fully. Furthermore, efforts to strengthen the links between industry and agriculture, through the development of agro-processing industries, require to be stepped up.

The continuing challenges faced in our agricultural sector call for a corresponding effort by our scientific community to intensify their research and understanding of the diverse factors which impinge on agricultural development. We need to further improve and expand the impressive existing resource base of agricultural statistics. I understand that the development of statistical techniques for data generation together with computer technology have resulted in major advances in our understanding of the ground realities in this sector and in the evaluation of policy options. Greater refinement and improvement in existing methodologies have closed information gaps in a situation where the environmental, technological and economic factors are rapidly changing.

We should encourage the application of computer simulation techniques, better forecasting techniques and remote sensing technology in our efforts for sustainable development in the agricultural sector. Such devices and mechanisms can play a vital role in the development of early warning systems whereby the effects of pests and diseases on crops, could be known in advance, and thus controlled. These also assist in a more accurate estimation of the output and productivity patterns. It is, therefore, essential to promote close and intensive collaboration between our institutions for agricultural research and statistics as well as those dealing with space technology and meteorological observations.

In addition to focussing on high technology areas for data collection and analysis, we must try and ensure that the actual cultivator, the tiller of the

soil is himself encouraged to collect and maintain statistics relating to his own arable land. Extension workers should be of assistance to our farmers in this area since it would enable them in adopting a more informed approach to farming, where each individual farmer could draw and improve upon his earlier experience. We should enlist the support of Panchayati Raj institutions in this task. Our agricultural universities too, could undertake pilot projects in some villages.

Another area in which your society could play a role is in the dissemination of the results of statistical analysis in a manner which is easy to comprehend. This information must reach the cultivators, extension agencies and government departments which are most directly involved in the work of enhancing productivity and output in the rural sector. Here again, we should fully seize the opportunities provided by Panchayati Raj mechanisms which could become catalysts for transmitting information and knowledge for enhancing productivity and ensuring sustainability of our agricultural production.

It is the quality of our human resources which determine the strength of our systems and programmes. India is proud of her vast pool of highly technical trained manpower. The calibre and competence of our professionals in diverse spheres and particularly, in the areas of science and technology, mathematics, statistics and computer software is recognized throughout the world. Dr. G.R. Seth is an eminent statistician who has been honoured with the Sankhyiki Bhushan Award for his contributions of immense value in the field of agricultural statistics. I extend to him my cordial felicitations.

The Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute has rendered invaluable service in promoting research, education and training in the area of agricultural statistics and in the application of information technology to this important sphere of endeavour. The Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics, through its annual conferences and other activities, provides an important forum for an exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences among research scholars, students and other professionals. I congratulate all those associated with these institutions.

With these words I am happy to inaugurate the fiftieth annual conference of the Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics and wish your deliberations all success.

JAI HIND