

Address given by Shri C. Subramaniam, Union Minister for Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Co-operation at the meeting of the Governing Body of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research on the 29th March, 1966 at New Delhi.

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Friends,

I have much pleasure in welcoming you to this first meeting of the Governing Body of the reorganised I.C.A.R. Since some of you may not be quite familiar with the guiding principles embodying our attempts to reorganise and revitalise the Indian Council of Agricultural Research so as to enable it to stimulate and serve agricultural research better, I shall briefly outline the genesis of this move and its present state. Reviews of the agricultural research work in progress in our country have been made periodically by various scientific teams during the last 10 years. From time to time, certain improvements had been introduced into the working of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research on the basis of the suggestions made by such teams, which have all felt that I.C.A.R. should become an effective instrument for coordinating research on agriculture and animal husbandry in the country. These changes, however, had only a marginal effect in achieving an effective coordination of research and integration of work in the different scientific disciplines. The last Research Review Team led by Dr. Marion Parker of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in its report submitted in 1963, therefore, suggested more fundamental alternations in the structure and scope of activities of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. This Team wanted to achieve two main purposes. First the research work in progress under (a) what are currently termed as the subordinate offices of the Department of Agriculture which include institutes like the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, the Indian Veterinary Research Institute and the National Dairy Research Institute, (b) PIRCOM centres and certain other institutes directly managed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, (c) Commodity Institutes like those on jute, arecanut, coconut, tobacco, etc., managed by separate Commodity Committees, (d) Agricultural Universities, and (e) State Governments should all become part of an integrated set-up and should become instilled with a sense of common purpose. Secondly, the administrative and organisational structure of the I.C.A.R. should be modified in such a way that the administrative part of the machinery becomes subservient to the scientific and technical part. In other words, I.C.A.R. should become an effective scientific body so that it could provide the leadership necessary for stimulating major research break-throughs.

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2. During the last two years, we have been actively engaged in taking the steps needed to implement these important suggestions and bring into existence a "new" I.C.A.R. The changes went through the following steps. Following the approval of the cabinet of the reorganisation proposals, we appointed an eminent scientist as the Director-General of the "I.C.A.R."; thereby replacing the tradition that such a post is to be occupied only by an administrator. Secondly, we proceeded with the dissolution of the various Commodity Committees and transferred the control of the research institutes run by them to the ICAR. Thirdly, we arranged for the effective technical supervision of the work in progress at such of the PIRRCOM centres which could not be amalgamated with the State research institutions, by placing these centres under the technical control of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute. Fourthly, we transferred the Section in the Department of Agriculture dealing with the centrally-run institutes to the control of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. As a last step in the complete integration of these institutes with the rest of the agricultural research set-up of the ICAR, we have recently requested all the employees of these institutes to join the ICAR service. We have assured them that by joining the ICAR service, the rights and privileges to which they are entitled to as Government employees, will not be in any way affected. When this process is finally completed, we should have a well knit and unified research organisation which brings within one frame institutes which were formerly under diverse administrative and technical authorities.

3. Having attempted to set our own house in order, we gave thought to the problem of more active and effective relationship between State, University and ICAR research institutions. For this purpose we have formulated a series of All-India Coordinated Projects in twenty major crops of the country. These projects were drawn up by groups of scientists endowed with expert knowledge in the crops concerned. These All-India Coordinated Projects will all be implemented during the Fourth Plan and they envisage the setting up of many regional stations in the different States. These stations will be under the administrative control of the States concerned but will be subject to an over-all technical coordination. The day-to-day coordination work will be discharged by whole-time Project Coordinators who will be scientists with out-standing records of service. For ensuring the smooth functioning of these projects, a Memorandum of Understanding has been drawn up for being executed by the ICAR and the States concerned. The draft Memorandum of Understanding has already been approved by most of the States and I am sure the few doubts expressed by the others could be cleared soon. This Memorandum would help to facilitate more close cooperation among the personnel employed in an All-India Research Project, irrespective of their location.

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4. The constitution of the ICAR Society has been modified in such a way that the ICAR will be able to assume its enlarged responsibilities as well as protect the service rights and conditions of the numerous scientists and administrative employees who will join the ICAR.

In the composition of the new Governing Body we have attempted to secure the services of eminent scientists, agriculturists with wide experience and representatives of Parliament and sister Ministries. I am very grateful to you for accepting our invitation and giving your time for this very important cause.

5. The changes to which I have made a reference so far have been brought about in less than a year. I wish to pay a tribute to all those who have worked hard and with devotion and dynamism to transform the organisational set up of I.C.A.R. I also wish to place on record my deep appreciation of the work done by the Panels of Scientists in Agriculture and Animal Husbandry attached to the Department of Agriculture which have helped in many ways to enliven our research activity and canalize our resources in the most productive areas of investigation.

6. During the last two years, I have talked often about the need for generating a better research climate in our laboratories through instilling respect for academic freedom. Hopes have hence been raised and many scientists have been wondering whether these hopes will be fulfilled. Agricultural scientists have languished for a long time under neglect and lack of both encouragement and opportunities to reveal their skill. They are still the lowest paid in the country although their work has the greatest significance for our economy and freedom. To cite a simple example, the scientist who played a major role in evolving hybrid jowar, which is promising to revolutionise jowar production in the country, is employed on a salary of Rs.700-1250. Even those who produced and sold the seeds of this hybrid have made several lakhs profit in a year. The profit to the country as a whole when seeds are available for growing in large areas would amount to many crores of rupees. I do not think that in any other field of scientific activity there is such a wide disparity between what one gives and what he is given in return. This condition must change if we are to retain and attract competent brains in the service of agriculture. Even if agricultural scientists are not paid more than other scientists, they should not get less. I do hope that the ICAR will soon introduce an Agricultural Research Service on the model of the agricultural research service of the United Kingdom and thereby offer better scales of pay and service conditions to its employees. If this is not done soon, agricultural scientists will lose faith in our pronouncements concerning the priority which the Government is planning to give to agriculture in the Fourth Plan. What we do today will not only be of immediate consequence but would also determine whether or not the brighter students in our schools and colleges would take to applied biological research, a factor

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of vital importance to the future of our agriculture and animal husbandry. The Panel of Agricultural Scientists has already provided the basic principles for the constitution of the Agricultural Research Service and I would like to see this service introduced within the next few months.

7. I wish to suggest for your consideration a few principles upon which the ICAR ought to build in the future. First, the ICAR should follow the principle which the late Dr. Bhabha called "Growing Science." This implies that we will not build large new institutes and look for competent persons to work there, but would rather build institutes around men of competence. This principle is the same as that underlying the Max Planck Institute in Germany, namely "The Kaiser Wilhelm Society shall not first build an Institute for research and then seek out the suitable man but shall first pick up an outstanding man, and then build an institute for him." Secondly, control over administrative processes at all levels must remain in the hands of research scientists. Thirdly, each constituent research laboratory must be given an opportunity to develop its own administrative practices in accordance with its own individual needs. While policy decisions must rest in the hands of scientists, an efficient administrative cadre must be built up in all research institutes so that the administration of the institution runs smoothly without the scientist becoming lost to science. Therefore, coincident with the introduction of an Agricultural Research Service, it is important to revise the scales of pay and the service conditions of the administrative personnel thereby making them an effective instrument for the better administration and service of science.

8. The Agricultural Research Review Team, which suggested the pattern of reorganisation which we have now implemented, also recommended that the IARI., NDRI., and IVRI should be declared as institutes of national importance and facilities created in them commensurate with the implication of such a declaration. These institutes were specifically mentioned for being accorded such a status because they are involved not only in research work but also in training a large number of postgraduate students. The Indian Agricultural Research Institute has already been invested with the power and status of a University. The other two institutes could also be gradually developed to the same status. We would need for implementing all our research programmes successfully and for transmitting speedily the research information to the farmers, a very large number of trained personnel; in fact a primary requisite for the success and spread of scientific agriculture would be both a dynamic research programme and an effective extension agency. Extension man should be able to demonstrate what the new agronomy employing high-yielding varieties and hybrids can do to transform our rural scene and to break the "yield dilemma", as I called it at another meeting. I am glad that the Indian Council of Agricultural Research would take special interest in strengthening and expanding agricultural education in the country.

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I would suggest that an agricultural research policy resolution embodying all the decisions of Government for strengthening agricultural research and declaring that the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, the Indian Veterinary Research Institute and the National Dairy Research Institute are considered as Institutes of national importance be drafted immediately and placed in Parliament. This would provide the much needed psychological impetus to our research workers.

9. Our food problem has always been discussed only in terms of quantity. Naturally, quantity has to be first satisfied before we think of quality. Nevertheless, the general strength and energy of our population would grow only if the nutritional quality of the food is considerably improved. Animal products like milk, butter, cheese and eggs as well as fishes should be made available in large quantities and at a lower price. For this, we will have to improve the production of all these commodities. Research in the field of animal husbandry and dairying has even been more neglected than crop husbandry. It is time that this situation is mended.

10. Lastly, I would like you to consider ways of giving a momentum to certain aspects of research which have a vital significance in the context of our immediate food problem. As you know, we have evolved what is known as the "new strategy of agriculture" for the purpose of increasing food production substantially during the next five years. This strategy is based upon recent research findings that dwarf varieties of wheat and rice and hybrids of jowar, bajra and maize, when grown under suitable conditions of soil fertility and water management, could give yields of the order of 5 to 6 tons per hectare. We are yet to discover the most efficient and economic method of fertiliser application and also the optimum use of water. We are yet to identify all the factors responsible for the occurrence of low plant populations in our farmers' fields which diminish the return from the fertiliser applied. These are some of the urgent problems to which answers and solutions ought to be found as quickly as possible. Research on such topics should be handled in such a way that we will have all the information we need within a year. Another aspect of research which should be accorded priority relates to the exploration of possible avenues for promoting exports and substituting imports. An excellent paper on this topic had been prepared by the Scientists' Panel and I hope action would be initiated in implementing the suggestions contained in that note. Animal husbandry research is by its very nature slow in pace and it is hence all the more important that not a day is lost in infusing a new dynamism in this area of research.

11. If we are able to instil a new spirit of enthusiasm and dedicated endeavour in our research institutions, attract the better quality of our students to the cause of agricultural science and evolve suitable priorities in the context of our national requirements, the effort which has gone into the reorganisation of the ICAR would have served an important national purpose and would occupy a significant place in the history of our agriculture. You are, therefore, helping in a very vital task and I do hope that from our meetings, new ideas and fresh inspirations will flow.

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