

M. S. Swaminathan

Indian Council of Agricultural Research
Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi-110001

August 8, 1977

Subject: Initiation of action for appointing a successor

Dear Sir,

I accepted the position of Director General, ICAR and Secretary to the Government of India for a period of only five years with effect from January 14, 1972. The late Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad, the then Minister of Agriculture was kind enough to record on the relevant file this request of mine.

2. A little over a year ago in a letter addressed to Shri Jagjivan Ram, the then Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation with a copy to the Secretary to the then Prime Minister, I requested that appropriate steps be taken to nominate a successor since I was due to complete five years of service on 13.1.1977. Shri Jagjivan Ram, however, suggested in writing that I should indicate another term acceptable to me. Since I did not do so, he very generously recorded that "I quite appreciate his reservation in the matter, the appointment of Dr. Swaminathan as Director General, ICAR may be extended beyond 13.1.1977 for a further period of five years." Soon after passing these orders, Shri Jagjivan Ram resigned from the then Government.

3. I am deeply conscious of the trust implied in the orders of the former Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation and am very grateful for it. However, my conviction that in such positions there should be rotation once in 5 to 6 years remains unaltered. References to this conviction of mine had also been made in Parliament by the late Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and by the ICAR Enquiry Committee in their report. Hence, after your distinguished predecessor Shri Parkash Singh Badal joined as Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation, I apprised him in writing in May, 1977, with a copy to the Prime Minister, of my earlier request that a successor may be found so as to enable me to return to a research and teaching career. I was informed by Shri K. P. Singh, Secretary, ICAR, that he had put up my letter to Shri Badal, but the decision had been deferred. Shri K.P. Singh has since informed me that he has shown you the relevant file.

4. I am writing this to request you to pass orders for the early identification of a successor so that he could be in a position as soon as possible or at the latest by 14.1.1978 when I will be completing 6 years of service in my present post. Since the VI Plan formulation is to start soon, it will be appropriate that the scientist who has to play a key role in implementing programmes of agricultural research and education during the VI Plan period is also involved at the Plan formulation stage.

5. ICAR is probably the second largest organisation in agricultural research in the world in terms of the number of qualified scientists associated with it. More important, it has been able to foster a fair degree of integration between research, education and extension education. Central Institutes and Agricultural Universities have been welded together into a symbiotic working partnership through All-India Co-ordinated Research Projects. A beginning has also been made towards fostering an integrated approach to crop-livestock-fish production systems in different agro-ecological and socio-cultural milieus. The data from the whole-village operational research projects of ICAR are designed to assess the untapped yield reservoir existing at current levels of technology in different farming systems. These projects will help in identifying the constraints which prevent benefits from the new technology accruing to small and marginal farmers and landless labour. The organisation of Krishi Vigyan Kendras based on the principle of learning by doing and the identification of breakthrough points for generating opportunities for gainful employment on the basis of an integrated analysis of the material, biological and human resources of an area are among ICAR's recent contributions towards bridging the prevailing gap between the capacity to grow food and the ability to purchase and eat food on the part of a considerable proportion of our population. Steps have also been taken to strengthen mission-oriented basic research so that there is a regular flow of new technology which alone can help us to grow more and more food from less and less land in the years to come.

6. Science and education are creative activities. They require men and women of integrity, dedication, scholarship and an attitude of mind where work and recreation are synonymous. An organisation dealing with science and education should have a form which is appropriate to its functions. The ICAR, in my view, has fortunately now achieved the desired synchrony between its organisational structure and its research and educational mandate. It has a structure which enables it to maintain continuous contact with the policy maker, on the one hand, and the farmer, who is the user and hence the ultimate judge of the value of agricultural research, on the other hand. Its structure also permits the speedy rectification of deficiencies as and when they come to light. The organisation of a Department of Agricultural Research and Education to provide the needed Governmental support and linkages to ICAR has been extremely valuable. Above all, ICAR has developed a personnel policy for its scientists which will enable a young scientist entering the Agricultural Research Service to get the highest salary possible in our public services without changing his or her field of specialisation and without shifting to managerial and administrative posts merely for receiving a better salary. Opportunities for career advancement, irrespective of the occurrence of vacancies, through a system of assessment should lead to each scientist competing with his or her own post,

rather than with colleagues and to the acceptance of the principle that " all rights accrue from a duty well done". Horizontal and vertical mobility has been rendered possible and helping tribal and neglected regions has been made a service duty. In the years to come, I have little doubt that this contribution of ICAR to personnel management will be regarded as a significant milestone in the organisation of science in the country, provided there is no deviation from or dilution of these basic principles.

7. The new personnel policies of ICAR are designed to foster cooperation in the place of competition. I will not be honest to myself or to the organisation if I do not admit that the progress in achieving this aim has been slow. Authority and accountability are yet to be linked at all levels. The attention given in some Institutes to enabling every staff member to give of his or her best, is also not adequate. I do recognise that it is probably too soon to expect that the changes in attitude visualised in the new policies leading to scientists competing with their own record rather than with each other and to the acceptance of the principle that rights and responsibilities are inseparable, become part of the working culture of the organisation. ICAR has already started the practice of providing training in management to Directors of Central Institutes. When the Central Staff College for Agriculture becomes fully operational and starts regular training programmes for staff members at different levels, there is likely to be considerable improvement in the efficiency of institute and project management.

8. A trend to be guarded against is the attempt by a few 'scientists' to seek recognition for their work by means other than establishing their merit among scientists of the relevant discipline or among professional bodies and scientific academies. Unchecked, this can do incalculable harm. Fortunately, your distinguished predecessors and you yourself have already made it clear that such unethical tactics will not pay.

9. It has been a privilege to work with the ICAR and the Ministry of Agriculture during the last 5½ years. I have seen during this period how the mood in Krishi Bhavan serves as a barometer of the nation's well-being. The drought of 1972-73 leading to tremendous efforts to save men and cattle; the efforts of 1974 and later years to insulate, to the extent possible, crop production from violent price and weather fluctuations; the emergence of the principal elements of a national food security system and the recent recognition accorded to agriculture as not merely an instrument for producing more food, but also as a principal generator of more rural income and employment, have all helped to widen my understanding of the processes of change and development. Above all, the opportunity to come into contact with farming families in different parts of the country and observe how they till the soil and tend the animals and keep smiling in the midst of floods and drought has instilled in me greater humility.

10. In my limited sphere, whatever I have been able to do is because of the guidance and encouragement I have received from you and from the past Presidents and Vice-President of ICAR, from the Members of the ICAR Society and Governing Body, Vice-Chancellors and staff of Agricultural Universities, from every one of my colleagues, both scientific and administrative, in the organisation and from my colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation as well as in the Government as a whole. I shall try to repay this debt of gratitude by continuing to serve our agriculture and the rural poor particularly through working on crop improvement and rural development systems based on the principles of synergy and symbiosis.

11. May I conclude by praying for success in your and the Government's mission of ushering in the day when no child, woman or man in our land will go to bed hungry and when the right to work becomes a fundamental right. Success in this mission is vital for the nation, for to quote the Roman philosopher Seneca -

" a hungry people listens not to reason nor cares for justice, nor is bent by any prayers."

Mahatma Gandhi expressed the same view when he said that to the hungry "God is Bread".

In ICAR, Government have a valuable instrument in assisting in this mission. Hence, everything that will sharpen this instrument and make it more useful should be done. In this task, I shall be glad to offer such assistance as you and my successor may desire.

12. I am requesting Secretary, ICAR to put up this letter to you with the relevant file so that you could pass the necessary orders. I am taking the liberty of endorsing a copy of this letter to the Prime Minister.

With my best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- M.S. Swaminathan

Shri Surjit Singh Barnala,
Minister for Agriculture & Irrigation,
Krishi Bhavan,
New Delhi.