

PRIME MINISTER SHRI CHARAN SINGH'S SPEECH AT NATIONAL
COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH GOLDEN JUBILEE AND
SYMPOSIUM OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SYSTEM ON 6-9-1979

Mr. Chairman and Friends,

I feel honoured to have been invited to this concluding plenary session of the International Symposium on Agricultural Research System. This has been organised by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research to coincide with its golden jubilee celebration which has attracted scientists from several parts of the world. Their presence here has also lent meaning and content. To the global convention for agricultural research system which is also being held here. I feel honoured because I am in essence, thought and taste, a farmer and the agricultural scientists devote a lifetime of research in the cause of farmers. I can claim to have given some thought to the problem of Indian agriculture. Last year when I tried to set them down in a----- I had said : "If we seek economic development of the country that is want man to be released fro, agriculture for diversion to industry, commerce, transport and other non-agricutral occupations. And inasmuch as they will be released only to the extent agricultural production goes up with fewer and still fewer men on the soil, capital and land will have to be invested in a far greater measure and technological improvements in agriculture effected at a far greater rate than we imagine and have planned for. In other words it can be stated as a rule of ----- economic development of India turns on the extent of improvement in agriculture practices we are able to effect. And the amount of capital we are able to invest in land.

Next to along with the need to invest more and more capital in irrigation and fertilisers, comes the need for research, the most deciding incentive to the farmers can come only from research, increased production as a result of new and newer technology in seeds, irrigation or water management, application of fertilisers etc. I have quoted this at length to underline the vital importance of-----productivity by intensive cultivation in India.

As the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi oversed 'Real India lives in the villages and agriculture is the most important occupation in our villages and therefore, there is need for much greater attention to Indian agriculrue and to raising its productivity. Indeed, the role of agricultural research as an aid to productivity is extremely significant. This symposium must have discussed at some length about agricultural research system. I am sure you must have borne in mind the problems of countries like ours and the difficulties that the scientists and extension workers face in

reaching out to the mass of peasantry with their well-tested ideas, practices and projects. The widespread illiteracy deep-seated tradition bordering on the superstitious, all round poverty breeding attitude of apathy and lethargy. These are formidable adversaries of those who would reach the fruits of research and new technologies to the million of small peasants in our country. But efforts in the near past have shown that the Indian peasant can adopt new technology. Still the role of nature continues to be paramount and perhaps will remain paramount for a long time to come. We all know that India is passing through a period of wide spread drought causing great hardship to people and farmer's animals besides damage to crops. They are normal behaviour of the monsoon underlines the urgency of efforts in the area of stabilising food production. It will, of course, not be possible to get the same production everywhere but we can try to minimise fluctuations to the extent possible. I am glad that during this year a beginning has been made by several of our state governments in the area of contingency planning. Planning for variations in weather behaviour should become an integral part of crop planning. It will not be adequate if we merely have theoretical plans just as grain reserve is essential for achieving food security, seed reserve is necessary for ensuring crops security. The seed reserve should relate to crops and varieties, that could be sown in drought and flood prone areas in case the normal crop and the usual varieties are wither killed or cannot be sown due to absence of rains I have appeal to the members of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research as well as International Federation for Agricultural Research System for development to assist in the tasks of speedy identification of varieties and crops, it can help government to develop and implement contingency plans. I am glad that Indian Council of Agricultural Research has chosen to commemorate its Golden Jubilee through three important activities.

The first about which the Director General spoke this afternoon, relates to the transfer of technology from laboratory to the field. If this activity is carried out with dedication and enthusiasm many small and marginal farmers will be able to get more income from their farms or fish ponds. I would request the ICAR to take particular interest in the transfer of appropriate technology to the landless labour families also. Animal husbandry involving the raising of cow, buffalo, goat, sheep, pigs and poultry could help, to supplement the income of landless labour, families, provided you are able to develop methods of them in the area of nutrition, health care, processing and marketing. All beneficially oriented programmes for small and marginal farmers and agricultural labour will have to be supported by appropriate beneficially oriented services. The peasant anywhere in the world is incorrigible individualist. Working with nature and mostly in solitude, he does not find the necessity of having to give orders to or

take orders from anybody. Yet these qualities do not hamper his receptivity to ideas, if they are conveyed to him in a manner consistent with his independence of outlook. There must be an attitude of shared wisdom while conveying the technologies to the peasant. You cannot simply be holier than those with a person whose experiences and responses are drawn from close communion with nature itself. For these reasons it is essential to have a very simple mechanism of extension and the research worker will also benefit by having as direct a contact with the farmers as possible. I, therefore, hope that all agricultural universities and central institutes and coordinatory projects will do their best to have such contacts and also identify the precise constraints of operating at the level of poor farmers and landless labour and help them to remedy them. Your second programme of launching movement for the conservation and on natural resources, particularly useful plants and animals is an exceedingly important one. I am happy to learn that a detailed blueprint for the establishment of a game sanctuary in the Garo hills of Meghalaya for reserving citrus materials has been developed by ICAR scientists. This will help to protect the environment which has enabled considerable variability to occur in oranges along with the North Eastern Himalayan region. I hope you will take up similar activity in other parts of the Himalayas. I would like to emphasise the need for conservation of soil which is after all our most important natural resource. I am sure soil science research will continue to be important and measures to check soil erosion etc. will continue to be guided by researchers.

Finally I am happy that you have chosen as part of your Golden Jubilee activity, the medium of an International symposium on Agricultural Research and education systems for development. Fortunately in our country there are now close linkages between research and education institutions and developments in the field of agriculture, animal husbandry fisheries and forestry. These however need to be strengthened further. So that the benefits from the work of our dedicated scientists can flow to farmers and fishermen with the minimum of delay. I would like to urge our agricultural universities to take the initiative in forging stronger linkages with the concerned state departments as well as farmers organisations. I am making particular mention of farmers organisations and also other voluntary and non-official organisations, because ultimately the aim of government should only be to help people to help themselves. The ICAR can look back with satisfaction on the work done during the last 50 years. The next fifty years will be even more crucial in determining the future of our country. Without adequate scientific inputs our desire to accelerate the pace of agricultural progress will not be fulfilled. The ICAR has therefore to play in the future even a more important role in the national development than it has done in the past. I wish you all success in this challenging task. And I assure

you of governments full support in it. To the scientists who have come from outside, I say how much we value in your assistance, advice and cooperation. I was happy to have had the opportunity of inaugurating the new laboratory of the International Crop Research Institute for the semi arid tropics recently at Hyderabad. Such institutions promote greater international cooperation among agricultural scientists and hence we welcome them. I also give my best wishes to the International Federation of Agriculture Research Systems for development and its work of promoting greater collaboration among the agricultural research organisations of developing countries. I wish you all success and happiness and safe a return to your destinations.

(Clapping)

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