

**Inauguration of
Mid-term Meeting
of
The Consultative Group on
International Agricultural Research
(CGIAR)**

**Speech
of
DR BALRAM JAKHAR**
Union Minister for Agriculture
and
President
Indian Council of Agricultural Research
(ICAR)

**23 May 1994
VIGYAN BHAVAN
NEW DELHI
INDIA**



Department of Agricultural Research and Education
Ministry of Agriculture
Government of India

Speech of Dr Balram Jakhar, Union Minister for Agriculture, on the occasion of Mid-term Meeting of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) on 23 May 1994 at New Delhi.

Hon'ble Prime Minister, Minister of State for Agriculture, Shri Krishna Kumar, Chairman of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, Mr Ismail Serageldin, Director-General, ICAR, Dr Chopra, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It gives me great pleasure to convey my greetings and extend a warm welcome to the delegates participating in the Mid-term Meeting of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). This important Conference is taking place at a time when the developing world is making determined efforts to intensify and sustain the momentum of agricultural development and food production. The very presence of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao bears testimony to the significance of the event. I express my gratitude to him for making it possible to be with us.

2. In recent years a number of countries, including India, have been able to achieve success in increasing food production through a combination of Government policies, achievements of scientific research and sustained efforts of farmers. India's achievements in food and agricultural production are well known. The co-operative endeavours of scientists round the world, including scientists working in international agricultural research centres under the aegis of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, have significantly contributed to this happy state of affairs. Through their dedication and commitment to alleviate poverty and hunger around the globe, Indian scientists have demonstrated remarkable dynamism, and I take this opportunity to convey felicitations on behalf of the farming community to the scientists of our country. I earnestly believe that to facilitate and improve the quality of research there should be on-going communication and exchange of experience among scientists engaged in agricultural research at various centres. This will further strengthen the bonds of collaborative efforts

with the CGIAR for achieving the common goal of eradicating poverty throughout the world.

3. It is a matter of great satisfaction that several of the CGIAR institutions have established a high reputation in the field of research in such a short span of time. I am confident that this fine example of co-operation between international organizations and developed and developing countries for achieving global objectives will continue to get support from policy makers all over the world.

4. As you are aware, Indian agriculture, like its civilization, has a hoary past. Agriculture constitutes a vital component of the Indian economy. However, it is only during the last three to four decades that several of its agricultural research and educational institutions have come into existence. India has belied the predictions made by several people doubting her capacity to achieve self-sufficiency in food production. We have not only achieved self-sufficiency in food production but are exporting increasingly large quantities of agricultural commodities. In fact, the Government of India had in 1984 gifted 100,000 tonnes of foodgrains to the drought-ravaged countries of Africa for the alleviation of human sufferings. This speaks of our confidence with which we tackled and overcame the problem of food shortages by the decade of the eighties. Since the last 25 years, remarkable progress has been achieved in the production of wheat, rice, sugarcane, cotton, poultry, milk, vegetables and fruits like grapes and apples. Oilseeds production level has touched 20 million tonnes through increase in yields in sunflower, soybean, rapeseed, mustard and groundnut. Very soon our palm oil will be in the market. We expect to improve production of pulses as well in the next few years. Today as I stand before you, I am in a happy position with a bountiful food basket which not only is sufficient to meet our requirements but also provides a buffer in case of reduction of output owing to natural calamities. Nevertheless, we in India cannot afford to be complacent about these achievements as we face several challenges, particularly, due to the increasing population, which has already crossed the 900 million mark. Productivity levels of a number of crops such as rice, oilseeds and pulses need to be further improved. Just to be self-sufficient in foodgrains requirements is not

enough, it is also necessary to increase export of agricultural commodities with value-addition to them, so that farmers get better income returns.

5. To improve the standard of living of the farming community it is imperative to bring in a new climate of application of Science and Technology, wherein the balance of nature is not disturbed and conservation of natural resources is not neglected. To achieve these it is essential to strengthen further national capabilities for generation and development of appropriate technology in such a manner as is easily adopted by the farmer. I would like to identify some of the areas for immediate attention and action:

- (i) In crop production timely steps to minimize shortfalls in some crops should be our immediate goal. We need sustained focus on service area approach to improve the neglected low yield areas.
- (ii) Intensive agriculture with promising new knowledge-oriented technologies and ecological farming needs to be applied in areas like the North-Eastern belt in the country where there is a tremendous potential and scope for increasing yield and production. We now need to lay stress on resource-poor areas.
- (iii) Emphasis should be on both excessive rainfall and rainshadow areas and drought-prone areas where situation-specific technologies are the prime need.
- (iv) Water is the "life line" of agriculture and is also a dwindling resource. Measures for conservation through watershed management both at micro- and macro-levels, and economy in distribution need to be promoted. Drip and sprinkler irrigations are to be popularised.
- (v) A novel approach to flood control measures with a view to preventing avoidable damage is required. Strengthening of agro-meteorological crop monitoring, forecasting of pests, disease outbreaks, locust invasion, and bird migration through satellite imagery would help farmers in maximizing output.

- (vi) To create biosphere reserves as is attempted in our country particularly in the Himalayan and hilly regions, virgin forests and similar ecological niches. Conservation of bio-diversity in horticultural, commercial, aromatic and medicinal plants, and likewise in the case of animals and fishes has to be assured particularly in remote tribal areas, where agriculture has been practised for thousands of years.
- (vii) Checking deforestation and encouraging afforestation programmes through both private and governmental agencies.
- (viii) In the post-Rio era, we are in a situation where new technologies are knowledge-intensive rather than capital-intensive, which is a blessing for a country with vast resources of scientific manpower.
- (ix) With the conclusion of the GATT negotiations and the agreement to establish the World Trade Organisation, Indian agriculture is on the threshold of new opportunities. The potential for increasing world trade in agricultural commodities will be exploited by Indian farmers for increasing exports. We are considering a *sui generis* legislation for protecting Intellectual Property Rights. However, this will not only protect the plant breeders' rights, but also the farmers' rights. In India, mostly agricultural research is in the State system and though private initiatives are welcome and are already developing, much of the agricultural research would continue under the auspices of the Central and State Governments. This will ensure that the needs of the society in a country like India are fully taken care of. I am sure that the challenges which the World Trade Agreement will throw up will be met successfully by Indian farmers and researchers and the opportunities will lead to further growth of the agricultural economy.

6. The challenges agriculture and agriculturists are facing are the responsibility of all of us. Together we must ensure that international

agricultural research programmes are truly relevant to the needs of the beneficiary countries and muster adequate support to accomplish the task. To meet the future demands, science-based, modern agriculture and natural resource management have pivotal roles to play in leading societies out of poverty and hunger. As such, targets for the world community should be to increase food production from the present levels by the turn of the century, to diversify agriculture, especially in the areas of horticulture, animal production and fisheries, to integrate these with a view to providing sufficient food and nutrition to every citizen of the world and adequate income to the growers.

7. Unless these measures are taken up on priority basis it would be difficult to enthuse confidence in the farming community to alleviate poverty, to meet the requirements of food, fodder and fibre, and to make the world free from hunger. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the CGIAR has been providing an important scientific infrastructure for meeting these objectives. I am confident that the CGIAR mid-term meeting would consider, *inter alia*, these issues and give direction to the future programmes. What you decide here will determine to a great extent the future direction of research programmes. Your work is the promise of future.

8. I hope this event will provide an opportunity to friends from abroad to see some of the places of historical and cultural importance, besides our research complexes. I wish them comfortable stay here.

9. I shall look forward with great interest to the results of your deliberations.

Jai Hind

Printed at The Central Electric Press, A-12/1, Naraina Industrial Area
Phase I, New Delhi 110 028.