

## Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS)

### Minutes of the 1st Meeting of Program Advisory Committee

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The 1st Meeting of Program Advisory Committee (PAC) of Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS) was held under the Chairmanship of Dr RS Paroda in TAAS committee room on 9 January, 2024 from 11:00-13:30 hours. The discussions were held in accordance with proposed Agenda (Annexure I).

Following members of PAC and resource persons attended:

1. Dr RS Paroda, Chairman, PAC and TAAS
2. Dr SK Vasal, Member
3. Dr PL Gautam, Member
4. Dr MP Yadav, Member
5. Dr JC Katyal, Member
6. Dr Ram Kaundinya, Member
7. Mr S Bhadsavle, Member
8. Dr JL Karihaloo, Treasurer, TAAS
9. Dr Umesh Srivastava, Resource Person, TAAS
10. Dr Rishi K Tyagi, Resource Person, TAAS
11. Dr Bhag Mal, Member-Secretary, PAC and Secretary, TAAS

Dr JC Katyal and Dr Ram Kaundinya participated online, while Dr PK Joshi could not attend due to other commitment. Mr Raju Barwale, Chairman, MAHYCO, Pvt. Ltd. and Trustee TAAS also joined the meeting briefly.

#### **Agenda 1. Welcome**

At the outset, Dr Bhag Mal welcomed the Chairman, all the members of PAC and resource persons. He expressed his gratefulness to the members for having accepted the invitation to attend the PAC meeting despite their busy schedules. He briefly explained that the purpose of meeting was to seek the advice of eminent experts in various fields of farming research and innovation on the priority activities to be carried out by TAAS during the current year. Thereafter, he requested the Chairman to make his opening remarks and conduct the meeting.

#### **Agenda 2. Opening Remarks and Context**

Dr RS Paroda welcomed the PAC Members and Mr Raju Barwale. He expressed his gratitude to them for having accepted to serve as member of Advisory Committee constituted on the basis of the recommendation made by the external reviewer, Dr. Mruthyunjaya, Former, Director, NCAP, New Delhi. A soft copy of Dr Mruthyunjaya's Report will be circulated to the members. Dr Paroda briefly recalled the history of establishment of TAAS in 2001 and discussed its role to address the emerging and challenging issues related to Indian agriculture. The activities are mainly centered around organizing seminars, conferences, brainstorming, dialogues, policy advocacy, and public awareness programs, by engaging all the relevant stakeholders. He mentioned that the visibility of TAAS has enhanced through its high-quality publications such as Proceedings, Policy Papers, Strategy Papers, Success Stories, etc.

He also apprised members about the discussion held during G20 Meeting at Varanasi, attended by chief agriculture scientists of member countries. He was the 1<sup>st</sup> speaker followed

by chief scientist of FAO in the inaugural session. The presentation on scaling innovations was received well.

Dr Paroda briefed about the purpose of the meeting to mainly discuss and prioritize the activities to be organized by TAAS during 2024, avoiding possible conflict with other national organizations.

### **Agenda 3. Activities approved by TAAS Board**

Dr Paroda then requested Dr Bhag Mal to make a presentation on the activities identified by TAAS Board and the recommendations that were related to agriculture in the G20 Declaration. Dr Bhag Mal accordingly made a power point presentation (Annexure II).

Dr Paroda apprised that TAAS in collaboration with ICAR and institutes, CG Centres, ISPGR, and the private sector had addressed a number of issues included in G20 Leaders' Declaration such as: – One Health, Paris Agreement, Digital Agriculture, Carbon Sequestration, Conservation Agriculture, Agroforestry, Gender Equity, Local Food System for Food and Nutritional Security, *etc.* However, there is a need to have many recommendations implemented through policy support and enabling environment.

### **Agenda 4. Suggestions on Future Programs and Activities during 2024**

Dr Ram Kaundinya, Director General, Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII) thanked the Chairman for including him as a member of PAC. He mentioned that there is a lack of understanding at all levels including within industry and also at farmers' level about green development and climate actions, green credit program, carbon credit system, *etc.* Therefore, there is a need to create awareness and develop capacities at all levels about green credit system. He mentioned that private sector can play an important role in developing green credit programs and action plans in collaboration with government. Dr Kaundinya made the following suggestions:

1. Harmonization of regulations for movement of material and technologies developed and advocated at national and regional level
2. Policy dialogue on value chain development for all crops as done for cotton
3. Enabling policy support for digital agriculture
4. Developing 2-3 mega projects on crops like oilseed, pulses under public-private partnership with facilitation role of TAAS
5. Creating enabling policies for selected 3-4 important states by having 2-3 working groups at state level engaging private sector
6. Dialogue on EXIM policy, particularly to review the export policies
7. Identify priority areas and modalities to build public-private partnerships

Dr PL Gautam thanked the Chairman to have him as a member of this important committee. He also expressed his satisfaction on developing the Road Map for Higher Education. Dr Gautam appreciated the importance and accomplishments during past years which is fulfilling the need of national commitment towards progress of Indian agriculture including quality publications brought out by TAAS. Following suggestions were made by him:

1. In order to address the problem of poor quality of human resource and lack of employment, it is important to deliberate on options for the vocational skills and awareness in youth.
2. There is a serious problem of food loss which needs to be addressed.

3. EXIM policies particularly national export policy needs to be reviewed, e.g. how to promote export of mango to Europe?
4. Centre-State-Private Sector partnerships need to be developed.
5. Focused and selected success stories on farmer-led innovations (e.g. Kamdhenu) need to be documented.
6. Important and doable recommendations appearing in TAAS publications during the past years may be identified and shared with policy planners and advisors for their effective implementation.

Dr SK Vasal was highly impressed with the quality publications brought out by TAAS during past years which are valuable resource material for the policy planners and advisors. He also appreciated the activities accomplished by TAAS in the form of seminars, conferences, brainstorming sessions, and dialogues, etc. on different emerging and challenging issues related to agriculture. He expressed the need to realize the benefits of public-private partnerships by developing trust for sharing the material, information/data on performance, and pedigree population with each other in different crops. He made following suggestions:

1. A symposium on hybrid development be organized to discuss as to how to exploit heterosis to develop and increase crop yields.
2. In wake of climate change, material tolerant to biotic and abiotic stresses should be tested on priority for adaptation in different agro-climatic zones in India.
3. There is a need to develop more collaboration between public and private sector for ensuring nutritional security.
4. Teaching and research should be integrated at higher education level.
5. Crop-specific projects need to be developed engaging private and public sector organizations.
6. The scientists need to be motivated through conferring awards for their outstanding contributions. TAAS is in the process of instituting "Dr SK Vasal Award for excellence in Hybrid Crops Research" for which he announced a generous contribution of Rs 10 lakh as the seed money and Rs 1 lac annually as cash prize as additional.

Dr MP Yadav appreciated the excellent publications brought out by TAAS. He emphasized on more focus on dairying and fishery, and suggested the following activities for consideration:

1. Brainstorming Session on replacing dairy milk and meat as a source of animal protein for human consumption with synthetic plant protein
2. Application of AI in livestock health, reproduction, production and management
3. Digital Agriculture needs to be given focussed attention
4. Microbiome studies in livestock, fisheries and poultry for higher production and productivity
5. Developing Strategy Papers on suitable topics in dairying, fisheries and poultry

Dr JC Katyal expressed his gratitude for including him as a member of Advisory Committee and made the following suggestions:

1. National dialogue on strategies for transforming agriculture as a promotor of ecological sustainability.
2. Stakeholder dialogue on nutrition literacy as a benchmark for devising a strategic action plan for managing malnutrition

3. A Brainstorming Session on retooling integrated management of soil, water, crops, and inputs for sustainable development of agriculture.

Mr Chandrasekhar Bhadsavle, promoter of Saguna Regenerative Technique (SRT) with zero tillage, more yield and improved soil fertility). He expressed his gratitude to be a part of this important committee to present his viewpoints on behalf of the farmers. He expressed his concern that SAUs are focusing on producing agricultural graduates and measuring their success merely by placement of the students. In his opinion, SAUs efforts should be to impart skill enhancement training to the students who are able to practice innovative farming more effectively. He also observed that more and more hills are becoming denuded due to forest fires/wild fires leading to soil erosion, runoff water, and water bodies have been encroached upon by water hyacinth. Students and universities are not aware of these problems and, therefore, public awareness is important. Mr Bhadsavle made following suggestions:

1. By increasing public awareness (both farmers and consumers), a proven regenerative method such as SRT should be enforced to check the soil erosion loss due to millet cultivation.
2. TAAS can play important role to create awareness and convince policy planners at centre/ICAR level about the concept of 'One Health' (soil, plants, forest, people, environment) and other innovative methods of farming. Maharashtra government is popularizing innovative farming systems and similar practices can be adopted at in other states.
3. Awareness about the benefits and importance of micro- and macro-biodiversity be created among the farmers.
4. The success of regenerative farming, is especially in empowering women farmers as well as smallholder farmers and making them happy, independent and more confident

#### **Agenda 5. Concluding Remarks**

Dr RS Paroda thanked all the members and appreciated the valuable suggestions made by them. He further added:

1. Success stories on farmer-led innovations on regenerative agriculture need to be documented.
2. Farmers participation should be ensured while executing the research programs both by the public and private organizations.
3. The suggestions made by PAC members are extremely important. TAAS is committed to take up the activities related to policy advocacy, public-private partnerships, public awareness, and providing incentives in the form of awards as per availability of resources.
4. However, all these activities cannot be carried out within one year due to limitation of manpower and financial resources. However, TAAS will try to prioritize the activities and try its best to include the most important ones during the current year.

#### **Agenda 6. Vote of Thanks**

Dr Bhag Mal proposed the vote of thanks to the Chair and all members of PAC and the TAAS resource persons.