

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PLATFORM FOR SOUTH ASIA (AEPSA)

FIRST MEETING OF THE AEPSA ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD AT KAB-II,

PUSA, NEW DELHI ON 5 SEPTEMBER, 2024

Proceedings

The first meeting of the AEPSA Advisory Committee was held on the 5th September, 2024 in hybrid mode under the Chairmanship of Dr RS Paroda, Chairman, Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), Former DG, ICAR & Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education, GoI and the Chairman of the AEPSA Advisory Committee. Seventeen participants including the Advisory Committee members and special invitees attended. The copy of Program and the List of the Participants are given in Annexure I & II, respectively.

Welcome Remarks

Dr Bhag Mal, Secretary, TAAS recalled the National Dialogue held on 8-9th April, 2022, the follow-up meeting convened by TAAS on 18 December, 2023 followed by a consultative meeting held on 8th March, 2024 wherein strong reference was made for establishment of AEPSA. Dr Bhag Mal mentioned that the existing extension systems in the South Asian (SA) countries appeared to be relatively weak in terms of innovations in technology dissemination of the scientific information, as a result improved practices generated by research institutions and private sector are not effectively disseminated to the farmers and end users. Hence, he argued that there is an urgent need to strengthen agricultural extension services for which innovations and reforms are urgently called for transforming them to respond to the emerging challenges in different agro-ecologies. This includes critical interventions in diverse areas like: farmer empowerment, digital interventions, high-tech application of farm activities, convergence of extension efforts, promoting inclusive extension approaches for small/marginal producers, farm women and farm youth, and building extension strategies in SA countries. The available extension models, approaches and strategies being adopted and the constraints being faced are country-specific; however, the principles, experiences and practices could be shared, scaled-up and replicated with suitable local adjustments in the respective countries for mutual benefits. This called for promoting innovative delivery mechanisms rather than adopting the approach as usual for which an innovative platform like AEPSA is undoubtedly needed in the South Asia region, he reiterated. In the absence of such entity, the sharing of experience and expertise, and exchanges of new knowledge generated and scaling well tested practices may not be effectively disseminated in the region. Further, Dr Bhag Mal added that both MANAGE, Hyderabad and ICAR-IARI, New Delhi did not come forward to own and operationalize/institutionalize this crucial initiative. However, in view of its urgent need and usefulness, Dr RS Paroda, Chairman, TAAS offered to initially support and

operate it informally from TAAS for 1-2 years for which he deserved our deep appreciation.

Dr Bhag Mal whole heartedly welcomed the Hon'ble Chair, AEPSA Advisory Committee, Dr Raj Paroda, Chairman, TAAS and former Secretary, DARE & DG, ICAR. He then extended a very warm welcome to the members of Advisory Committee including Dr Karim Maredia, Director, International Programs, Michigan State University, USA; distinguished members from South Asian countries - Dr Hamidur Rahman from Bangladesh, Dr Yogendra Kumar Karki from Nepal, Dr Chandna Jaywardena from Sri Lanka, Dr Hema Devi Nirola from Bhutan, Dr RN Padaria, and Dr VV Sadamate from India.

He also extended warm welcome to all the Special Invitees - Dr P Chandra Sekhara, Director General, CIRDAP; Dr Wais Kabir from Bangladesh, Dr Raju Barwale, Chair, MYHCO, Dr SV Reddy, President, PRDIS, Dr R Burman, ADG, ICAR, Dr JL Karihaloo, Trustee, TAAS, Dr RK Tyagi, Senior Consultant, TAAS, Dr RK Tripathi, NSAI and Dr Ashish Khandelwal, YPARD.

Opening Remarks

Dr RS Paroda, Chairman, TAAS and Chairman, AEPSA Advisory Committee, at the outset extended very warm welcome to the participants and appreciated the efforts of AEPSA Secretariat and Country Contact Points (CCPs) in grounding this crucial initiative. Dr Paroda observed that the South Asia, a region of green revolution had good experience in innovation led - both in research and technology- through new seeds, new extension strategies - Training and Visit System, Lab to Land, Institute Village Linkage Program, Front Line Demonstrations, Mini kit trials, *Krishi Vigyan Kendras*, etc., all centered around knowledge transfer. Schemes during Green, White & Blue revolutions did get schematic extension support, however, it seems weakened over a period of time and added that today farmers need good / new knowledge and prefer sound technical knowledge over subsidies, hence innovations are required both in research and advisory services to respond to such demands. Further, Dr Paroda observed that the ongoing extension models seem to have become routine and need to innovate to address the emerging demands of the farmers concerning the specialty, sustainable, protective, and regenerative agriculture, climate change issues, etc. The current situation perhaps needs more of private sector extension support including that of competent NGOs (e.g. BRAC, Bangladesh, BAIF, India, etc.), FOs, FPCs, and Startups, etc.

Dr Paroda further added that AEPSA offered an opportunity as neutral platform in the region, informal to begin with and focused on developing good extension knowledge base, scaling innovations, documenting success stories, providing cross learning in the partner countries for mutual advantages and increased access to the stakeholders. Neutral, voluntary and ICT led/networked efforts are very much required to capture advances in technology delivery services especially in and around the high value crops, horticulture, fisheries, etc. and the farmers are unable to avail the same. Hence, there is need for promoting alternate value-added extension services. He underlined that AEPSA would run informally for 1-2 years so as TAAS program but emphasized that the related networks and agencies must

extend ownership to this innovative platform and contribute towards its performance in strengthening advisory services in the partner countries. He noted that the related partners are coming around promoting AEPSA and suggested that AEPSA must get linked to the national and international networks like APAARI, CIRDAP, YPARD, GFAR, GFRAS, CGIAR Institutes, SAARC Agri Information Centre, active NGOs in respective countries, like BRAC in Bangladesh, and BAIF in India, etc.

Dr Paroda observed that we need to define a doable role for AEPSA to begin with and then share the responsibilities in terms of willingness to join and support, to provide necessary resources and initiate working on identified programs. He suggested that now the core team is getting activated and we should immediately get the Country Agricultural Extension Profiles(C-AEPs) organized reflecting information on extension resources, extension training and CB institutions at various levels, extension innovations, success stories, ICT applications, farm portals available in partner countries, etc. Such information would need to be provided to the Country Contact Points and other stakeholders in the partner countries. This would provide a real facilitation advantage to the AEPSA. Bringing in more of scientific knowledge to the farming population from across the production sectors and innovating on new ways to work with the farmers, farm women and farm youths are the future pathways for AEPSA.

Brief Update on AEPSA

Dr VV Sadamate, Chief Coordinator, AEPSA in his intervention provided a detailed update on the developments over the last 5 months with reference to the recommendations of AEPSA initiation meet held on 8th March, 2024. He highlighted the salient points as follows: (i) AEPSA started functioning as informal professional platform initially for a year or so as TAAS Program, (ii) a core team has been constituted - Chief Coordinator (VV Sadamate), Deputy Coordinator, IT & Networking - Part time (RK Tripathi) and one young professional will be hired and he may join the team shortly, (iii) registration and bank account would be taken- up later at appropriate stage, (iv) the requisite government clearance for establishment of AEPSA would be taken- up later after completing registration and bank account formalities, (v) the Advisory Committee to steer the program has been duly constituted, (vi) draft brochure has been attempted with Logo, Tag line, Vision, Mission, Objectives, Organogram, etc. The Website link, Email List Serve, WhatsApp group, would be initiated soon, (vii) fee structure as a part of brochure & tentative fund requirement for the FY2024-25 & 2025-26 has been worked out and shared, (viii) membership drive would be launched as soon as AEPSA activities become visible to the stakeholders, (ix) country specific contact points (mainly through professional NGOs) have been identified for phase-I countries, (x) country agricultural extension profiles (C-AEPs) - drafts have been attempted in the format prescribed through MANAGE. These would be shared with the country contact points (CCPs) for further refinement through consultative meet in the respective country. The draft for Bhutan attempted by Ms Hema Devi has been received, (xi) collaboration with other international agencies and networks would be considered at appropriate time as AEPSA grows, (xii) draft annual work plan has been attempted and shared with the CCPs in partner countries, (xiii) half yearly and annual reviews

proposed in partner countries by rotation; annual review for 2024-25 be considered for 8th of March, 2025 (First Foundation Day) in Nepal as suggested by the country representative from Nepal.

The Chairman appreciated the update of AEPsA presented by the Chief Coordinator, despite initial teething troubles. requested Members/Special Invitees for their considered/specific comments on the agenda items and guidance in general on future pathways for promoting the mission AEPsA.

Interventions by the Advisory Committee Members/Special Invitees

The Chair, Dr RS Paroda requested the Members/Special Invitees for their considered/specific comments on the agenda items and guidance in general on future pathways for promoting the mission AEPsA.

Dr Raju Barwale, Chair, MAHYCO, appreciated TAAS for initiating this excellent platform and assured all possible support in its organization and operation. He urged that the proposed AEPsA should address emerging pathways for PPPs and the outreach requirements of all the sub-sectors of the farming.

Dr. Paroda, Chair, AEPsA Advisory Committee, reacting to Dr Barwale's support, profusely thanked him for his virtual presence and mentioned that we shall try to use this platform to promote innovative models of the technology dissemination and sought greater support to the mission AEPsA. He urged the private sector to upscale good extension practices successfully tested within and abroad and promote AEPsA like mechanisms for their dissemination.

Dr R Burman, ADG Extension, ICAR mentioned that AEPsA would be an excellent platform for extension learning and knowledge sharing. Lots of experiences and innovations are available with the KVKs as institutional system deploying team of SMSs at KVK (731) level and managing 11,000 extension networks on the regional basis by the ATARIs (11) and there is need for documenting success stories brought out by the KVKs. Further, he pointed out crucial challenges faced by the KVK system and urged for scaling this model in other partner countries. He proposed joint actions with the partner countries in the areas like PPPs, youth in high tech applications like drones, exposure visits, exchange of extension professionals, community actions for NRM and climate change. He wished AEPsA to take intended shape soon to serve the larger number of clientele in the South Asia region.

Reacting to the observations made by Dr. Burman, Dr Paroda appreciated the presence of KVKs SMSs team at the district level and the growth of this institution at the cutting-edge level and its impact over a period of time. He suggested AEPsA to study the ToT mechanism in the Phase-I countries at the cutting edge /district level that would focus on R-E linkages, convergence and coordination arrangements and provide weblink on AEPsA Website.

Dr Hamidur Rahman, President, Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network (BAEN) & Former Director General (DG) Agriculture while appreciating the AEPsA initiative, pointed out that the farm sector in Bangladesh is facing challenges of land, climate change and price realization to the farmers. Further, the agricultural scenario is

gradually changing from subsistence to commercialization and from traditional to mechanization. Under these situations the inter-county experiences coming through AEPSA would matter a lot, he observed. He also pointed out that the organized FOs and FPCs are yet to come up in full force as it is happening in India and urged exchange of experiences in this area. He also observed that the real challenge for AEPSA would be to move from country contact points towards linkages with Government programs and other partners and urged for designing necessary coordination mechanisms as AEPSA grows. He also highlighted the necessity for AEPSA intervening on (i) training and CB efforts linking training infrastructure and training resources in the partner countries at the districts and blocks, as KVK like institution does not exist in Bangladesh, (ii) documenting success stories, and (iii) providing information on extension models that are promoting direct linkages with the farmers and experience sharing in this crucial area. For financial contribution towards AEPSA, he proposed to have discussion with the BAEN Members and get back to AEPSA Secretariat soon.

Dr RS Paroda, suggested that the respective CCPs & AEPSA should develop mechanisms for improving linkages with the Government and other agencies' extension programs and relevant experiences of the international agencies could also be studied and lessons integrated.

Dr Wais Kabir, Former Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) in his intervention observed strong need for technology commercialization, as has been initiated by Agri Innovate Company floated by the ICAR linking the farmers, the entrepreneurs and the processors and expected AEPSA may provide some input in the process. Further, he focused on greater understanding on (i) the research-extension linkages mechanism operated under the KVK system, and success achieved (ii) mechanisms in public and private sectors for replication of success stories on extension efforts, (iii) promoting research institutes as knowledge partners for extension services and (iv) Bangladesh to make serious efforts to capture learnings on technology led extension services in India operated through ATARIs and KVKs.

Responding to the observations of Dr Kabir, the Chairperson Dr Paroda mentioned that he headed a High-Power Committee for Strengthening KVK Program and desired AEPSA to provide soft copy of the report to the country contact points enabling them to get oriented to various aspects of reforms in frontline extension services in India and for examining cross learning and applications back home.

Dr Yogendra Karkee, Former Secretary Agriculture, Nepal and Chairman, Nepal Farmers Advisory Council, Kathmandu while supporting the mission AEPSA indicated that there is wider appreciation to this proposed initiative by the Agriculture Ministry and Nepal Agricultural Research Council and foresaw greater possibilities of AEPSA engagements and proposed networks. He further informed that the NARC has favorably considered office space for AEPSA Nepal Chapter and focused on need for training of extension personnel, R-E linkages at various levels, promoting mission mode innovative pilots, mobilization of funds through private sector partnerships, etc. Further, he broadly supported the organogram, proposed

programs, fee structure in installments and M&E mechanism through half yearly and annual reviews, etc. and urged to complete the registration and bank account formalities early. Dr Karkee agreed to host proposed Annual Review at Kathmandu in March, 2025 around the AEPsA Foundation Day falling on 8th March, for which he had detailed discussion with VV Sadamate and RK Tripathi during his last visit to India in June, 2024 and agreed to share part of expenditure.

Dr RS Paroda appreciated the sincere efforts made by Dr Yogendra Karkee in establishing rapport with the Government of Nepal and Nepal Agricultural Research Council, promoting cause of AEPsA in right spirit, getting assurance on location for Nepal AEPsA Office and promoting membership drive in advance. Further, Dr Paroda in principle supported to have annual review at Kathmandu, subject to positive progress of the AEPsA activities, especially finalization of brochure, linking the same to TAAS Website, successful completion of the C-AEPs, drawing lessons for cross learning and initiating the implementation of technical program.

Ms Hema Devi Nirola, CEO, Druk Horticulture Private Limited & Country Contact Point (CCP), Bhutan represented a private sector organization dealing with high-tech horticulture production, processing and export. Ms. Hema Devi in her intervention informed that she is happy to join the AEPsA Advisory Committee and would try to work for it in collaboration with the Bhutan Government Agriculture and line departments. She added that the linkages with the government departments would be a great challenge and we may have to have some strategy for the fostering the same. She informed that her organization got in touch with some technical experts within the GO-NGO systems both on research and extension side and got the draft C-AEP Bhutan prepared, but she preferred to wait for inputs from MANAGE, India and subsequently would get in touch with the Government Deptts in Bhutan for refining the C-AEP through consultative meetings. She desired strong intervention and presence of AEPsA in the process. On the performance of agricultural extension innovations, she referred to the organic rice promotion movement in Bhutan enabling its export to the countries like Australia, Japan and Thailand, though in smaller quantity. She also added that the extension interventions in the form of promotion of FOs/FPOs, streamlining research-extension linkages, focus on cluster approach in selected commodities would need to be promoted in Bhutan through AEPsA on pilot scale.

Dr RS Paroda while appreciating Ms Hema Nirola's efforts in coordinating the task of developing the draft C-AEP, Bhutan, suggested promotion of private sector extension interventions and their integration with main extension service providers. He desired that private sector agencies like Druk Horticulture Private Limited promoted by Ms Hema could play an important role in initiating AEPsA activities on pilot scale there, with focus on capturing extension innovations and success stories and examining possibilities of cross learning with partner countries.

Dr Chandana Jayawardena, President of Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association, Peradeniya University, Sri Lanka and CCP for Sri Lanka in his intervention suggested strong collaborative efforts for promotion of AEPsA, linkages with Country and Global Extension forums, involvement of private sectors, need for

extension services to demonstrate commercial potential of technology dissemination, unmutate the value of serious extension efforts, involvement of NGOs, etc. He further urged for informal and virtual linkages with the various stakeholders and mobilizing funding support through program funding, private sector and international agencies too.

While appreciating the interventions of Dr Chandana Jayawardena, Dr Paroda suggested that membership and user network for AEPSA should be encouraged by involving and enrolling the public, private sector and NGO extension providers.

Dr P Chandrasekhara, DG, CIRDAP suggested that AEPSA may immediately begin as an informal network of extension professionals and get linked to extension bodies within the partner countries and outside. Further, he added that the AEPSA may think of having a consultancy wing in its domain as the activities grow and also think of initiating innovative pilots. It must also demonstrate the extension opportunities to the stakeholders and seek initial funding support. Dr Chandrasekhara did mention about technical and financial support to AEPSA through relevant provisions of CIRDAP. He suggested AEPSA collaboration/participation in incoming programs of CIRDAP in India, Pakistan and Thailand.

Dr Paroda appreciated the interventions of DG, CIRDAP and suggested close collaborations with programs between AEPSA and CIRDAP. He further observed that the CIRDAP has a strong network of 15 countries in South East Asia and may provide need-based support to AEPSA as deemed appropriate and enable AEPSA to make differences in technology dissemination processes in critical areas. Dr Paroda suggested (i) CIRDAP to be a member of AEPSA and (ii) facilitation of CRIDAP in getting Pakistan NGO Extension Contact Point on the board in Phase-II, for which DG, CIRDAP agreed in principle.

Dr SV Reddy, President, PRDIA, Hyderabad, India, suggested AEPSA to be immediately registered at suitable premises that would facilitate opening bank account while operating under TAAS patronage for functional purpose. In a away, the AEPSA would have registered office and operational office separately. Registration and bank account being in place may facilitate in mobilization of the funds, he added. Regarding phasing the program coverage, he suggested to (i) have third phase too, expanding its activities to South East Asian countries over a period of time and in collaboration with CIRDAP and (ii) AEPSA may think of linking with national and international extension/ agricultural platforms on program and collaboration mode. Regarding activities for this new initiative, Dr Reddy suggested to have country specific pilot projects in partner countries as emanated from C-AEPs and proposed organization of international conferences and dialogues, capturing extension knowledge from other countries be added in the objectives of AEPSA. He did appreciate efforts and vision of Dr Paroda for envisioning AEPSA for promoting innovations in technology delivery mechanisms and the impact of the same would go a long way in dissemination processes.

Dr Paroda appreciated Dr SV Reddy for his support for mission AEPSA right from the beginning and sought continuous guidance and financial back up for furthering its programs and activities. He observed that initial need-based funds have been

assured by a few private sector agencies like MAHYCO & RASI Seeds and wished other national and international ones would come forward as the AEPSA visibility and usefulness moves up.

Dr Attaluri Charyulu, Deputy Director, representing the MANAGE in the deliberations, suggested AEPSA to move forward with informal knowledge sharing platform using portals, weblinks of the related national and international agencies. He observed that as the visibility of this platform grows the justification of the private sector participation may also move up. Innovative extension pilots may also be considered on MANAGE-MSU Collaborative arrangements in place now. He assured all support for developing country agricultural extension profiles (C-AEPs) base which would provide the further line of action for AEPSA and strongly pleaded for (i) taking on the board the large number of emerging Agri- Startups in various challenging areas and (ii) organizing policy dialogues inter and intra country basis. Finally, Dr. Attaluri Charyulu, considering his rich experience in developing and operating Asia-Pacific Agricultural Research Information System (APARIS), under the umbrella of Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) earlier, noted that the AEPSA is moving in the right direction and assured personal and professional support for its growth in the South Asia region and beyond.

While appreciating the observations of Dr Attaluri Charyulu, Dr Paroda observed that his knowledge and experiences would be suitably used and AEPSA would approach MANAGE for necessary support and need based resources.

Dr RK Tripathi, in his intervention urged for intensive use of social media like face book, twitter, websites, etc. and create positive impact/footprints of AEPSA. He urged for (i) early initiation of email serve, website, whatsapp group, etc. immediately after finalization of the brochure and (ii) developing necessary e-resources around each country contact point (CCP) enabling the AEPSA program network to grow fast and respond to the emerging ICT needs in each partner country.

Dr. Khandelwal of YPARD desired a strong linkage with AEPSA and added that farm youths and farm entrepreneurs (both males & females) need to be encouraged for venturing into innovative extension and outreach programs and intensive use of ICTs and Social Media.

Supporting the observations of Dr Khandelwal and Dr Tripathi, Dr RS Paroda suggested: (i) capturing innovations, success stories and their documentation, (ii) creating portal, websites, sharing weblinks, using YouTube channel, use of print and electronic media, etc. and (iii) making such things operational early at AEPSA Secretariat and in the partner countries.

Additional Observations/Comments

After the deliberations were over, the Chair requested all members and special invitees including those who could not attend the meeting to provide their valuable observations and comments on the agenda items discussed. The observations and comments received are summarized below:

Dr K Narayan Gowda, President, INSEE, Nagpur suggested strong extension interventions in promoting and facilitating post-harvest management operations and cited an example of poor harvest of tamarind in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu as the market prices have dropped in the markets. Providing market opportunities for better price discovery may also be addressed as pilots through AEPsA.

Dr.SV Reddy, President, PRDIS, Hyderabad suggested: (i) the objectives and activities are mostly synchronized except objective - 4. To take up need-based pilot studies to generate knowledge, etc. which is not reflected in activities, (ii) it is also suggested to add as objectives/ activities to organize international conferences / seminars on current issues of SAARC countries in agricultural sector for finding solutions and strategies. Such a forum can also help for visibility of AEPsA and also to mobilize funding, (iii) membership categories are well documented. It is advisable membership fees of International organizations/ institutions like CGIAR etc. could be enhanced, (iv) Asia and Pacific countries also need to be included in Phase II. This will give better mileage to our organisation, (v) tagline for AEPsA may be considered as Network for Next Gen Agri Extension. Knowledge sharing and partnership can come in other objectives/ activities, (vi) Some space for AEPsA office to be taken on rent or approach Dr N.P. Singh /Dr B.K. Singh for the space. Registration and opening bank account may taken-up urgently. This will help in fundraising that the registration can be done with local members and later after government approval we can modify and add others, (vii) it would be desirable to open a website as a priority, (viii) it is desirable to organize at least one international event per annum on current issues by AEPsA on Foundation Day i.e. 8th March, 2025, (ix) identification of extension stalwarts in partner countries and documenting their work profile for the benefit of future generations, and (x) it will be good to document extension models world over beginning with SA, in collaboration with country regional and global platforms.

Dr RN Padaria, Country Contact Point, India highlighted: (i) the Logo, Tagline, Vision, Mission, Activities, Organogram have been very well crafted, (ii) membership and the proposed fee structure are modest and could be revised after the AEPsA gains momentum, (iii) for Annual Work Plan for 2024-25, status document of extension innovations, reforms and policy shift during the last 5 years are important, (iv) reflections on emerging core competencies and course curriculum in agricultural extension in context of SDGs, (v) for the funds for 2024-25 & 2025-26, joint initiatives with professional societies, grant from Ministries, CSR, Philanthropic contributions, could be given attention, and (vi) networking of farmers' organizations and grassroots innovations need to be considered

Dr Ashish Khandelwal, Country Representative, YPARD India mentioned: (i) tagline may be considered as Network for Knowledge Sharing, Partnership and Transformation, ii) for membership fee, CGIAR and UN bodies be kept in different slots; annual membership fee in different categories be reduced appropriately, iii) tenure of life membership fee can be fixed as 10 years or 15 years or unlimited, iv) under private sector category, small, medium and big may be defined v) bank account can be opened immediately, under program of TAAS. Registered office may be used as TAAS office. However, working office may be changed at later stage and can be informed to appropriate authority.

Dr Hamidur Rahman, Country Contact Point (CCP), Bangladesh, strongly supported the suggestions made by Dr Khandelwal.

Dr. Karihaloo Trustee TAAS suggested to rephrase the objective 1 as “To collate and share information on the agricultural extension systems operating in South Asia, and the impact of these interventions on the agricultural productivity, food and nutrition security, and economic well-being of the beneficiary communities”.

Dr. Karim Maredia in his response proposed that the logo on the first page of the brochure may read as: Agricultural Extension Platform for South Asia and the tagline as: Network for Next Generation Agricultural Extension

Concluding Remarks

Dr RS Paroda, Chairman, TAAS and Chairman of the AEPSA Advisory Committee in his concluding remarks observed that AEPSA has made good beginning and started functioning as informal platform under the umbrella of TAAS. He desired that it would work as a focal point for extension innovations and cross learning and assured all support for establishment and operation of this regional platform. He hoped that funding constraints would be addressed through some corporate support to begin with, however, the AEPSA needs to mobilize its own resources through membership and domestic and external grants. Further, he expected AEPSA to demonstrate the innovative ways of technology dissemination and outreach enabling regional and global importance and serious attempts need to be made to promote cross learning amongst the partner countries. He also suggested to revisit the technical program and refine further in consultation with the partner countries and it must reflect on the areas for innovative pilots as reflected in the C-AEPs.

Dr Paroda emphasized that future extension strategies and models be designed for addressing minimal or no loss in technology dissemination process. He suggested to initiate the cycle of activities in Phase-II countries (Afghanistan, Maldives & Pakistan), which may begin with identification of Professional Agricultural NGO Network that can be taken on the board as AEPSA link. Strong linkages with national and international research institutions on the program mode would enable AEPSA to gain excellent experiences like Lab- to- Land and Institute Village Linkage Program of India, he added. Focus on the promotion of extension services for dissemination of diversified portfolios – public, private, PPPs, NGO led, use of social and print/electronic media and pluralistic extension service providers in a given micro agro- situation to scale the extension innovations and impacts, were also highlighted by Dr. Paroda.

Dr Paroda emphasized that the country agricultural extension profiles (C-AEPs) may be closely followed up; obtain the drafts from MANAGE, immediately share with the county contact points for refinement in collaboration and consultation with GO/NGO stakeholders in the respective countries, to enable gradual ownership / linkages of the innovations demonstrated. He also suggested to develop e-resources (e.g. portals like e-kisan, digital green, e-chaupal, etc.) around the CCPs and approach National and International Platforms/NGOs/Agencies for technical, collaborative and

financial support like CGIAR network, APAARI, GFRAS, BRAC, BAIF, YPARD, CIRDAP, B&MGF, Etc.

Major Action Points for Way Forward

1. Finalise the contents of brochure in view of suggestions received from the participants.
2. Initiate Website, Live Email Serve, WhatsAppGroup, and enlist existing portals (e.g. e-Kisan, Digital Green, e-Chaupal of ITC, startup portals, etc.), enhance Social Media connects and e-connectivity with the Country Contact Points (CCPs).
3. Finalise country profiles with focus on institutions, network of NGOs, directory of extension specialists, new innovations, success stories and cross learnings. Also to share the inputs from MANAGE with the CCPs for refining C-AEPs in the respective countries.
4. AEPSA to collate all available information relating to agricultural extension and advisory services in the South Asia region would emerge from the C-AEPs and facilitate the process of developing innovative pilot projects and ensure external funding
6. Approach the founding partners and other promoters, including a few from the corporate sector for mobilisation of funds.
7. Have a separate bank account for AEPSA opened by TAAS for functional ease.
8. For membership drive, approach willing organisations (ex. BRAC, BAIF etc), institutions, farmers associations, and the individuals representing various categories as already defined in the AEPSA brochure.
9. Decide on the M&E modalities and explore possibility to hold first annual review meeting in Nepal, preferably on AEPSA Foundation Day (8 March 2025).
10. Approach at right time the regional organisations like APAARI, SAARC Agricultural Information centre, Dhaka, CIRDAP, GFAR, GFRAS etc., linkages with national and international extension service providers and work out modalities for linkages with respective Government extension organisations.
11. TAAS/AEPSA to share High Power Committee Report on KVKs, chaired by Dr RS Paroda, with the participants, to make the partner

countries understand and appreciate the principles and practices of front-Line extension operated by KVKs in each district in India.

12. Initiate action at appropriate time on registration and respective Government clearances when AEPSA visibility based on its activities and achievements become evident.

13. Ensure hiring required minimum manpower or to have some experts contracted as resource persons (for defined services/roles).

Vote of Thanks

Dr Rishi Tyagi, Senior Consultant, TAAS extended sincere gratitude and profuse thanks to the esteemed Chairman, Dr RS Paroda, for his visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to promote AEPSA. His insights and experience have been instrumental in shaping the agenda for today's meeting as well as the future activities under AEPSA.

He expressed deep appreciation and sincere thanks to all the Members of the Advisory Committee and Special Invitees for their valuable contribution, thoughtful deliberations and valuable suggestions that would undoubtedly help AEPSA achieve its goals. He also expressed his sincere thanks to Dr Bhag Mal, Dr VV Sadamate, for their tireless efforts in organizing this first meeting and invaluable contributions in promoting the mission AEPSA.

He also thanked Dr Karihaloo, Dr RK Tripathi, Ms Simmi Dogra for providing excellent back- up support and to Dr RC Agrawal, DDG (Edu.), ICAR for providing the venue and logistical support.