



*Consultative Meeting on*  
**Agricultural Extension Platform for  
South Asia (AEPsA)**

8 March, 2024

*Proceedings  
and  
Recommendations*





## Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS)

### GOAL

Harnessing the potential of agricultural sciences for the welfare of the people.

### MISSION

Promoting growth and advancement of agriculture through scientific partnerships, policy advocacy and public awareness.

### OBJECTIVES

- To act as a 'Think Tank' to deliberate on key issues relating to agricultural research and innovation for development (ARI4D) and influence policy decisions
- To organize workshops, conferences, brainstorming sessions, policy dialogues seminars and special lectures on emerging issues and new developments in agricultural sciences
- To disseminate knowledge among stakeholders through publication of proceedings, strategy papers and policy papers
- To confer awards to the scientists of Indian and foreign origin for their outstanding contributions having impact on Indian agriculture
- To facilitate scientific interactions and partnership building of non-resident Indian agricultural scientists with Indian scientists

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***Proceedings and Recommendations***

***Organizers***

**Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS)  
Michigan State University (MSU)  
National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE)**

**Citation** : TAAS, 2024. *Consultative Meeting on Agricultural Extension Platform for South Asia (AEPSA) : Proceedings and Recommendations*. Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), Avenue II, Pusa Campus, New Delhi. vi+18 p.

**Published by : Secretary**  
Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS)  
New Delhi

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**Printed** : April, 2024

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## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ADG	Assistant Director General
AEPSA	Agricultural Extension Platform for South Asia
AESA	Agricultural Extension in South Asia
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APAARI	Asia-Pacific Association for Agricultural Research Institutions
ATIC	Agricultural Technology Information Centre
ATMA	Agricultural Technology Management Agency
BAEN	Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network
BAIF	Bharatiya Agro-Industries Foundation
DAC	Department of Agriculture and Cooperation
DAESI	Digitalization of Agricultural Extension Systems in India
DARE	Department of Agricultural Research and Education
DBT	Direct Benefit Transfer
DG	Director General
EEI	Extension Education Institute
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FPO	Farmer Producer Organization
GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services
GEPs	Good Extension Practices
GO	Government Organization
IARI	Indian Agricultural Research Institute
ICAR	Indian Council for Agricultural Research
IC	International Cooperation
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development

IT	Information Technology
KCC	Kisan Call Centre
KVK	Krishi Vigyan Kendra
MANAGE	National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management
MoA&FW	Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
MSSRF	MS Swaminathan Research Foundation
MSU	Michigan State University
NFAC	Nepal Farmers Advisory Council
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NITI Aayog	National Institute for Transforming India
PJT SAU	Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PRDIS	Participatory Rural Development Initiatives Society
R&D	Research and Development
SAARC	South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation
SAU	State Agricultural University
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLAEA	Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association
TAAS	Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences
USA	United States of America
VISTAAR	Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources
YPARD	Young Professionals for Agricultural Development



# **Consultative Meeting on Agricultural Extension Platform for South Asia (AEPSA)**

## **BACKGROUND**

The main emphasis of National Conference on Youth in Agriculture jointly organized by Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS) and MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Chennai, India in 2018, was on infusing motivation and demonstrating the technologies or business models for faster uptake of the enterprises by the youth. One of the recommendations led to development of a flagship program called - Motivating and Attracting Youth in Agriculture. Accordingly, there appeared a need for innovative, practical, and effective extension delivery models enabling youth as a prime catalyst for agricultural transformation in South Asia and even other parts of the world.

Realizing the need for strengthening agricultural extension system in the present context, the Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), New Delhi, organized a National Dialogue on Innovations in Agricultural Extension: A Way Forward, in collaboration with Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad and Michigan State University (MSU), USA, on 8-9 April 2022. This Dialogue focused on much needed innovations and reforms for strengthening agricultural extension services/frontline extension programs/systems and transforming them to respond to the emerging challenges in the micro- and macro-agro-ecologies. However, the cross-learning and experience sharing was observed to be weak, which needs to be strengthened.

Further, an International Conference on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agricultural Extension Strategies was organized jointly by Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network (BAEN), Bangladesh and Participatory Rural Development Initiatives Society (PRDIS), Hyderabad, India at Dhaka on 2-4 February 2023. It was attended by senior extension representatives from India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka and representatives of other international stakeholders like MSU, Consultative Group of International Agriculture Research (CGIAR) centres,

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), etc. The conference strongly impressed upon the need for cross learning and experience sharing on extension innovations between the South Asian Countries and reforms and proposed a network - Consortium on Agricultural Extension Professionals.

The participants in the recently organized Delhi Dialogue (8-9 April 2022) and Dhaka Conference (2-4 February 2023) recognized varying levels of extension capacities and their uniqueness in different countries and resolved to facilitate strengthening agricultural extension services/frontline extension programs/systems in a collaborative mode at the regional level having leverage with global networks. However, in the absence of such entity, the experience and expertise sharing, exchanges of new knowledge generated and tested practices may not be disseminated in the region. A regional platform in South Asia - with professional approach and global collaboration - would certainly carry this forward systematically.

There are diverse agricultural extension models in operation in South Asia, each has its own space in the outreach and linkages with the farming communities. The capacities, methodologies and applications vary from country to country in the region. Cross model experiences are limited. If captured systematically and professionally, it would enable addressing major systemic constraints presently limiting the pace, efficiency, and performance of agricultural extension programs seriously. The models, experiences and systemic constraints are though specific to the countries; however, the principles, technologies, experiences and best practices could be shared, scaled-up and replicated with suitable modifications locally in the regions for mutual advantages. This called for a space wherein ideas and experiences could be debated, moulded and taken up for wider applications with the countries and nodal implementing agencies.

Further, there is a strong need for piloting a venture upon promotion of South-South cooperation and collaboration. Sharing the gains of such platforms like Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) and Young Professional for Agricultural Development (YPARD) in cross-learning among nations and programs about the innovations. Accordingly, establishment of a Regional Platform, namely, Agricultural Extension Platform for South Asia (AEPSA) was proposed that will help in documentation of success stories, best practices, knowledge sharing, promotion of exchange programs, joint investigation and testing of innovations and scaling strategies.

## **CONSULTATIVE MEETING**

An initial meeting regarding the need for establishing South Asia Platform for Agricultural Extension, was convened at the TAAS office on 18 December 2023. This was followed by a Consultative Meeting on Agricultural Extension Platform for South Asia (AEPsA), which was organized by TAAS in collaboration with MANAGE and Michigan State University (MSU), USA, in the Conference Room of Dr MS Swaminathan Library, Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi, on 8 March 2024. The Technical Program is given in Annexure I. This meeting was chaired by Dr RS Paroda, Chairman, TAAS, New Delhi. A Concept Note, and the Program were circulated to all the participants in advance. The meeting was attended by 28 participants (Annexure II) including the officials of ICAR, IARI, MANAGE, MSU, representatives from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD), TAAS and the private sector.

## **INAUGURAL SESSION**

The Inaugural Session was chaired by Dr RS Paroda, Chairman, TAAS & Former Secretary, DARE and DG, ICAR. Dr Bhag Mal, Secretary, TAAS, extended warm welcome to the Chairperson and invited dignitaries - Dr AK Singh, Director, IARI, Mr Samuel Praveen Kumar, Joint Secretary, Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW), Dr Karim Maredia, Director, International Programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University, USA, Dr P Chandra Shekara, DG, MANAGE, Hyderabad, Dr R Burman and Dr RK Singh, Assistant Director Generals (ADGs) of the ICAR, Dr Anupama Singh, Dean, IARI, Dr MS Nain, Professor, Division of Agricultural Extension, IARI and Dr VV Sadamate, Former Adviser (Agriculture) Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog). He also warmly welcomed the overseas participants from the South Asian Countries, namely, Dr Hamidur Rahman, Former DG, Agricultural Extension and President, Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network (BAEN), Bangladesh, Dr Chandana Jayawardena, Professor, Agricultural Extension Peradeniya University, Sri Lanka, Dr Yogendra Kumar Karki, Former Secretary (Agriculture), Government of Nepal and President, Nepal Farmers Advisory Council, Nepal and the Specialists from Michigan State University, Michigan, USA. Dr Bhag Mal also welcomed other participants from the IARI, ICAR, the Ministry of Agriculture Farmers Welfare, the MANAGE, representatives of SAUs, private sector and other organizations.

Dr Bhag Mal, while initiating the proceedings, highlighted that the existing extension systems in the South Asian countries are relatively weak and there is a need for: (i) strengthening agricultural extension systems through innovations

and reforms, and (ii) critical interventions for farmer empowerment, youth empowerment, high-tech application of farm activities, convergence of extension efforts, digital interventions, and building extension strategies for mutual advantages. He further mentioned that the principles, experiences and practices could be shared, scaled-up and replicated with suitable local adjustments in the respective countries. He felt the need for establishing a regional platform in South Asia for sharing of experience and expertise, and exchange of new knowledge and well tested practices for which the modalities will be intensively discussed today.

**Dr P Chandra Shekara** supported the initiative and mentioned that the list of serious discussions during Dhaka Conference held on 2-4 February 2023 has gone into the Concept Note. He suggested that there is a need to operationalize AEPSA to supplement and complement extension efforts amongst the neighbouring countries in the region as the agrarian problems and prospects are mostly common in South Asian countries. The DG, MANAGE stressed upon strengthening value chain management extension in public-private partnership (PPP) mode as traditional methods of extension are now not effectively serving the purpose.

**Dr R Burman**, ADG, ICAR, strongly supported AEPSA initiative and suggested to move it forward through collaborative mode to learn extension experiences of other countries in the South Asia region. Dr Burman emphasized on improving frontline extension efforts and urged for collaboration in improving the content, capacity development and quality of extension research so that the application of strategies are effectively intervened accordingly. He also emphasized for convergence of databases of Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) and Directorate of Extension, MoA&FW and other partner countries under AEPSA.

**Dr Karim Maredia**, Director, International Programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources, MSU, also strongly supported for having AEPSA operationalized soon and implored for all out support to initiate and operationalizing the same. Dr. Maredia stressed that through humble beginning, the AEPSA be launched initially as an informal professional network and formalized later as we gain the experience and concrete support of the regional and international partners to sustain the network. He added that the agricultural extension collaboration between the MANAGE and MSU, keen for global partnership for extension services, is progressing well and mentioned that the recently launched Agricultural Development Centre for Asia and Africa at MANAGE, Hyderabad, could supplement AEPSA through networking and knowledge sharing programs.

**Mr Samuel Praveen Kumar**, Joint Secretary, Extension made a brief presentation and observed that the paradigm of extension service delivery is changing fast in

a high-tech application mode. He emphasized on intensive use of ICTs, internet platforms, and social media to reach the farmers fast and also for obtaining the feedback. Extension strategies must utilize more of AI tools, web portals, data services, YouTube on convergence mode, e.g. VISTAAR Platform operated by the MoA&FW is a way forward. He also appreciated the AEPsA initiative and assured the possible support for its establishment.

**Dr AK Singh**, Director and Vice Chancellor, IARI, highlighted the innovative extension approaches promoted by IARI like seed village, Pusa Samachar on YouTube, Non-Government Organization (NGO) partnerships, digital extension, extension without borders in collaborative mode, orientation of field functionaries on AI, digital applications and high-tech interventions, collaboration with the SAUs, etc. Dr Singh mentioned about the new initiative of IARI - Seed Without Borders- where the varieties released in India can be released in other countries, e.g. Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, etc. He advocated for development of digital extension models and creating awareness amongst farmers about such models. Dr Singh supported the AEPsA initiative, assured need-based support and urged for paid extension services in commercial crops through youth entrepreneurs.

At the very outset **Dr RS Paroda** welcomed all the participants and wished them for International Women's Day and *Mahashivratri*. In his concluding remarks as Chairman, he observed that the today's farmer needs quality knowledge on package of practices across the production systems, especially the demand is more on high-tech applications from second generation farm youths for secondary agriculture. Therefore, the extension service delivery needs to be thoroughly reformed. He emphasized on the farmer to farmer and farmer-scientists interface, extension for rainfed areas, exposure visits, integrated delivery through joint efforts of Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) and *Krishi Vigyan Kendras* (KVKs), improving service delivery through Agricultural Technology Information Centre (ATICs), promoting public-private partnerships (PPPs) in extension, promoting farmer empowered FPOs, Farmer Cooperatives and high-tech farmer's groups involved in tech marketing and export operations through GO/NGO, industry and FPO partnerships. The extension efforts would need to be supplemented by the institutional back-up for sustainable impacts for the benefits of the farmers. Dr Paroda mentioned that we are discussing about AEPsA for about two years now, this is high time to take some concrete decision today whether it is to be established or not. However, he strongly recommended regional and global partnerships and suggested AEPsA could play an important role in South Asia Region if it joins the hands with organizations like Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS), and Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD), etc.

## **DISCUSSION ON STRUCTURAL AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES OF AEPsA**

The Session on Discussion on Structural and Operational Issues of AEPsA was chaired by **Dr RS Paroda** and co-chaired by **Dr P Chandra Shekara** and **Dr Karim Maredia**. Dr Paroda invited **Dr VV Sadamate**, Former Adviser (Agriculture), to brief about background for setting the context of the consultative meeting for initiating the AEPsA, especially its structural and functional aspects. Dr Sadamate indicated that the need for South Asia collaboration did figure in two international deliberations organized recently i.e. National Dialogue on Innovations in Agricultural Extension: Way Forward organized by TAAS at New Delhi on 8-9 April 2022 and the second time on the SDGs and Agricultural Extension Strategies organized at Dhaka, Bangladesh on 2-4 February 2023, jointly by the BAEN and PRDIS. Both the dialogues indicated that the delivery of extension services is rapidly reforming through digital interventions, farmer empowerment models, increasing involvement of entrepreneurs and start-ups, intensive PPPs, etc. in the South Asian Countries. However, they have focussed on limited cross learning, hence, recommended a mechanism for collating and promoting good extension practices (GEPs), appreciating varying levels of extension capacities and uniqueness and sharing of the gains and experiences. Dr Sadamate referred to the preliminary meeting for this purpose, which was held under the Chairmanship of Dr RS Paroda, Chairman, TAAS, wherein important stakeholders, namely, TAAS, MSU, ICAR, IARI, etc. participated at TAAS office, New Delhi. Subsequently, he informed that the draft Concept Note on AEPsA was developed, shared with the stakeholders for including their valuable inputs and then shared with the invitees. He further added that the vision, mission, objectives and activities of AEPsA were spelt out. And informed that the proposed AEPsA would be a regional, registered platform with varied membership categories like institutional, associate, international, individual, etc. Dr Sadamate drew attention of the house to the issues requiring immediate attention that would include: office space, Executive Secretary, Facilitator/Senior Consultant, core secretariat staff, IT network facilities, and seed money, etc. enabling AEPsA to take a formal shape as soon as possible.

The Chairperson requested the participants to provide their suggestions and opinions on the structural, functional and funding aspects to enhance the purpose and prospects of the proposed regional set up - AEPsA. Their suggestions were, by and large, were quite supportive and are captured in brief as follows:

**Mr Samuel Praveen Kumar**, Joint Secretary, Extension, MoA&FW, observed that the next generation extension service delivery is going to be thoroughly reformed and digital-driven. He added that the man-to-man extension services

may not stand test of the current demands, and farmers and service providers would need to be engaged more in digital mode. He cited the example of Kisan Samman Scheme of the Government of India wherein the farmer beneficiaries are covered through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). Today, the young entrepreneurs use IT platforms and high-tech applications on production and marketing side. He further observed that the Kisan Call Centre (KCC), ATMs, KVKs and farmers' organizations (FOs) need to be transformed to the digital extension mode, which is much faster than traditional modes of extension delivery. Through his brief presentation in the inaugural session, he highlighted that the proposed VISTAAR IT Platform focused on future digital extension scenario linking the farmers on one side and the markets on other side. He proposed intensive IT application with segments like: use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, Machine Learning, IoT, Blockchain Technology, Web Portals, Apps, Data Services, Advisories and Registries. He also endorsed the need for establishing regional platforms like AEPsA.

**Dr Chandra Shekara**, DG, MANAGE, as an extension professional strongly supported the AEPsA, however, he submitted that as DG he would need to run through a formal proposal to take approval of the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC)/International Cooperation (IC) Division of Government of India to operate AEPsA as part of the MSU-MANAGE Agricultural Development Centre for Asia and Africa. Further, he proposed that till such time the AEPsA could be established formally, it may function informally as a Knowledge Resource Centre promoting digital, PPP and entrepreneurship driven activities. Regarding funding support for AEPsA, Dr Chandra Shekara suggested that the Extension Professional Organizations in the member countries and also South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Centre could be approached.

**Dr AK Singh**, Director IARI, strongly supported the establishment of AEPsA at the earliest to share the regional experiences for mutual advantage. He observed that the technologies in the farm sector are emerging fast and extension delivery would need to cope-up with its transmission for cross-learning.

**Dr R Burman**, ADG Extension, ICAR, supported AEPsA and added that there is a strong need for collaborative research in extension, and collating experiences of other countries in the region. Funding contribution from the stakeholders on annual basis was suggested by him.

**Dr RK Singh**, ADG Extension, ICAR, mentioned that extension services in South Asia are changing fast. He proposed that an informal beginning may be made immediately and to make AEPsA formal following the internal clearances of various departments.

**Dr Karim Maredia**, Director, International Programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources, MSU, pleaded for early beginning of AESPA. He proposed that it could be started at a smaller level as an informal professional network and eventually grow as we gain more experience and support of regional and global partners. Dr. Maredia focused on global knowledge partnerships in effective extension models, best practices, experiences and cross-learning and extended MSU's support as a knowledge partner to help strengthen agricultural extension in South Asia and globally.

**Dr Yogendra Kumar Karki**, Former Secretary Agriculture, Nepal & Chairman, Nepal Farmers Advisory Council, Kathmandu, supported the proposed AESPA. It may undertake studies on the different extension approaches practiced in South Asia for mutual advantages. It may begin with the support from MSU and take a formal shape as early as possible. The location could be ICAR-IARI or MANAGE. The AESPA could aim at bridging the gaps between the resource poor and resource endowed farmers. He further requested for lower level of funding contribution from the promoters for initial 1-2 years, and there is need to consider constituting a Management Committee or Core Governing Body representing various stakeholders from the partner countries.

**Dr Chandana Jayawardena**, President of the Sri Lanka Agricultural Extension Association (SLAEA) at Peradeniya University, Sri Lanka, voiced his support for the AESPA initiative. He emphasized the importance of diligent follow-up on the proposed actions and urged the creation of strong relationships between partner countries. Dr Jayawardena suggested that AESPA may initially focus on improving the professionalism of extension workers across participating nations. He proposed an informal launch with some basic initial arrangements, allowing the initiative to gain traction before formalizing it with international stakeholders' involvement. Regarding funding, he recommended generating revenue through project-based activities as AESPA builds its capacity.

**Ms Mollie Woods**, Director, Food Processing Innovation and Product Centre, MSU, while supporting the proposed AESPA suggested that the Farmer Groups and Farmer Federations be represented on it as it progresses over a period of time.

**Ms Erin Daines**, District Director, Marquette County Extension Office, Michigan, supported the AESPA and suggested for establishing direct contact between scientists and farmers to avoid the message transmission loss, so also the country partnerships should focus on production to value addition activities.

**Dr Chris Bardenhagen**, Farm Business Management Educator, MSU, focused on promotion of Farmer-FIRST approach through proposed AESPA. He also mentioned that funding mechanism should be ensured before launching AESPA.



**Dr Hamidur Rahman**, President, Bangladesh Agricultural Extension Network (BAEN), provided a brief overview of BAEN's activities and acknowledged the support from GFRAS and Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESAs). He emphasized on the importance of combining knowledge dissemination with practical applications in extension approaches and the need to include input agencies in this process. He expressed strong support for the proposed AEPSA, and assured BAEN's contribution to AEPSA's operations. He stressed the urgency of securing funding including project-based funding from international organizations like IFAD and FAO, developing bylaws, and initiating registration procedures to formally establish AEPSA.

**Dr Sudha Rani**, Director of Extension at Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University (PJTSAU), Hyderabad, proposed several key initiatives for the Agricultural Extension Professional Service Association (AEPSA). She advocated for allowing institutions to become members of AEPSA, expanding its reach and resources. AEPSA should actively promote successful frontline extension models for others to learn from. She envisioned AEPSA as a hub for brainstorming and developing extension reforms and advancements, and emphasized the need to enhance the skills and expertise of extension field workers. She proposed that AEPSA could partner with institutions to deliver training programs in the region and could be a joint venture between IARI and MANAGE, with its focus on practical extension applications. She also highlighted the importance of developing regional extension policy papers and conducting country-specific pilot studies to make AEPSA a comprehensive and impactful organization for agricultural extension services.

**Dr Jagan Mohan Reddy**, Director, Extension Education Institute (EEI), Hyderabad, supported AEPSA initiative and suggested that the proposed platform may begin informally and be shaped formally in due course of time.

**Ms Anne Baker**, Learning & Talent Development Specialist, MSU, supported AEPSA like regional platform and assured collaborative programs.

**Dr Miloni Rathod**, Community Programme Instructor from MSU, proposed partnership approach for AEPSA and expected to come-up with good number of pilot programs.

**Ms Janis Brinn**, MSU Extension Educator supported AEPSA and proposed 4H program collaboration with the partner countries through this platform.

**Ms Ana Heck**, Apiculture Extension Educator, MSU, while supporting proposed AEPSA suggested collaborating programs with it on allied areas like apiculture in the partner countries through the entrepreneur development. AEPSA could develop a strong mechanism for feedback management.

**Mr Ashish Khandelwal**, Country Representative, YPARD, India, lauded the AEPsA initiative. Youth in agriculture be promoted as entrepreneurs and for taking over high-tech operations in agriculture and allied areas. Participation of farm youth and farm women in agriculture and allied areas need to be promoted as entrepreneurs and paid service providers. He suggested for a formal beginning for AEPsA.

**Dr Nain**, who represented Joint Director Extension, IARI, also suggested to adopt a formal approach to initiate AEPsA. Formal partnerships may sustain it and suggested to have its space, core manpower and IT Network. It would enable program partnerships within the region and member countries.

**Dr Srinivas Attaluri Charyulu**, Deputy Director, MANAGE, supported the initiative and urged for strong IT network mechanism to collate the information, document it systematically and share among the stakeholders in the partner countries.

The eminent Extension experts, namely, **Dr P Das**, Former DDG (Extension), ICAR, **Dr SV Reddy**, Former World Bank Consultant, and **Dr K Narayana Gowda**, Former, Vice Chancellor, UAS, Bangaluru and President, International Society of Extension Education (INSEE) could not attend the Consultative Meeting due to their pressing commitments. However, they have supported the idea of establishing the regional extension platform.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Dr RS Paroda, Chairman, TAAS, in his concluding remarks profusely appreciated the efforts of the stakeholders and the support provided by the MSU for the initiation of AEPsA. On the basis of detailed inputs from all the participants, he reiterated that the funding support for this regional platform is the key for its performance and sustenance. Therefore, the fund mobilization is a priority, and may be started with humble beginning from the donors and supporters like MSU. However, as it progresses adequate fund has to be obtained from the memberships and government extension agencies of the partner countries. He opined that the services rendered and the projects taken up could add on to the revenue of the AEPsA. Further, Dr Paroda observed that there is a need to develop country-specific extension profiles covering data on extension manpower, extension services offered in agriculture and allied sectors and extension models in the respective partner countries. This would further strengthen the AEPsA for sharing and gaining from information exchange. So also, the region-specific and country-specific extension dialogues and projects would need to be integrated in the annual work plans. AEPsA would need to identify the space for collaboration with the agriculture and allied sector extension agencies in public

and private sectors covering the digital and entrepreneurial extension impacts. Farm Universities in the partner countries would be natural collaborators on extension services. Dr Paroda observed that the proposed name of the Platform - Agricultural Extension Platform for South Asia (AEPSA) - is just befitting as it focusses more on science rather than geopolitical boundaries. It has to work with and collaborate with national and international forums. Collaboration with YPARD would give AEPSA an added advantage to become global platform as the YPARD is already working with Uruguay in Latin America wherein 200 farm youths have been exchanged on farm visit from Haryana.

Regarding housing and the initial logistics for AEPSA to make it operational, Dr Paroda suggested for MANAGE, ICAR and IARI to take an active part and immediately allot suitable space and provide some logistics to begin with. Director, IARI, needs to be formally approached for this purpose urgently. For mobilization of funding, Dr Paroda suggested a voluntary contribution by the promoters and major stakeholders to contribute generously at least to the tune of ₹ 1 lakh per annum, to raise the seed money. Dr Bhag Mal also endorsed the suggestion for initial contribution of ₹1 lakh/annum by the key stakeholders from collaborating countries and other stakeholders to initially support a few key staff. However, a few participants suggested that it should be reduced to ₹50,000/year initially. Both the government and non-government agencies like Bhartiya Agro-Industries Foundation (BAIF), international organizations and resourceful Farmer Organizations, Professional Extension Societies, Farm Sector R&D Organizations and also the individual contributors would need to be approached urgently for this purpose. On the resource generation, the guidance of the Advisory Group is essential, hence, it needs to be constituted on priority. Dr Paroda requested Dr Sadamate, being an extension expert, to spare some time to act as Senior Facilitator/Senior Consultant of AEPSA, to which he kindly agreed.

The meeting ended with vote of thanks by Dr RK Tyagi, Senior Consultant, TAAS. At the outset, he expressed his sincere thanks to Dr RS Paroda, Chairman, TAAS, for his encouragement, guidance and leadership provided right from planning to completion of this meeting. He profusely thanked Dr Karim Maredia, Director, International Program in Agriculture and Natural Resources at MSU and his team of experts for their participation, collaboration and support; to Mr Samuel Praveen Kumar, JS Extension, MoA&FW, and Dr Chandra Shekara, DG, MANAGE; Dr AK Singh, Director, Dr Anupama Singh, Dean and Dr MS Nain, Professor, Division of Agricultural extension, IARI, for their participation and extending support by providing the venue of the meeting; Dr R Burman and Dr RK Singh, ADGs, Extension Division, ICAR; representatives from the South Asian Countries, viz. Dr Hamidur Rahman

and Ahsan Ullah from Bangladesh, Dr Chandana Jayawardena from Sri Lanka, Dr Yogendra Kumar Karki from Nepal; and participants from SAUs, IARI, YPARD, TAAS and private sector. He profusely thanked Dr VV Sadamate for his constant support for developing the concept note, program and facilitation role and Dr Bhag Mal, Secretary, TAAS with valuable assistance from Ms Simmi Dogra for taking care of logistics and making this event highly successful.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Establishment of AEPSA**

1. Initiate urgently the establishment of AEPSA as an informal platform of professionals for knowledge and information sharing and effective networking in agricultural extension. Have a management structure in place as soon as possible with holistic conceptual clarity on efforts relating to agricultural extension in the South Asian context. Further, identify the AEPSA founding members and ensure their commitment for moving forward.
2. Consider either ICAR-IARI or MANAGE as possible location to establish AEPSA platform and decide on initial staff needs (coordinator, consultant, IT resources). TAAS could possibly facilitate the process initially until a permanent location is identified. Dr VV Sadamate, an extension expert of repute, could be requested to spare his time to be the Chief Coordinator, AEPSA, initially for a period of 2 years.
3. Initiate the registration process as applicable for AEPSA to be a regional/ international platform.
4. Initiate simultaneously the process of seeking Government approval for the formal establishment of AEPSA.
5. Constitute an Advisory Committee for AEPSA having the representatives from countries in South Asia and appropriate international partners to steer its programs and activities.
6. Design and develop a vibrant web portal showcasing AEPSA's structure, vision, mission, objectives, activities, etc. for wider publicity. Also, develop an e-mail list serve and WhatsApp group of extension professionals and programs in South Asia region.

### **Funding and Membership**

7. Approach MSU, TAAS, and other donor/corporate agencies for initial seed funding to operationalize AEPSA and undertake need-based activities for at least 2 years.

Further, explore funding options from the UN/Bilateral Agencies, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, CGIAR Institutes, private sector and other potential donors.

8. Explore possibilities to expand membership in different categories: (i) Country membership of respective government organizations, (ii) Agricultural extension societies, Agricultural institutions, Universities, (iv) NGOs/Private Sector engaged in agricultural extension, (v) International institutions, (vi) Extension Professionals, Students and Farmer Organizations. Category-wise membership fee be decided by the Advisory Committee to be paid as one time life membership/annual membership so as to sustain AEPSA activities in the region.

### **AEPSA Activities and Coordination**

9. Identify country-specific contact points (institutions/individuals) in South Asian Countries and globally who can effectively support and contribute in achieving the objectives of AEPSA. Also, seek project grants to build further its activities.
10. Develop country profiles on agricultural extension services and inventories of extension professionals with their on-going activities.
11. Seek representation and collaboration with other international agencies focused on agricultural development and extension or advisory services such as GFRAS, SAARC, BRAC, etc.
12. Develop annual plan of work in consultation with AEPSA members and initiate activities which may include: documentation of innovations, good practices, knowledge partnerships, success stories, experience sharing, path breaking extension models, knowledge sharing (cross learning), preparing directory of institutions and individuals engaged in advisory services, organizing regional dialogues, consultations, workshops, etc. while serving as neutral platform.
13. Monitor the progress closely on a half-yearly basis; schedule an annual coordination meeting inviting all members of AEPSA.

## Technical Program

FRIDAY, 8 MARCH, 2024

<b>10.00 - 11.30 Inaugural Session</b>		
<b>10.00 - 10.05</b>	<b>Welcome</b>	<b>Bhag Mal</b> , Secretary, TAAS
10.05 - 10.20	Brief Remarks	<b>P Chandra Shekara</b> , DG, MANAGE
10.20 - 10.35	Brief Remarks	<b>R Burman</b> , ADG (Extn), ICAR
10.35 - 10.45	Brief Remarks	<b>Karim Maredia</b> , Director, International Programs, MSU
10.45 - 11.00	Special Remarks	<b>Samuel Praveen Kumar</b> , Joint Secretary (Extn.), MoA&FW
11.00 - 11.10	Special Remarks	<b>AK Singh</b> , Director, IARI
11.10 - 11.25	Chairman's Address	<b>RS Paroda</b> , Chairman, TAAS
11.25 - 11.30	Vote of Thanks	<b>MS Nain</b> , Professor (Extn), IARI
<b>11.30 - 11.50 Tea Break &amp; Group Photograph</b>		
<b>11.50 - 13.00 Discussion on Structural &amp; Operational Issues</b>		
	<b>Chair</b>	: <b>RS Paroda</b> , Chairman, TAAS
	<b>Co-Chairs</b>	: <b>P Chandra Shekara</b> , DG, MANAGE
		: <b>Karim Maredia</b> , Director, International Programs, MSU
11.50 - 12.05	Structural & Operational Issues	<b>VV Sadamate</b> , TAAS
12.05 - 13.00	Discussion	Participants including Country Representatives
<b>13.00 - 13.35 Concluding Remarks and Way Forward</b>		
13.00 - 13.10	Remarks by Co-Chair	<b>P Chandra Shekara</b>
13.10 - 13.20	Remarks by Co-Chair	<b>Karim Maredia</b>
13.20 - 13.30	Remarks by Chair	<b>RS Paroda</b>
13.30 - 13.35	Vote of Thanks	<b>RK Tyagi</b> , Senior Consultant
<b>13.35</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	

## **List of Participants**

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## **Recent TAAS Publications**

1. Saguna Regenerative Technique and Agro-tourism - A Success Story by Chandrashekhar Hari Bhadsavle, March 2024.
2. Stakeholders Dialogue on Enhancing Fertilizer Use Efficiency for Sustainable Soil Health - Proceeding and Recommendations, February 2024.
1. Rationalizing Fertilizer Use for Managing Ecological Sustainability and Subsidy - Strategy Paper by Dr JC Katyal, December, 2023.
2. Enhancing Fertilizer Use Efficiency for Sustainable Soil Health - Policy Brief, November, 2023.
3. Strengthening National Agricultural Education System - A Road Map, 30 October, 2023.
4. Navara Rice - A Success Story by P Narayanan Unny, July 2023.
5. Policy and R&D Interventions to Increase Cotton Production and Industrial Growth - Policy Brief, March 2023.
6. National Dialogue on Harnessing the Potential of Floriculture in India - Proceedings & Recommendations, 16-17 February, 2023.
7. National Dialogue on Sustainable Growth and Development of Indian Dairy Sector - Proceedings and Recommendations, 16-17 December, 2022.
8. National Symposium on Food, Nutrition, and Environmental Security: Towards Achieving SDGs - Proceedings and Recommendations, 29-30 August, 2022.
9. Resilience in Dairy Farming - A Success Story by Nikki Pilania Chaudhary, November 2022.
10. National Dialogue on Innovations in Agricultural Extension: A Way Forward, 8-9 April, 2022.
11. Towards Secure and Sustainable Agriculture - Strategy Paper by Dr RS Paroda, August, 2022.
12. Expert Consultation on Promoting Efficient Irrigation Technologies for Water Saving Across Scales and Sectors, 25 February, 2022.
13. Expert Consultation on Accelerating Export of Seed Spices: Challenges and Opportunities - Proceedings and Recommendations, 22 November 2021.
14. National Workshop on Bridging the Yield Gaps to Enhance Foodgrain Production: A Way Forward - Proceedings and Recommendations, 26 August, 2021.
15. Report on Policies and Action Plan for a Secure and Sustainable Agriculture in Hindi, October, 2021.

16. Youth as Advisory Agents, Input Providers and Entrepreneurs - Article by Dr RS Paroda, September, 2021.
17. Brainstorming Session on Regenerative Agriculture for Soil Health, Food and Environmental Security - Proceedings and Recommendations, 26 August, 2021.
18. Stakeholders Dialogue on Enabling Policies for Harnessing the Potential of Genome Editing in Crop Improvement - Proceedings and Recommendations, 17 March, 2021.
19. Harnessing Genome Editing for Crop Improvement - An Urgency: Policy Brief, May, 2021.
20. Accelerating Science-Led Growth in Agriculture: Two Decades of TAAS, May, 2021.
21. A Road Map on Stakeholders Dialogue on Strategies for Safe and Sustainable Weed Management, January, 2021.
22. Fish Farming in North India-A Success Story by Dr Sultan Singh, December, 2020.
23. A Road Map on Stakeholders Dialogue on Current Challenges and Way Forward for Pesticide Management, September, 2020.
24. A Road Map on Stakeholders Dialogue on Way Forward for the Indian Seed Sector, June, 2020.
25. Biofertilizers and Biopesticides for Enhancing Agricultural Production - A Success Story by Dr Basavaraj Girennavar, June, 2020.
26. A Road Map on Policy Framework for Increasing Private Sector Investments in Agriculture and Enhancing the Global Competitiveness of Indian Farmers, December, 2019.
27. Crop Biotechnology for Ensuring Food and Nutritional Security - Strategy Paper by Dr JL Karihaloo and Dr RS Paroda, December, 2019.
28. A Road Map on Efficient Land Use and Integrated Livestock Development, November, 2019.
29. National Dialogue on Land Use for Integrated Livestock Development - Proceedings & Recommendations, 1-2 November, 2019.
30. Horticulture for Food & Nutritional Security - Strategy Paper by Drs KL Chadha and VB Patel, October, 2019.
31. Urgency for Scaling Agricultural Innovations to Meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - Strategy Paper by Dr RS Paroda, April, 2019.





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