

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PLATFORM FOR SOUTH ASIA (AEPSA)
SECOND MEETING OF THE AEPSA ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD AT KAB-I,
PUSA, NEW DELHI ON 13TH DECEMBER 2025

PROCEEDINGS

The second meeting of the AEPSA Advisory Committee was held on 13th December, 2025 in hybrid mode under the Chairmanship of Dr. R.S. Paroda, Chairman, Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), Former Secretary, DARE & Director General, ICAR, GoI and the Chairman of the AEPSA Advisory Committee.

The following participants including the Advisory Committee members and special invitees attended the meeting:

1. Dr. R.S. Paroda, Chairman, TAAS and AEPSA Advisory Committee (**Online**)
2. Dr. Rajbir Singh, DDG (Agril. Extn.), IACR & Vice Chair, AEPSA Advisory Committee
3. Dr. Karim Maredia, Director, MSU & Member, AAC
4. Dr. V.V. Sadamate, Chief Coordinator, AEPSA
5. Dr. R.R. Burman, ADG (Agril. Extn.), ICAR (Special Invitee)
6. Dr. P. Chandra Shekara DG, CIRDAP & Member, AAC (**Online**)
7. Dr. R.N. Padaria, Joint Director (Extn), IARI & Country Representative, India
8. Dr. Yogendra Karkee, Country Representative, Nepal (**Online**)
9. Dr. Hamidur Rahman, Country Representative, Bangladesh (**Online**)
10. Dr. R.K. Tripathi, Coordinator (P&P), AEPSA (**Online**)
11. Dr. S.C. Attaluri, Former Director, MANAGE & (**Online**)
12. Dr. N.V. Kumbhare, Principal Scientist (Agri. Extn) & Incharge, ATIC, IARI (Special Invitee)
13. Dr. Rakib Hasan, Bangladesh (**Online**)
14. Mr. Svantra Dubey, Technical Associate, AEPSA

Dr Bhag Mal, Secretary, TAAS and Member, AEPSA Advisory Committee could not attend the meeting due to being unwell.

Welcome Remarks

At the outset, Dr. N.V. Kumbhare, Principal Scientist (Agri. Extn.) & Incharge, ATIC, IARI welcomed the Dr. Rajbir Singh, DDG (Agril. Extn.), ICAR & Vice Chair, AEPSA Advisory Committee; Dr. Karim Maredia, Director, International Programs, Michigan State University, USA; Dr. R.R. Burman, ADG (Agril. Extn.), ICAR and Dr. P Chandra Sekhara, Director General, CIRDAP and distinguished country representative and members AEPSA Advisory Committee namely: Dr. Hamidur Rahman from Bangladesh, Dr. Yogendra Kumar Karki from Nepal, Dr. R.N. Padaria, India and Dr. V.V. Sadamate, Chief Coordinator, AEPSA.

He also extended warm welcome to all the Special Invitees - Dr. R.K. Tripathi, Coordinator (P&P), AEPSA; Dr. S.C. Attaluri, Former Director, MANAGE & other invitee Mr. Rakib Hassan from Bangladesh.

Opening Remarks

Dr. Rajbir Singh, DDG (Agril. Extension), ICAR profusely thanked AEPSA /ICAR for their consideration to position him as Vice Chair, AEPSA Advisory Committee. He then extended warm welcome to the Chair and members of the AEPSA Advisory Committee. While appreciating the progress made by the AEPSA in a short span of a year and half, he emphasized on the following:

- The Kathmandu resolution and the recommendations are self-explanatory, which are focused on sourcing the extension innovations, and their cross-learning in the region through innovative pilots.
- This task appeared to be very challenging and needed support of the stakeholders, including Government ownership, broader membership base across the identified categories and networking with the regional & global extension agencies.
- A lot of efforts have gone into the development of country agriculture extension profile (C-AEPs) that provided strong basis for sourcing and dissemination of extension innovations.
- The frontline extension network in India is progressing rapidly and has an excellent network at the regional level (ATARIs,) at the district level (KVKs) that provided systematically organized technical backstopping to the field extension and private extension efforts.
- The funding support for such interventions would need to be mobilized through national and international agencies.
- The country representatives need to facilitate improving the contents and the visibility of AEPSA website, to make it useful and productive to the intended stakeholders, farmers and extension services providers in the region.
- This regional responsibility needed a good funding support from the countries and from the members across the categories to make it fully operational. Hence, there is urgency for resource mobilization.

The Vice Chair, AEPSA then reinforced on the commitments by the partner countries for making AEPSA more efficient and responsive to the intended activities in the region. Finally, while appreciating the efforts of team AEPSA and the country representatives, he sincerely thanked Dr. R.S. Paroda, Chair, AEPSA Advisory Committee, a great visionary in the farm sector for his efforts in conceptualizing, initiating and supporting this platform.

Dr. R.S. Paroda, who attended for short while the meeting virtually, extended warm welcome to Dr. Rajbir Singh, Vice Chair of Advisory Committee and all participants. He also appreciated the efforts of AEPSA Secretariat and Country Contact Points (CCPs) in grounding this crucial initiative. 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. He emphasized on enhancing the financial status of AEPSA and urged the country representatives to speed-up the membership drive. Dr. Paroda urged for strong support

from CIRDAP, Dhaka in terms of institutional membership, programme partnership and interface opportunities with other member countries (annual meeting). Dr. Paroda desired that the knowledge partner agencies should enroll as members of AEPSA and augment resource mobilization and pursue Govt. membership as well. Further, Dr. Paroda suggested that Dr. Rajbir Singh may ICAR becoming an important member of AEPSA and ensure linkages with national extension network to take up innovative pilots and regional dialogues.

Update on AEPSA

Dr. V.V. Sadamate, Chief Coordinator, AEPSA presented a detailed update on the developments over the year and half with reference to the recommendations of AEPSA initiation meet held on 8th March, 2024. He highlighted the salient points as follows:

- The minutes of the 1st AEPSA Advisory Committee meeting held on 5th September, 2024, and the action taken report were duly approved.
- AEPSA started functioning as informal professional platform initially for two years as TAAS Program,
- A core team is in place - Chief Coordinator (Dr. V.V. Sadamate), Coordinator (P&P) - Dr. RK Tripathi (Part time) and one young professional (S.K. Dubey). The services of Dr. Attaluri, Retd. Dy. Director, MANAGE are proposed to be availed on need basis, especially in the areas of ICT and networking. The backup support including logistic is provided by TAAS.
- AEPSA Brochure has been revised, website is in place and being updated regularly, membership drive in India and other countries is on, resource mobilization activated, cross learning possibilities of impacting innovations being worked out, C-AEPs for phase-II countries have been initiated, M&E arrangement are worked out and annual work plan for 2025-26 as well as the budget details for the 2026-27 are being worked out.

Interventions by the Country Resource Persons:

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. While observing the slow pace on membership drive, he assured to promote it soon with enrolment of BAEN and BAEF. He also mentioned that he himself would enroll as a member soon and a few individual members, innovative farmers, agri-entrepreneurs, NGOs etc. would be followed up to join AEPSA. He observed that there are greater possibilities of HR collaboration in partner countries promoting good extension practices in various sectors including fisheries. He stated that the Govt. support would be possible only after the general election in Bangladesh is over.

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 assured to enroll members covering various categories and already some NGOs have joined the mission AEPSA and suggested to mobilize the funds by

taking up innovative projects. He informed that the farmers training and exchange of extension experts and promotion of organic farming may be flagged as possible areas for pilots and collaborations.

Dr. Chandana Jayawardena, Country representative, Sri Lanka could not join the meeting. However, in his email response he assured on his individual membership and suggested AEPSA to take up a few entry point activities in Sri Lanka enabling its visibility with the stakeholders. The funding support for such initiatives may be mobilized through national/international agencies.

Country representative, Bhutan could not join the meeting reportedly because of connectivity problem. However, the following points noted referring Bhutan: (i) Bhutan may work out Cross Learning Possibilities Matrix (CLPM) and provide their input in the format provided (Annex IV of the Nepal Meeting Proceedings) by the end of December, 2025. It would enable AEPSA Secretariat to identify the priority areas for innovative pilots, to be funded by the national/international agencies, (ii) Bhutan agriculture department may consider nominating a suitable representative on the AEPSA advisory committee, who may act as primary contact for AEPSA representing department of agriculture, Royal Government of Bhutan and (iii) support for government membership to be considered later when budgetary support is assured.

Dr. Karim Maredia, Director, MSU & Member, AEPSA Advisory Committee in his response emphasized on the pronouncement of Dr. Norman E. Borlaug to “Take it to the Farmers” and strengthen outreach programmes accordingly by designing proper linkages of AEPSA with various R&D organizations in the region and globally. While appreciating the progress made for over the last one and half year, he proposed that (i) there should be adequate focus on membership drive covering extension professionals, agri - NGOs, R&D organizations, (ii) updating the website regularly, (iii) initiating some pilot activities under south-south collaboration (ISSCA-AEPSA) and (iv) taking urgent action on AEPSA registration as a society, opening bank account, FCRA clearance and some corpus fund. Dr. Maredia assured that MSU may provide some seed money to the proposed corpus. Further, he desired AEPSA to have partnership with CIRDAP, which has a network with 15 countries of South and South East Asia. He also suggested that AEPSA website be linked to agriculture related organizations (domestic and overseas). Additionally, Dr. Maredia desired partnership of AEPSA core/CRPs with MSU’s annual extension innovation appreciation programme (September, 2026). He also emphasized on possibilities relating to exchange of research scholars through AEPSA.

Dr. P Chandra Shekara, DG, CIRDAP proposed that : (i) initiation of corpus fund, (ii) approach agri-business companies for fund mobilization, (iii) seek CSR funds from national, international corporates, (iv) organize paid programmes in collaboration with lead institutions, (v) bring out quality e-publications, (vi) organize online training/ webinars, (vii) take-up impact assessment, evaluation studies and consultancy. (viii) update country profile bi-annually, (ix) MOU with CIRDAP and (x) take-up innovative pilots.

Dr. R.N. Padaria, Joint Director (Extn.), IARI & Country Resource Person, India in his interventions highlighted on the following: (i) documenting farm innovations (within and overseas), (ii) linkages with the innovation practitioners, (iii) working on modalities for feedback mechanism, (iv) developing capacity building modules based on extension

challenges, (v) sourcing innovations from innovative farmers and (vi) reforms in profiling extension activities - developing appropriate matrix and (vii) collaboration with IARI Alumni Association(IAA).

Dr. R. R. Burman, ADG (Extension), ICAR while supporting the organizational and structural matters of AEPSA suggested to adequately focus on the following: (i) organizing sponsored and paid training programmes through lead institutions, (ii) seeking support from international organizations like CIRDAP on MOU basis, (iii) profiling country-wise extension challenges and solutions, (iv) promoting farmer-to-farmer exchange of innovations, (v) promoting community of practitioners, (vi) taking membership on extension platforms from other countries at regional and global level, (vii) following up space allocation, registration, bank account and FCRA clearance and (viii) showcasing AEPSA activities at national and international events (e.g. Global conference on women in agriculture, March 12-14, 2026).

Concluding Remarks by Dr. Rajbir Singh, DDG (Ag. Extn) & Vice Chair, AEPSA

While expressing satisfaction on the positive progress of AEPSA, the Vice Chair concluded with major action points and way forward as given below:

- Address International Institutions and Organizations, Corporates, Knowledge Partners, Professional Societies, NGOs (National/ International) and other membership categories for enrolment.
- Organize funding support and initiate establishing a corpus fund.
- Promote linkages with regional and global extension networks
- Follow-up the cross-learning possibilities matrix (CLPM) from the partner countries and identify the important areas for innovative pilots.
- Update AEPSA website regularly to make it regionally relevant, member friendly & useful to the stakeholders, especially the farmers.
- Adoption of AEPSA Annual Action Plan 2025-26 and working out budget details for 2026-27.
- Follow-up with the second phase countries for development of C-AEPs.
- Initiate efforts on Training & CB of AEPSA core & CRPs and also initiate a few models paid training programs in collaboration with lead institutes in the partner countries and global experts.
- Follow-up on the space, registration of AEPSA, opening the bank account and FCRA clearance.
- Examine the possibility of project partnerships with international agencies and CGIAR centres with focus on Asia - Africa.
- Initiate action on next annual review in April/May, 2026.

Vote of Thanks

Dr. R.K. Tripathi, Coordinator (Programs & Partnerships), AEPSA expressed deep appreciation and sincere thanks to the Chair, Co-Chair and Members of AEPSA Advisory Committee and Special Invitees for their valuable contribution, thoughtful deliberations and valuable suggestions that would undoubtedly facilitate AEPSA achieve its performance to desired level. He also expressed his sincere thanks to Dr. V.V. Sadamate, Chief Coordinator &

Team AEPSA for their tireless efforts in organizing second Advisory Committee meeting successfully. He expressed thanks to Dr. R.R. Burman, Dr. Padaria, Dr. Kumbhare and Mr. Svatantra Dubey for their direct and indirect support in organizing this meeting. He also expressed sincere thanks to Dr Bhag Mal, Secretary, TAAS and Ms. Simmi Dogra, Office Secretary for technical and back-up support provided, respectively.