

# **Navsari Agricultural University**

## **Second Annual Convocation Address**

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Address by

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**His Excellency the Governor of Gujarat and the Chancellor Shri Nawal Kishore ji Sharma; Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Cooperation, Fisheries, Panchayat, Rural Housing Development and Gau Sanvardhan, Government of Gujarat Shri Bhupendra Sinhji Chudasama; Vice-Chancellor of the University Dr. R.P.S. Ahlawat; Members of the Board, various University Authorities; Learned Faculty members; Distinguished guests; Recipient of degrees; Students; Press and Media; Ladies and Gentlemen;**

At the outset, I express my profound gratitude to His Excellency the Governor of Gujarat and the Chancellor of the University Shri Nawal Kishore ji Sharma and Vice-Chancellor Dr. R.P.S.Ahlawat for the invitation to address the Second Annual Convocation of this prestigious University. I indeed deem it as an honour and privilege.

Dear students, kindly accept my hearty congratulations for earning the well-deserved degrees and concomitant awards and prizes. On this opportunity I also compliment the faculty members who imparted high quality education and inculcated rich values to have prepared the students for facing challenges in life ahead.

I am proud to be in *the home land of Mahatma Gandhi – the Father of the Nation, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel – the Iron Man of India, Shri Morarjibhai Desai – a leading statesman of his era and later Prime Minister, Swami Dayanand Saraswati – the founder of Arya Samaj, Veer Narmad – a poet and social reformer and Shri Vikram Sarabhai – a progenitor of Space Research Programme.* The City of Navsari itself has contributed highly distinguished personalities that include the industrial giants viz. Dadabhai Navroji and Jamshedji Tata.

Navsari Agricultural University by virtue of its vicinity to Dandi will always be a preferred destination for all those who seek the path of truth. With the forthcoming

support of the Government of Gujarat, I am sure that Navsari Agricultural University would shape-up itself into a World Class Institute. ICAR, as per its policy and agreed guidelines, will continue to provide the University all possible support to help achieve its mission of upholding the quality and relevance in higher agricultural education.

Dear scientists and students, kindly unleash the hidden potential in you. I see in each of you a Dr. C.T. Patel in making who gave the World the First Cotton Hybrid that made a great impact towards farm-prosperity. Besides recording several firsts in cotton, Navsari Agricultural University has through resistance breeding successfully overcome the menace of Bacterial Leaf Blight in Paddy and that of Wilt and Red Rot in sugarcane - big feats by the University on all accounts. Its contributions to fruit crops especially mango, 'sapota' and banana are well documented and are, from all angles, remarkable as reflected by the ranking of Gujarat in top two or three in terms of productivity in these sectors.

Soil and Water Management including drainage are the other areas in which University has enormously contributed through research and large-scale demonstrations of technologies on farmers' fields. The phenomenal rise observed in the sale of

drip-irrigation sets and drainage pipes in Gujarat during last two years illustrates the positive shift in the attitude of its farmers towards natural resource management, conservation and rejuvenation technologies.

I am appreciative of the new initiatives taken by the Navsari Agricultural University for bringing about an all round improvement in the coveted endeavours and functional efficiency of various organs of the university. ICAR in its mission to improve the educational standards of Agricultural Universities (AUs) has enhanced the financial assistance to the AUs. We envision each University to establish one or more Centers of Excellence in strategic/frontier areas. We have to be globally competitive in science and technology or else we will be left behind in this era of global competition. India is already ushering as a knowledge power in the world – the best example of it being the I.T. sector, which earns our country around Rs. 40 billions worth of foreign exchange.

The present agricultural scenario in the country is beset with challenges such as decline in growth rate since mid nineties, large number of people living Below Poverty Line (BPL) etc. It is through the development of agriculture and its allied sectors including rural that a science-led growth is achieved, sustained and augmented. The recent rise in GDP as well in the agricultural GDP, to an extent, is the pointer towards bright future of the

country. The agricultural scenario in Gujarat, in particular, is a witness to this growth. The State has witnessed a growth rate of 12.4 per cent in the first four years of *Tenth Five Year Plan*. It is vouched by the spectacular increase in agricultural GDP *i.e. from 9000 crores* in 2001-02 to *28,000 crores* in 2005-06. The estimates for the current year are placed at 33 or 34 thousand crores *i.e.* around 12 per cent increase over the last year. We compliment the people of the State and the enabling environment for this leap forward.

Gujarat now has the challenge of sustaining this high growth rate and, in my opinion, the state has the capability to achieve it provided:

- (i) The capital investment in agriculture sector is raised to 30 per cent desirably as is the case in the industry sector,
- (ii) Infrastructure for processing, storage, pack houses, etc., are established to promote exports and fetch farmers higher prices,
- (iii) Market intelligence net-work and other related services are created to cover most of the farmers, and
- (iv) Research and higher education in the Universities is adequately strengthened.

This is not an all-inclusive *desiderata* but is to emphasize that adequate steps shall have to be taken

to achieve and sustain the spurts in growth.

Education has to be contextual and remain aligned with contemporary and dynamic economy. ICAR supports the AUs towards achieving this end. On this occasion, I may be allowed to apprise the dignitaries and all those present here in this august gathering about the ICARs' new initiatives. Some of the prominent ones are:

### ***1. Restructuring and revamping higher agricultural education***

Agriculture has undergone a very rapid transformation because of integration of the frontier technologies and post-WTO globalization and commercialization during the recent past. To develop matching expertise, ICAR considered it essential to revise the present course curriculum of U.G. Hence, a High Level Committee of Deans, the IV Deans' Committee, was constituted, which has submitted its recommendations. The same have been circulated to the Vice-Chancellor of all agricultural universities. ICAR stands to support and promote the adoption of recommendations made therein. Norms and standards of departments, faculty positions and minimum infrastructure for different faculties at under graduate level have been developed. Under Graduate programmes have been restructured for increased practical and practice contents

New curricula and syllabi have been developed with an emphasis on *Experiential Learning* and infusion of professionalism at the undergraduate level while not jeopardizing the super *specialization* in frontier areas at higher levels. In this regard, the Council has supported the NAU recently by providing financial assistance to establish an Onion dehydration plant and a Biofertilizer production unit under the project on *Experiential Learning*.

Faculty development especially in cutting-edge technologies is needed. We have to reduce inbreeding in AUs. An arduous export of Indian higher agricultural education is needed to remain globally competitive in this arena by selectively opening the campuses abroad and by attracting the foreign students to Indian Agricultural Universities. Education has to impart not only knowledge, but also skill and right attitude. Facilitating experiential learning and also industry-attachment of students would prepare them to enter the professional life with needed skills, confidence and expertise. The Council will continue to provide performance-linked support, with appropriate financial discipline, to AUs for higher agricultural education.

## **2. Indo-US Agricultural Knowledge Initiative (AKI)**

Recognizing the long history of cooperation between India and US in Agriculture and the success of Indian State Agricultural Universities established on the pattern of Land Grant Colleges of US, the Indo-US-AKI was built on this tradition of collaboration to address new

challenges and opportunities of modern-day agriculture. Priority focus areas identified under AKI are:

- (1) Human Resources and Institutional Capacity Building
- (2) Food Processing and Marketing
- (3) Biotechnology

(4) Water Resource Management. Under the Indo-US AKI, the Council has supported a number of scientists who were deputed in the year 2006 for training in leading laboratories/ Universities of USA in the areas of Biotechnology, Water Management, Food Processing/ Bio Fuels/ Post Harvest Technology, Distance Learning and Library Information Systems.

15 Borlaug Fellows were selected from the Indian National Agricultural Research System (NARS). Two Scientists successfully participated in the Workshop on Genomics-Enabled Molecular Breeding in Legumes organized by University of California, Davis. A project on pigeon pea genomic has come up at national level in collaboration with the US Universities of California and Davis.

Indo-US workshops have already been held on water management and curriculum development. Workshops on food policy and biotechnology related

areas are slated during the year 2007-08. Based on identification of partners, and funding sources from US, joint collaborative research projects are taken up under AKI. With funding support for expenditure in US from the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC), projects such as those on pigeonpea genomics; water harvesting for ground water recharge; water resource management; water management for rain-fed agriculture and capacity building for water management, and risk analysis and modeling to promote trade, have already been initiated. Further collaboration is contemplated.

### **3. Niche Area of Excellence**

Niche Area of Excellence provision of the ICAR is leading towards development of facilities and expertise that could be fruitfully utilized in achieving excellence in strategic area of strength that could also be utilized for faculty development. The subject area selection for these Centres is based on existing institutional strength and strategic needs of the region. Centres of Niche Area Excellence are being seen to support development of new teaching and post-graduate research programmes and materials. Additionally, these Centres would help in building competent human resource in the field of new sciences and transfer of technology.

### **4. National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP)**

The *NAIP* is to facilitate accelerated and sustainable transformation of Indian agriculture in support of *poverty alleviation* and *income generation* by collaborative development and application of agricultural innovation by the *public research* organizations in partnership with the farmer's groups, *the private sector*, the *civil society organizations* and other *stakeholders*. The components under which the financial assistance would be provided from this National Project are:

- (i) Catalyzing the management of NARS
- (ii) Production to consumption research involving the value chain right from production to consumption.
- (iii) Sustainable Rural Livelihood Security for Poverty alleviation in the disadvantaged 150 districts identified by the Planning Commission.
- (iv) Basic and strategic Research in Agricultural Sciences especially *Biotechnology*.

All the research projects conceived under NAIP will be operated in the *consortium mode* with AUs, ICAR Institutes, NGOs, Industries and Progressive farmers as partners.

## **5. Mega Seed Project**

Recognizing the fact that unavailability of quality seeds is the main constraint in realizing the created production potential of crops, ICAR conceived and commissioned, a Mega Seed Project was launched by the ICAR and is being implemented through the AUs. Each AU has been provided adequate funds for creating necessary infrastructure for raising different categories of seed of various crops including seedlings, saplings and grafts. Under the project, the funds have also been provided for training farmers and students in seed production to facilitate involvement of farmers in seed production at later stages.

## **6. National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Microorganisms**

On the lines of *National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources* and *National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources*, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research has established a *similar Bureau for Agriculturally Important Microorganisms* at Mau in U.P. It will not only serve as repository of gene pool in agriculturally important microorganisms but also help to boost the research in microbiology – a field in which we have lagged behind. I am sure, it will open a new vista of opportunities for Indian agriculture, be it the bio-fertilizer

or bio-control of diseases and pests, or heavy metal bio-remediation or development of new food products through fermentation technology.

*Dear graduates, you are stepping out of this University at a juncture when the economy of Gujarat state is on the threshold of entering into a higher trajectory. Concomitantly, there may not be any dearth of job opportunities for you at large. I hope and pray that wherever you go and whichever career you pursue, you win. As long as you keep on learning and having self-renewal, you will be achievers in all of your endeavours.*

As Charles Darwin, the Naturalist (1809-1882) stated:

***“It is not the strongest of the species that survive,  
Nor the most intelligent,  
But the one most responsive to change.”***

I wish you all a successful and meaningful life ahead.

**JAI HIND**