

Agricultural extension to accelerate impact of science

NEW DELHI, India – Senior officials, scientists, and other representatives of the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), and project partners convened for the ICAR-IRRI Collaborative workshop on 4-5 May 2017 to discuss the strengthening of research in agricultural extension.

Agricultural extension is seen as a crucial means to accelerate the impact of agricultural knowledge and technologies by informing policy and practice, as well as to promote innovation.

Uma Shankar Singh, South Asia Regional Coordinator of the Stress-Tolerant Rice for Africa and South Asia (STRASA) project, said in his opening message that the linkages between technological developments and impact must be strengthened by understanding extension and delivery systems better.

India, the second most-populated country in the world, faces the massive challenges of poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. While agricultural research has and continues to make significant advances post Green Revolution, the challenges persist and are becoming complex.

“Multiple challenges in India that include 60 million farmers with less than one hectare of land, and the outmigration of men and youth from rural areas, leaving the women and elderly in charge of agricultural activities—these need to be addressed by promoting integrated food system models and convergence of various extension efforts and agencies to cover all the segments of farming population,” said ICAR Deputy Director General for Extension Ashok Kumar Singh. He urged scientists to generate evidence and data to inform strategies for improvement of extension systems, assess the impact of extension services, and quantify the contribution of extension services to agricultural development. Dr Randhir Singh, ADG (AE) mentioned that research in extension need to be strengthened through networking of extension scientists in India and abroad.

The workshop is part of efforts to reimagine agricultural extension and ensure that the outputs of research benefit the marginalized and poor farming communities. Innovative extension methods and approaches are badly needed to reach those previously beyond the scope of regular extension.

IRRI Representative for South Asia Nafees Meah emphasized the “need to consider the changing social norms and transformation in communities” and urged orientation of research and extension efforts with these changes.

Development of new methods in public extension must indeed be informed by rigorous extension research. This workshop, as part of the IRRI-ICAR collaboration, was intended to take this area further as a high-priority agenda in the region.



The workshop was attended by a diverse group of about 40 extension researchers and practitioners, discussion among whom sought a deeper and common understanding of constraints in extension practice and research, as well as potential solutions.

Also in the workshop were the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID, Food and Agriculture Organization, representatives of which reinforced support for and interest in the critical area of agricultural extension and for initiatives to take it forward.