

PROCEEDINGS

PANEL DISCUSSION, TRANSFORMING IARI INTO GLOBAL UNIVERSITY AN ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE

IARI Alumni Association

June 22, 2024

Cover Note

Dear Alumni

As you are aware, a national symposium was organized on June 22, 2024 at the Bharat Ratna Dr. C.S. Subramanian Hall, NASC Complex, New Delhi-110012. Among the various activities held on that day, a panel discussion was also organized. Please find the proceedings of the **Panel discussion, “Transforming IARI into Global University – An Alumni perspective”** for your information.

Regards

Anil K. Singh Secretary

Acknowledgments

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to **Dr. P.L. Gautam**, Chancellor of RPCAU Pusa, Bihar, for graciously serving as the Chairman of this event. We are deeply grateful to our Convenor, **Dr. Anupama Singh**, Dean of ICAR-IARI, New Delhi, and Patron of IAA, for her invaluable leadership and unwavering support. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to our esteemed panelists:

- **Dr. R.C. Agrawal**, Deputy Director General (Education), ICAR, New Delhi & Vice President, IAA
- **Dr. A.K. Singh**, Director, IARI, New Delhi & President, IAA
- **Dr. B.S. Dhillon**, Former Vice Chancellor, PAU, Ludhiana
- **Dr. K. Siddique**, Director, Institute of Agriculture, UWA, Australia

Our special thanks go to the distinguished discussants whose contributions have been instrumental in deepening the discourse:

- **Dr. R.B. Singh**, Former Director, IARI, New Delhi
- **Dr. H.S. Gupta**, Former Director, IARI, New Delhi
- **Dr. H. Pathak**, Director General, ICAR and Secretary, DARE, New Delhi
- **Dr. Sanjay Kumar**, Chairman, ASRB, New Delhi
- **Dr. T. Mohapatra**, Chairman, PPVFRA, New Delhi
- **Dr. S.K. Vasal**, World Food Prize Laureate
- **Dr. H.P.S. Sangwan**, IARI Alumnus

Proceedings

Proceedings of the Panel discussion, “Transforming IARI into Global University – An Alumni perspective” held on the occasion of IARI Alumni Meet & National Symposium Organised by IARI Alumni Association (IAA) on June 22, 2024

Chairman: Dr. P. L.Gautam, Chancellor RPCAU Pusa, Bihar

Convenor: Dr. Anupama Singh, Dean, ICAR-IARI, N Delhi & Patron, IAA

Penalists:

- Dr. R.C. Agrawal, DDG (Education), ICAR, N Delhi & Vice President, IAA
- Dr. A. K. Singh, Director, IARI, New Delhi & President, IAA
- Dr. B. S. Dhillon, Former Vice Chancellor, PAU, Ludhiana
- Dr. K. Siddique, Director, Institute of Agriculture, UWA, Australia

Discussants:

- Dr R.B Singh, Former Director, IARI, New Delhi
- Dr HS Gupta, Former Director, IARI, New Delhi
- Dr H Pathak, DG ICAR and Secretary DARE, New Delhi
- Dr Sanjay Kumar, Chairman, ASRB, New Delhi
- Dr T Mohapatra, Chairman, PPVFRA, N Delhi
- Dr SK Vasal, World Food Prize Laureate
- Dr HPS Sangwan, IARI Alumnus

The newly elected Executive Committee of IARI Alumni Association, New Delhi organized the Alumni Meet and a National Symposium on “Transforming IARI into a Global Leader in Agricultural Research and Education: An Alumni Perspective” on June 22, 2024 at Bharat Ratna Dr. C. Subramaniam Auditorium, NASC Complex, Pusa, New Delhi-110012. During the symposium, a panel discussion session on “Transforming IARI into Global University - An Alumni perspective” was also organized.

Dr. Anupama Singh welcomed the dignitaries and alumni delegates. She briefed about the concept of global University. It was informed that in the Rajya Sabha during 2018, there was a question regarding establishing world class agricultural University in the country. Responding to it and the directives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, the ICAR initiated the exercise to transform the existing ecosystem of its four Deemed to be Universities, in the first phase, as world class universities. Subsequently, the National Education Policy-2020 also rolled out its vision of the Multidisciplinary Education and Research University (MERU). To expedite the NEP compliance, IARI, New Delhi was identified for support by the competent authority of ICAR, in the first phase for transforming into a global University/MERU. She further highlighted that the panel discussion had been organized with the objectives to understand the requirement of IARI in context in a time-bound manner, invite suggestions and develop the roadmap on role of alumni network in this mission and to work out the strategies for mobilization of the resources through alumni network for the same.

Presentations and Discussion:

After the formal welcome and stage setting, the session Chair invited Dr. R.C. Agrawal for lead presentation. He informed the august gathering that IARI had already taken many steps for meeting the goal of global University including establishment of Center of Excellence for the Genomics which has been helping the students and faculty to undergo hands on training in this emerging area. He emphasized on the global ranking of the universities so that IARI can have more number of international students, enhanced visibility and reputation, more opportunities for international collaborations, diversified funding opportunities, etc. Out of the four main global rankings, he particularly focused on the QS ranking. He mentioned five main criteria to determine good

world ranking of any University. Among these, the maximum marks were allotted to the academic reputation (40%) and employer reputation (20%). The alumni strength and engagement also play very important role in this process. He requested all the alumni to support IARI in these parameters particularly through proactively updating the employee reputation, providing authentic information to the ranking system etc. He added that for expansion of IARI International Research Network, the alumni, being in senior positions across the globe, should come forward for support in research collaborations and networking, to enhance H index and citations. He also informed that for QS ranking, the information is collected through the various sources from the social media. Therefore, alumni may make efforts for more social presence on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram etc. He also underscored the important role being played by the Scopus in these rankings and the role alumni can play through helping IARI students and faculty in enhancing collaborations in research and publications. He also stressed upon the industry-academia linkages and urged IARI alumni in corporate sector to come forward to support and strengthen these bonds.

In his remarks, Dr. A.K. Singh mentioned that in the QS and the Times ranking systems and MERU, the two essential requirements for a University comprised of multi-level educational system (UG, PG and Ph.D.) and the faculty diversity. He informed the house that, IARI has already started UG program in four disciplines. He appreciated ICAR initiative of expansion of IARI's academic programmes to the regional hubs. Dr Singh also briefed about the need of inviting Nobel laureates and global citizens on board, as guest faculty, special guests in important events etc. Work is needed to address the requirement of 15% each of faculty and students to fetch score. IARI has initiated efforts to recognise the international faculty from amongst the Indian diaspora as adjunct professors and international postdocs but more efforts are needed. IARI is going to start from this year, the self-financing scheme for NRIs and students of international origin, initiated dual degree programme with Western Sydney University and is working on expansion of similar collaboration with University of Western Australia, Murdoch University, Michigan State University, etc. Dr. Singh urged upon IARI alumni to augment these efforts. He suggested the following strategies as possible interventions of Alumni: (i) Investment in physical capital, infrastructure, including new

Academic blocks, recreational facilities, renovation of existing buildings (ii) investment in knowledge capital and R4D, such as creation and empowering centres of knowledge, innovation, technology incubation, continuing education, curriculum Development etc., (iii) Investment in human capital in form of establishing medals, endowment, scholarship programs, postdoctoral fellowship, faculty exchange, sabbaticals, job placement and motivation and mentoring.

Dr. BS Dhillon appreciated the capacity building work being done by the IARI. He emphasized on importance of research-intensive character of IARI, increasing the PhD intake, industry academia interface, branding of IARI and research in new areas, inviting/ selecting international and national faculty on the model of ICRISAT, giving freedom to Director IARI in this regard, need of powers of vice chancellor to the Director. He expressed concern over IARI UG programme and publication of research outcomes in paid journals. Dr Dhillon stated that adequate funding requirement is critical and all world ranked research intensive universities are being funded by the governments and concluded by stating that focus should be on quality research and education rather than ranking.

Dr. Kadambot Siddique shared his experience in lifting the University of Western Australia from nowhere to number one in the country in agriculture science, and number 22 in the world. He suggested that IARI should not stick to one ranking; instead, it should go for all four rankings. He expressed his concern that IARI is not recognized as a full-fledged University, although it is recognized as an excellent research institute. He also expressed his concern over the starting of the UG programmes by IARI that could dilute IARI efforts as IARI and its hubs don't have enough resources and faculty members. He also raised concern over the non-availability of world class infrastructure and facilities, except in certain areas. Further, he raised the issue of lack of the inter-disciplinary approach in HRD and R4D, as the students are confined to the tight boundaries of the divisions. He mentioned that the connection of IARI with the industry has diluted and that should be restored. He also suggested to follow the international rating instead of the NAAS rating of journals. He emphasised upon renaming of IARI as National Agricultural Research University, to facilitate the cause

of the Global University/MERU mission. He summed up his presentation by flagging three requirements to be a world class institution, namely the quality students, quality teachers and world class infrastructure.

Prof. R.B. Singh appreciated the efforts of revival of the IARI Alumni Association and the new initiatives that IARI has taken up including the alignment of its educational system with the NEP-2020 and creation of 16 hubs throughout the country. He also stressed upon the integration of efforts with frontier areas of science *viz*, the AI, digitalization, big data, renewable energy, hydrogen economy, carbon economy, machine learning, drone, precision farming, molecular biology, gene editing etc.

Dr. H.S. Gupta congratulated the Alumni of IARI for the immense contributions, which they have made to the agricultural development of the country through their research, education and extension activities. He also complimented the institute for setting a goal of becoming a world class University in agricultural research, education and extension and also for starting the UG degree programs, which is a prerequisite for qualifying to be counted in the various global rankings. Dr Gupta suggested that the SWOT analysis of Institute done at the time of initiation of the World University mission, should be revisited and done again in present day context. He expressed concerns over the viability of hub system initiated recently, in terms of inadequate qualified teachers in all the disciplines and urged that IARI should look into it so that the quality of the graduates, which are going to be produced should, in no way be inferior to the quality of graduates coming from the leading Agricultural Universities. He suggested that Undergraduate courses should be shifted to IARI Assam and Jharkhand campuses, Ranchi, Baramati and Raipur hubs and faculty strength should be built up for effectively running UG programmes. In IARI New Delhi, PG teaching and research programme should not be diluted. He emphasised that the following criteria should be considered to expedite process of making IARI a global University:

- Ensure academic freedom to the institution, in term of designing of their courses, academic programmes etc.
- Extend adequate and sustained financial assistance.

- Provide autonomy in recruitment, governance and pay structure at par with the CAUs.
- IARI is already number one in Agricultural Sciences in country, our single goal should be on global recognition of the institute like Wageningen University in Agricultural sciences.

Dr Himanshu Pathak thanked the speakers for their suggestions given in the session. He highlighted upon the recent initiatives taken by the ICAR regarding institute autonomy and informed the assembly about the recently revised delegation of powers. He mentioned that almost 95% of the activities of any research institute will be or can be handled within the institute itself. Elaborating on the budget issue, he informed that in last one or two years, the budget of IARI had been increased by 35%. He specially mentioned that now under Corpus Fund whatever revenue is being generated by any institute, 70% of the same can be used with the consent of only Directors of the Institutes.

Dr. Sanjay Kumar emphasized upon the full-fledged analysis on the agricultural commodities for which country is dependent on import and in the next phase of research, thrust should be on these commodities which will add lot of value to our research. Entrepreneurship development in agriculture should be intensified. He also stressed upon the need of innovation oriented research to attract interest of industry in IARI.

Dr Trilochan Mohapatra suggested that another round of focussed deliberation may be organised online/ hybrid mode to obtain expert opinions from alumni scattered worldwide.

Dr. S.K. Vassal suggested that IARI should develop a germplasm management system, through collaboration with relevant national and international programs. He also expressed his willingness, as an alumnus, for delivering the lectures on hybrid technology and other topics for IARI students and faculty.

Dr HPS Sangwan emphasised upon the priority to groom quality teachers for imparting high quality agricultural education in country. He suggested that on the pattern of Oxford Alumni Union, IARI alumni association should organise strong expert lectures

monthly on diverse topics of national interest.

Recommendations:

Concluding the dialogue, Dr. Gautam appreciated the Alumni Association for organizing the Alumni Meet and National Symposium on a very relevant theme. He thanked the lead speakers, panelists and the discussants for useful inputs and interventions. He consolidated the recommendations as follows:

1. The initiative taken by the ICAR to nurture IARI and other deemed Universities as global Universities should continue to score respectable international rankings. The concerns raised regarding shortage of faculty, training of teachers and quality infrastructure at IARI and its hubs (human resources, labs, library, lecture halls, equipment, sports facilities, hostels etc.) should be addressed urgently. In the race for global ranking, the focus on addressing in-adequate funding and quality of research and education should not be compromised. Hence, it may be worthwhile to use the services of alumni and senior experts to visit IARI and its hubs and suggest immediate and long term remedial/corrective measures for ensuring the desired quality of education, research and extension.
2. The transformation of IARI as a global University is a daunting task, requiring functional, financial and administrative flexibility and autonomy. Further, the National Education Policy has no place for Deemed universities. Hence, IARI has a great opportunity to become MERU and this experience may further be helpful to upgrade the other DUs of the ICAR. Hence, it is high time to recognize ICAR- IARI and other DUs as “Institutions of National Importance” and make them Central Agricultural Universities through an act of Parliament.
3. The integration of the frontier areas of science, viz, the AI, digitalization, big data, renewable energy, hydrogen economy, carbon economy, machine learning, drone, precision farming, molecular biology, gene editing etc. may be ensured.
4. The NBPGR and IARI should develop a germplasm management system, in collaboration with other relevant national/ international programs
5. Creation of World class infrastructure and facilities, attracting the best faculty,

fostering inter-disciplinary approach in HRD and R4D and establishing effective academia- farmer/NGO/industry interface need a big thrust.

6. The IARI should invite Nobel /World food laureates and distinguished faculty from time to time to interact and guide the students and faculty. It should also fascinate the Indian diaspora as visiting faculty, adjunct professors, professors of practice etc.
7. The IARI should attract foreign students in self-financing scheme under international student fellowships, and the sandwich and dual degree program with reputed global Universities.
8. The IARI should also capitalize the Study in India (SII) program of Government of India by going world over and conduct fairs to interact with the students enrol them in large numbers.
9. As far as the role of alumni in developing the IARI Global University is concerned, the following were recommended:
 - (a) Attract investment in physical infrastructure, including new academic blocks, recreational facilities, renovation /refurbishing of buildings.
 - (b) The investment in knowledge capital and R4D by creation / empowering centres of knowledge, innovation, technology incubation, continuing education, curriculum development etc.,
 - (c) Establish medals, scholarships/ fellowships, chairs and support/promote faculty exchange, sabbaticals, motivation and mentoring.
 - (d) Deliver seminars and lectures on important topics periodically

The session came to an end with vote of thanks by the convener.