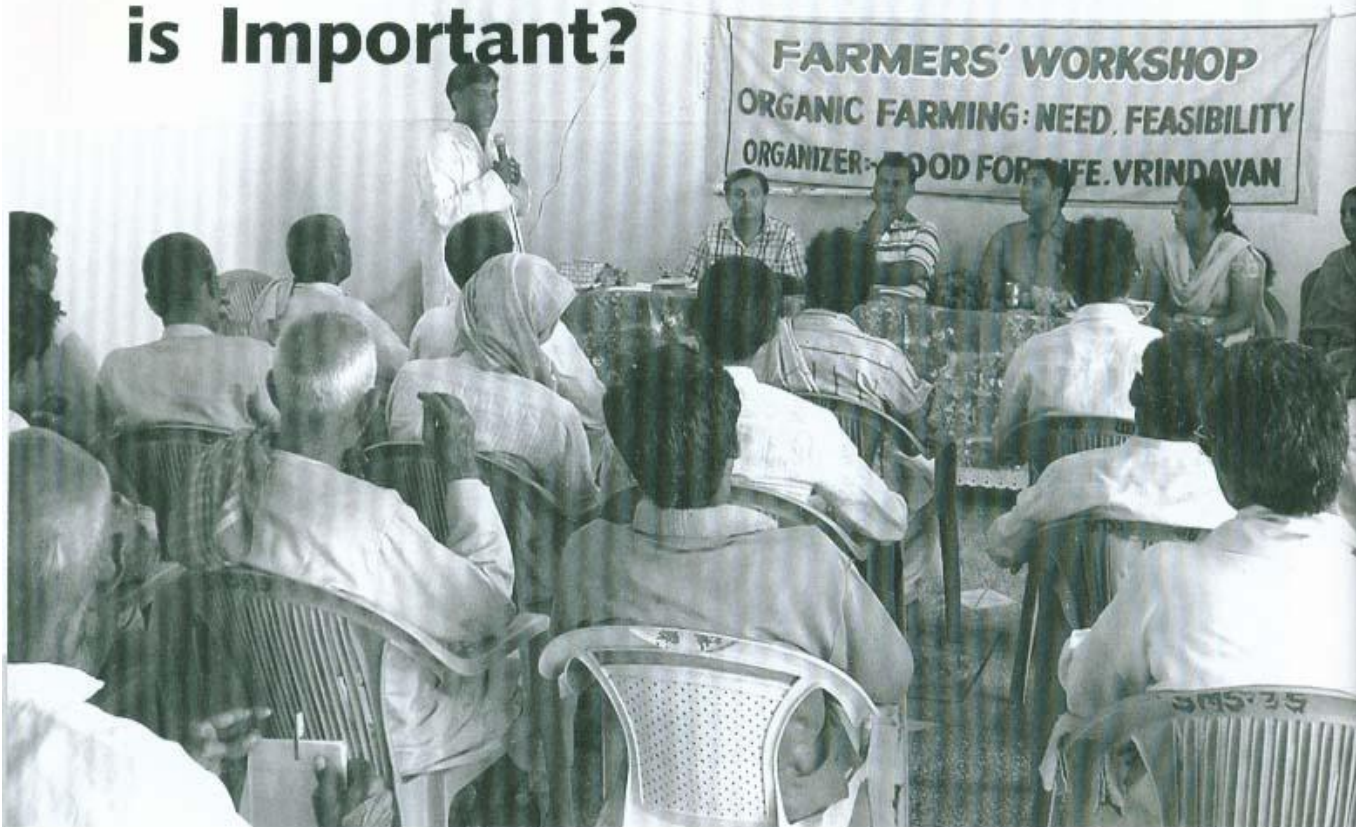


Why Agricultural Education is Important?



Despite the fact that India is and always has been an agrarian society, there has not been enough attention given to agriculture and agricultural studies in India. It is by no means the preferred choice of studies in India. This outlook towards agricultural studies needs to change in the country.

We are a big nation with a massive population. India needs to be food-sufficient for the proper growth and running of the country. There is no alternative to food security for a humungous nation like ours. Agricultural leadership can only be attained by proper research and education. It's about using the most potent seeds and deriving maximum yield per hectare. Farmers in the remote parts of the country need to be provided with the latest technology, enabling them to utilize India's soil to the maximum.

Students/executives should be encouraged to join agricultural studies. Importantly, the encouragement should not come from outside; it should be an internal drive to do something for the nation. And earn some money in the process.

Agricultural Education in India

India has a fairly well laid out agricultural education system. The country has one Central Agricultural University, forty-five

State Agricultural Universities and four National Institutes of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (Deemed Universities). The four deemed universities in the country are as follow:

- Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) – Got deemed University status in 1958;
- Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Izzatnagar (UP) – Specializes in animal sciences;
- National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), Karnal – Specializes in dairy technology; and,
- Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai – Specializes in fishery management.

Central Agricultural University

The Central Agricultural University was established by an act of parliament. Viz., the Central Agricultural University Act 1992 (No.40 of 1992). The University came into effect on 26th January 1993.

The University was functionalized on 13th September 1993. The jurisdiction of the University extends to six north eastern states – Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura. The University is headquartered at Imphal, Manipur.

Accreditation

The ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) plans, undertakes, aids, promotes and coordinates higher Agricultural Education in India. It has been promoting the quality of Agricultural Education in the country since the 1950s, through Education Panel (1952), Standing Committee (1965) and Norms and Accreditation Committee (1974). To further improve and sustain the quality of higher Agricultural Education, an Accreditation Board was established in 1996 with well-defined objectives and functions.

Focus Areas

Agricultural education nowadays is highly focused and streamlined. A person can select his stream from a number of specializations. The following are some of the core studies/work areas available:

Agro-Business: There are many businesses located around agriculture. Businesses that are included in the definition of Agro-business are food production, seed supply, agrochemicals, farm machinery, wholesale & distribution, processing, marketing and retail sales.

Farming: Farming is a lucrative business these days. The demand for food will never go down, however bad the recession may be! Farming also offers an unbelievable and serene working environment to many corporate executives. Farming has an irresistible charm.

Agricultural Research: As discussed already, agricultural research is a major thrust area for Indian agriculture. As the amount of land available cannot be increased, it's very important that new systems are introduced through large scale research & development.

Agricultural Education: Since agriculture is an ever evolving discipline, educationists are required at all levels. Bright minds should take up agricultural education. Great minds ignite revolutions.

Agricultural Services: Agriculture needs to be serviced and serviced well. Services range from information dissipation (weather, local prices, market information, best practices...) to core essentials like transportation and warehousing. These services most often have to be provided at breakneck speed to affirm smooth operations.



Professionals are required to manage the vast and ever-growing network of micro-finance institutions in the country. People will need to know the ins/outs of micro-financing and develop an error free mechanism

Media: The growth of Indian media has been sensational, not just for the sector but for India as well. Agricultural journalism entails following agriculture in the country and commenting on the policies and procedures being followed. Considering the length and breadth of our country, it is a very demanding job. The challenges involved around agricultural journalism are alluring and will not provide a single dull moment.

Micro-Finance Banking/Cooperative Banking: We all know now the trick to rural banking is micro-finance/cooperative banking. Professionals are required to manage the vast and ever-growing network of micro-finance institutions in the country. People will need to know the ins/outs of micro-financing and develop an error free mechanism.

The Ideal Resource

What are the characteristics a professional working in agriculture should possess? Here are a few indicators:

- Should not be addicted to urban life. Since most agricultural works happens in rural areas, a person would have to stay a lot in rural and semi-urban centres;
- The person should not be scared or perturbed by hardships. Agriculture is hard work and one should be prepared for it;
- The person will be susceptible to the vagaries of nature. Be prepared for whatever God can dish out;
- Agriculture should interest the person. Work should be interesting for all professionals; more so for agriculturists. They will be keener to give their best;
- Work will get dirty. Quite literally. Be prepared for stepping on cow dung, stranded vehicles on muddy roads and a few bites here and there. Nothing life threatening, really. Consider this as a little advance warning;
- Good health is essential; and,
- Scientific understanding. Something dearly required by Indian agriculture.

Summary

Agriculture is a great field to be in. A person connects directly to his/her roots. And it is the industry of the future. Agriculture is an ideal scenario – it combines the best of both the worlds. Immensely satisfying and gratifying. Just do it the right way.