

# Food Security Needs Three Pronged Approach: Dr. Paroda

*Dr. Rajendra Singh Paroda is the Chairman of Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS). Dr. Paroda also served as Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) & Secretary (DARE) between 1994 and 2001.*

*Dr. Paroda is an accomplished plant breeder, geneticist by profession and an able research administrator. Dr. Paroda has the unique distinction of being the main architect of the world's three largest and most modern national gene banks. He is fellow of almost all the prestigious science Academies in India and abroad – fellow of the Russian, Georgian, Armenian, and Tajikistan Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), Italy. In recognition of his meritorious contributions to agricultural research, the President of India conferred Padma Bhushan on him in 1998. Other prestigious awards conferred on him include: Asia Pacific Seed Association Special Award (1995); Harbhajan Singh Award (2001); B.P. Pal Memorial Award (2003); Borlaug Award (2006); and, Agriculture Leadership Award (2008).*

*Dr. Paroda recently spared some of his valuable time for a conversation with 'Financing Agriculture' editor Kalyan Kumar. Excerpts follow:*



**Q. How does TAAS view the Food Security issue in India and what can be the right approach to attain food security? Is it enhancement of agri infrastructure or adoption of new technologies in farming?**

The Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS) views the issue of food and nutrition security in India to be a three pronged approach i.e. physical, economical and ecological access to food being produced in the country. While the physical access will continue to be achieved through enhancement of capital investment in agricultural infrastructure and adoption of new innovations in farming, the issues of economic and ecological access are the major challenges which need to be addressed currently. This can be achieved by enhancing the income of farmers through linking them to markets and by major efforts to produce food where it is needed. In this context, eastern and north-eastern regions of our country offer great opportunities, but would require both political will and mission mode approach involving all stakeholders.

**Q. In your view how can India balance the subsistence farmers and commercial farming without endangering food production to feed India's one billion plus population?**

India is fortunate to have enough cultivable land, even more than China and has varying agro-climatic conditions suitable for diversified agriculture. Hence, despite the imbalance of both resource poor farmers and large scale farmers, I personally do not see any problem for enhancing our food production to feed more than one billion people. Both small scale and commercial farming have their place provided we bring in resilience in agriculture through efficient and innovative farming practices and put in place policies for large scale farming without detriment to small farm holders.

**Q. What is the action plan of TAAS on the food security front?**

TAAS recently organized a Brainstorming Workshop inviting eminent experts and policy makers on 'Emerging Challenges before Indian Agriculture - The Way Forward'. We made ten specific recommendations for immediate action. Increasing agricultural productivity is a key challenge for ensuring national food security. To increase production, exploiting the potential of existing yield gaps offers a tremendous opportunity. Hence, a Mission Mode Program on 'Bridging the Productivity Gap' with real missionary zeal and effective monitoring is required to be launched with meticulous planning as a matter of priority.

**Q. What more does India have to do in its agriculture to absorb more technologies to raise production. What is the role of research and academic institutions in the agriculture domain to achieve this?**

India has to have an aggressive approach for bridging the yield gap through innovative ways of technology transfer. In this process, effective role of NGOs, private sector and progressive farmers will have to be recognized and an enabling environment created for large scale impact of various innovations that are yet to be adopted on a large scale. Some recent examples of such innovations are single cross maize hybrids, hybrid rice, conservation agriculture, etc.

**Q. What is your vision of Indian agriculture for the coming years in terms of growth, global competitiveness and food sufficiency?**

My vision of Indian Agriculture is to move forward with no room for complacency and to ensure higher growth of production not only in crops but also in other sectors of agriculture (livestock, fishery, horticulture, forestry etc.). No doubt, this would require increased investments on agricultural research for inclusive development and to have value addition to be globally competitive and to ensure continued national food and nutrition security.