

## **ICAR's 2025 Vice-Chancellors and Directors Conference: Convergence for Action**

On May 20, 2025, the Annual Conference of Vice-Chancellors of State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) and Directors of ICAR Institutes convened in New Delhi. The conference, themed "Convergence for Action: Shaping Agricultural Research, Education, and Extension for Viksit Bharat@2047," brought together key stakeholders to address critical challenges and opportunities in Indian agriculture.

The event was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Sh. Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and the Hon'ble Minister of State, Sh. Bhagirath Choudhary. Dr ML Jat, Secretary (DARE) & DG (ICAR), emphasized the need for an action-oriented approach to improve agricultural education quality, leveraging technology and resources for progressive agriculture.

Sh. Choudhary highlighted concerns about climate change and soil health, advocating for increased agricultural budgets, investment in AI, modern tools, genomics, and digitalization of the agricultural education system. He stressed the importance of curriculum revision, practical learning, and the incorporation of traditional farming techniques.

Sh. Chouhan emphasized a collaborative "One Nation-One Agriculture-One Team" approach, applauding the contributions of scientists, VCs/Directors, faculty, and state governments. He proposed a comprehensive six-tier program for agricultural development focusing on: increased production, reduced costs, secured selling prices, agricultural diversification, environmental sustainability, and promotion of natural farming. He further urged regular field visits to understand farmer needs, aligning research with on-farm realities, improving agricultural education through practical training, and attracting students to agri-business and related sectors. Additional suggestions included developing farmer-assistance mobile apps, surveying VCs/Directors and scientists to gauge innovation potential, learning from international best practices, strengthening the extension network, and sharing best practices amongst institutions.



Dr RS Paroda, Chairman, TAAS and Former Secretary (DARE) & DG (ICAR), delivered a speech virtually on this occasion during inaugural session. His speech on reimagining India's National

Agriculture Research System (NARS) lauded its past successes while advocating for crucial reforms. He highlighted NARS's pivotal role in India's Green, White, Blue, and Rainbow Revolutions, transforming it into a globally respected system. With India aiming for a \$5 trillion economy, agriculture's contribution is key, and NARS, with its extensive network of institutes, universities, and KVKs, is well-positioned to contribute significantly.

Dr Paroda emphasized two historical reforms: ICAR's establishment in 1965 and the Gajendra Gadkar Commission's restructuring. However, he stressed the urgent need for further reimagining and reform to address future challenges. He pointed to the insufficient research funding (0.4% of agricultural GDP, far below developed nations' 3-5%), advocating for at least doubling this investment. A paradigm shift from "Agricultural Research for Development" to "Agricultural Research for Innovation for Development" is necessary, with a strong focus on farmer-centric innovation reaching the grassroots. This includes educating youth to become not only white-collar workers, but also extension agents and agri-entrepreneurs.

Dr Paroda argued that innovations should focus on cost-effective and sustainable solutions such as biopesticides, biofertilizers, and efficient irrigation. The research agenda must be reoriented towards practical, farmer-focused innovation, rather than solely academic publications. Organizational reforms, as suggested by various expert committees are vital. KVKs should evolve into dynamic hubs of knowledge, skill development, and innovation. Increased coordination among universities and research institutions, along with a corporate culture fostering public-private partnerships and mission-oriented programs with robust monitoring, are essential.



Dr Paroda concluded by emphasizing continued policy support, academic freedom, and innovative thinking, advocating for a "Think globally, act locally" approach. He expressed confidence that a strengthened NARS will significantly contribute to India's development goals by 2047.

Dr Mangi Lal Jat, Secretary (DARE) and Director General (ICAR), highlighted that the conference is crucial in determining the future direction of agriculture, research, education, and extension. He remarked that ICAR should play the role of an elder brother in the national agricultural

education and research system, by guiding and supporting its institutional counterparts such as Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and agricultural universities to help them progress.

Vice-Chancellors of Agricultural Universities, Directors of ICAR Institutes, Deputy Director Generals of ICAR, and senior officials of the Council also participated in the conference.

The conference concluded with a vote of thanks by Sh Sanjay Garg, AS (DARE) & Secretary (ICAR), following the release of the “ICAR Kharif Agro-Advisory for Farmers 2025” book.



The full speech of Dr Paroda can be accessed through following link:

[https://youtu.be/0\\_pzm9Zmkss](https://youtu.be/0_pzm9Zmkss)