

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY SHRI SHARAD PAWAR, UNION MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION AT THE THIRD NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON KVK AT GBPUA&T, PANTNAGAR ON DECEMBER 27, 2008

Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, Major General (Retd.) B. C. Khanduriji, Agriculture Minister of Uttarakhand, Shri Trivendra Singh Rawatji, Dr. Mangala Rai, Secretary, DARE and Director General, ICAR, Dr. Bisht, Vice Chancellor, distinguished participants, ladies and Gentlemen.

2. I am delighted to participate in the Third National Conference on KVK. I am happy that this Conference is being held at this beautiful campus of Govind Ballabh Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, which is the first agricultural university in the country established in 1960 on the Land Grant Pattern of USA. Owing to its valuable contributions, Noble Laureate Dr. N.E. Bourlaug has rightly remarked that "Pantnagar is the harbinger of Green Revolution of India". The place is credited with the establishment of first Seed Corporation of the country as U.P. Seeds and Tarai Development Corporation, well known for its "Pantnagar Seed". At present more than 250 seed processing units are functioning in this region supplying seeds to many states in the country. The University has received the prestigious National level "Sardar Patel Outstanding ICAR Institution Award", twice for the year 1997 and 2005.
3. I extend a warm welcome to all the Programme Coordinators of Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Presidents/Secretaries of the Non-Governmental Organizations, Vice-Chancellors and Directors of Extension of Agricultural Universities, Directors of ICAR institutes, officers from various Ministries, Secretaries of the State Development Departments and extension professionals for making it convenient to participate in this Conference.
4. I congratulate the Programme Coordinators and staff of the KVK, Puducherry; KVK, Raichur, Karnataka; and KVK, Gurgaon, Haryana for winning the National Best KVK Award for the year 2005-06; and KVK, Pune, Maharashtra; KVK, Karimnagar, Andhra Pradesh and KVK, Jalna, Maharashtra for winning the National Best KVK Award for the year 2006-07. I am sure that they will keep up their good work and I wish all the KVKs to work hard for excellence in espousing the cause of the farming community in their districts.
5. ICAR has been making all efforts to strengthen the KVK system. The number of KVKs increased from 273 by the end of the IXth Plan to 562. Since the Second National Conference, there has been significantly higher budgetary allocation for the activities of the

KVKs. The KVK system has been proposed to be further strengthened for availability of web enabled technology, modules/capsules as alternative options for knowledge empowerment of farmers, extension agencies and other stakeholders; facilities of soil and water testing, plant health diagnostic and minimal agro-processing; and additional demonstration units on rainwater harvesting structures with micro-irrigation system, portable carp hatchery and integrated farming system. Provision has been made for Wi-Fi enabled mobile diagnostic cum exhibition units at the Directorates of Extension for use of the KVKs, besides continuation of support to the Directorates for knowledge empowerment, technological backstopping, and human resource development. The facilities of farmers' hostel created at the main campus of the agricultural universities will help for wider exposure of the farmers to the latest agricultural technologies after their training at the KVKs. I am happy to announce that the Zonal Coordinating Units will be upgraded to Zonal Project Directorates in order to improve overall monitoring mechanism and to foster more effective linkages with different agencies engaged in the task of agricultural development.

6. In spite of overall economic slowdown all over the world, India had a bumper harvest of 231 million tons of food grains with over 4.0 per cent growth rate in agriculture in 2007-08. I congratulate all the farmers of the country, the researchers, extension professionals, policy makers and all those engaged in the task of development of agriculture.
7. Agriculture is being accorded top priority in the country. The Central Government has initiated a number of schemes to help and guide the State Governments so as to take up scientific and technological interventions for higher agriculture growth. Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) has been launched with an outlay of Rs 25,000 crore for holistic development of agriculture in the XIth Plan. National Food Security Mission (NFSM) has been launched with an outlay of about Rs 5000 crore to enhance production of rice, wheat and pulses by 10, 8 and 2 million tones, respectively, by the end of the XIth Plan. In addition to such policy and development initiatives, sincere efforts of the researchers, educationists and extension workers are the need of the day. Our goal of attaining 4% agriculture growth rate during the XIth Plan needs concerted efforts by improving water management, focusing on soil quality, effective extension, diversifying into high value agriculture, promoting animal husbandry and fishery, and improving marketing systems.
8. We need to not only produce efficiently, but also to manage the produce including its processing, value addition and marketing efficiently. This will generate additional income

and create employment opportunities. Overall, agriculture has to be perceived differently and has to keep pace with the growth in other sectors of economy, to bring a sense of pride in the people engaged in agriculture.

9. Ever since the establishment of the Krishi Vigyan Kendras in the country, they have continued their efforts for assessment and refinement of various techniques and technologies for productivity enhancement and empowerment of the farming community. Empowerment of farmers is crucial to make farming a competitive and remunerative occupation and farmers' empowerment has been put as an important agenda for agricultural development.
10. Today, farmers need to connect with agri-business, production systems, research institutions, public administration, other farmers, both domestic and global market, and other numerous partners. Knowledge empowerment is becoming more and more important along with capital investment. The conventional mode of transfer of technology through personal contact by the extension agencies is no longer the sole or predominant mode of extension. There is more diverse need of information not only for production procedures, but also for quality certification and reporting, grading, packaging, storage, transportation and other requirements for both domestic and export markets.
11. There are a variety of farmers' organizations including cooperatives, farmers' clubs, self-help groups, and farmers' companies. These organizations need to be facilitated for undertaking primary processing and marketing of local products which requires different organizational support and greater demand for highly knowledge-intensive services. Indian agriculture needs to be viewed not as a way of life but as a vibrant economic activity with a sense of pride for future generations. In this context, farmer empowerment will include technological empowerment, addressing the heterogeneity of economic means and aspirations.
12. In the present context of agriculture and the problems faced by the farmers, I consider the theme of the conference as timely and appropriate in quest of enhanced agriculture growth not only for enhanced productivity but also improvement in sustainability, stability, equity and lastly quality and value addition for making agriculture more remunerative and for improvement in the quality of life of the farmers.

13. I hope that the conference will deliberate on many of such issues not only to understand various intricacies involved in empowering farmers but also identify appropriate strategies for enhancing the potential of our agriculture sector. I am sure, the KVKs will rise to the cause and wish all of you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.