

Indian Council of Agricultural Research Celebrates 'World Food Day'

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in collaboration with ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi celebrated 'World Food Day-2021' by organizing a webinar on "An evening with World Food Laureates to discuss the global food and nutrition security to meet the Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) during and after COVID-19 pandemic" on October 16, 2021 through virtual mode. World Food Laureates Prof. Mankombu Sambasivan Swaminathan (World Food Prize Laureate-1987), Dr. Gurdev Singh Khush (1996), Dr. Surinder Kumar Vasal (2000), Dr. Howarth Bouis (2016), and Dr. Rattan Lal (2020) shared their experiences and road map to fight hunger and malnutrition.

World Food Prize Laureates



Prof. M.S. Swaminathan



Dr. G.S. Khush



Dr. S.K. Vasal



Dr. Howarth Bouis



Dr. Rattan Lal

Mr. Tomio Shichiri, FAO Representation in India, and Mr. Bishow Parajuli, Representative and Country Director, World Food Programme, New Delhi were amongst the other prominent speakers. The programme was attended by more than 1000 participants including Dr. Panjab Singh, former Secretary, DARE and DG, ICAR; Prof. R.B. Singh, Former ADG, FAO and Member, Farmer Commission of India; Deputy Director Generals and Assistant Director Generals of ICAR; Vice Chancellors of State and Central Agricultural Universities; Directors and Project Coordinators of ICAR Institutes; scientists of National Agricultural Research, Education and Extension System (NAREES); distinguished Fellows of National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, and faculty and students across the country. The program was chaired by Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra, Secretary DARE and DG, ICAR, New Delhi. Dr. T.R. Sharma, Deputy Director General (Crop Sciences) welcomed the speakers and all participants. Dr. T. Mohapatra in his introductory remarks summarized the contributions of ICAR on food and nutritional security of the Nation and emphasized the need for biofortified crop varieties to attain Sustainable Development Goals.

Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, the architect of 'Green Revolution' in India and first recipient of the World Food Prize in 1987 shared a message and said 'Today is the *World Food Day*, the progress of agriculture is the key to food security. Let us thank all connected in agriculture for their help to keep the life in earth possible'. Dr. Gurdev S. Khush congratulated ICAR for its contributions and significant role in bringing green-, white-, yellow- and blue- revolutions in India. Dr. Khush emphasized to address the issues of stagnant crop yield, poor soil health, scarce water resources, low crop diversity and frequent occurrence of drought, flood, incidence of diseases and insect-pests which have become more challenging due to climate change as it is evident in case of Covid 19. He further talked about the need of the crop biofortification towards achieving the zero hunger. Dr. Howarth Bouis presented the success stories of crop biofortification worldwide, and expressed his happiness on the development of 85 biofortified crop varieties in India led by ICAR. He emphasized the need for 'health over income', importance of 'nutrition over yield', varieties with multi-nutritional traits and diversified diets in addition to biofortification. Dr. Surinder K. Vasal emphasized on the importance of plant genetic resources to enhance both productivity and nutritional quality. He stressed upon the need of application of dwarfing genes to reap the benefit on higher productivity as has been achieved in rice and wheat. He also suggested to diversify germplasm pertaining to nutritional quality to achieve productive hybrids, public private partnership and more investment in agriculture. Dr. Rattan Lal suggested the paramount importance of 'sustainable food system' that delivers food and nutritional

security for all by keeping economic, social and environmental bases maintained for future generations. Dr. Lal suggested that 'healthy soil = healthy diet = healthy people = healthy environment' is key to the future. The laureates shared the vision of developing new technologies including genetic engineering and genome editing to provide nutri-dense food to the ever increasing population.

The FAO representatives appreciated the various policies and schemes of Govt. of India such as, free ration through PDS system, 'one nation one ration card' and management of migrants during and after Covid 19 Pandemic period. Prof. R.B. Singh suggested a strong need for the amalgamation of 'science of delivery' and 'science of discovery' for achieving a greater success. During the interaction session, stalwarts of Indian agriculture gave their suggestions for further improvement of country's research and development programmes on agriculture. Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra, Secretary, DARE and DG, ICAR in his concluding remarks assured that based on the deliberations an action plan will be prepared and implemented in the National Agricultural Research, Education and Extension System in the country in order to meet the sustainable development goals. Dr. Ashok K. Singh, Director, IARI, New Delhi gave the 'vote of thanks', and profusely thanked all the World Food Prize Laureates and dignitaries for their precious time and all the suggestions to build a road map for the 'malnutrition free India'.