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The Changing Paradigms of Agriculture

The dynamics of agriculture extension have changed. We have moved far ahead of the times when exchange of information was from farmer to farmer. After Independence, the government sector played a key role in disseminating information regarding new technologies with farmers. Agriculture universities started coming up. The first one, GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology at Pantnagar, which was built in the late 60s. Today we have close to 80 State Agriculture Universities and four Central Agriculture Universities, besides four institutions with academic courses, IARI, IVRI, NDRI and CIFE under ICAR. These universities with full fledged extension directorates and field network of Krishi Vigyan Kendras, exceeding 800 plus, and presence in almost every district of the country, further expanded the scope and ambit of the extension work and technology delivery system. The establishment of extension divisions by the Agriculture Department of the states and the World Bank funding during 1975-1998 created huge nationwide extension paraphernalia. This program boosted farm productivity growth and developed local extension leaderships, which could be sustained during and post the Green Revolution era.

Coinciding with the Green Revolution and immediately thereafter, the private sector, especially the fertilizer and crop protection companies deployed their field development teams. These boosted government extension activities. The private sector was focused on the promotion of their products. In the process, they delivered useful knowledge and technologies.

In the last few years, with advancements in ICT and other digital technologies the nature of extension work has undergone massive change. Today the private sector, especially the 1000-plus Agtech Startups are playing key roles with their innovative models, making the reach and effectiveness of the extension



system incredibly high. The new institutions, especially the FPOs are also playing an important role in bringing farmers on one platform, connecting them to technologies and markets.

For comprehensive development of Indian agriculture, there is need for collaborative approach among all stakeholders.

The three Acts related to agriculture will unleash the potential of this sector. They shall create the eco-system in which farmers can realize the value of their produce and flourish.

Earlier, the thrust of extension services was to maximize production. Now that our agriculture is marked by surplus, the focus is moving from production to profitability. Surplus management and minimizing post-harvest losses are key areas of concern. The learning is that production alone cannot guarantee income. We need to benefit from the increased production. Post harvest processing and management is the answer.