

## **My Reflections About Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute (IASRI) and Views on Future Research Direction**

- **SD Sharma**

I am pleased to share my reflections about IASRI from two angles, as a student of MSc and PhD at IASRI during 1968 to 1973, when the Institute was known as IARS (Institute of Agricultural Research, Statistics) and also as a Faculty and Director of the Institute from 1996 to 2008.

I remember those days when I joined MSc Ag Statistics program shifting from a traditional yearly based courses of Delhi University to a trimester based Credit courses of Land Grant Pattern Deemed to be University, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Pusa, staying and studying at IARS. I must admit that the transition from traditional University to a Credit based University was not very smooth and had to overcome the initial hiccups and adjustment problems. But overall environment at IASRI made this transition not very difficult. Atmosphere at IARS was conducive to learning with supportive friends at Panse Hostel. It was a great opportunity to study under the guidance of great stalwarts in Statistics. Also courses at IARI in Genetics and Economics opened new vista of learning. We were exposed to IBM 1620 Computer and learned computer programming FORTRAN II from Prof Carl F Kossack of Georgia University USA. There was also learning from Visiting Faculty from around the world. Overall it was a best period of my life with supportive friends and healthy sports environment in the evenings at the Hostel.

Thereafter I moved to join as Statistician, a Class One Gazetted Post at the Directorate of Family Planning in UP Government at Lucknow. Later on, I joined the University of Udaipur in 1974, and then moved to GB Pant University of Ag and Technology Pant Nagar in 1977 and thereafter to the Rajendra Agricultural University, Pusa, Bihar (now Dr RP Central Agricultural University) in the year 1980 where I spent 16 productive years of my life, first as an Associate Professor for six years and then as University Professor and Chairman of Deptt of Statistics, Mathematics and Computer Applications from 1986 to 1996.

I moved to IASRI in the year 1996 as Principal Scientist Computer Applications and then joined the position of Joint Director Computer Science in 1997 and later joined as Director of the premier Institute IASRI which was my own Alma Mater. I must admit that it was a great learning experience for me while working for the betterment of my own institution and was really a challenging work. I had to ensure a proper disciplined working environment for my colleagues where merit is duly rewarded and everyone has an opportunity to grow in his career. Any obstacle in their working had to be expeditiously addressed and at the same time, maintaining good relationships with stakeholders concerned, be it ICAR HdQrt, Agricultural Scientists in NARS or the Ministries of Statistics and Program Implementation, Animal Husbandry and Dairy, Economics and Statistics at Ag Ministry and several others. I had worked for the resource generation, through outside funded projects to overcome financial crunch. Various training programs were initiated and conducted and at the same time ensuring there is no obstacle in working of my colleagues. Young colleagues were sent for training abroad and proper working facilities were provided on their return to ensure fruitful gains to the Institute from their training.

Though I might not have achieved all the goals I set, but I note with satisfaction that, by and large, the Institute benefited a lot from all such efforts.

Looking to the future, I feel Statistical Science has now outgrown from its usual notion of statistical techniques and their applications to agriculture and other science disciplines. Data are being generated, these days, at a very fast pace and huge data sets are available for extraction of information, therefrom. Data on Indian Economy indicators, Agricultural production, Water Availability and Use indicators, Demography, Housing sector, Social and Behavioral indicators, Livestock, Dairy and Fisheries, Industrial indicators, Production indicators, Market volatility indicators, health indicators and infrastructure, Education Sector, and many more, which are available, not only as a long time series but are continuously pouring in which need to be subjected to Data analytics for informed decision making. Therefore, the need for Data Analytics is ever more increasing during this era of information explosion. In my opinion, Statistics need to viewed, now, as a Data Science which combines Statistical techniques with Data Mining and Computer based algorithms developing techniques for handling huge data sets with sparse information on the variables of interest. This to me appears to be a future challenge to be addressed.

Through these techniques and steps, Statistical Science can definitely play a big role in shaping a developed India, a Viksit Bharat @2047.

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