



**7<sup>th</sup> National Extension Education Congress - 2014**  
**Translational Research-Extension for Sustainable Small Farm Development**  
**November 8-11, 2014**  
**ICAR Research Complex for North Eastern Hill Region, Umiam, Meghalaya**



*There is lot of scope to make improvements in organization of extension conferences, for which we need to draw lessons from our mistakes. Prakashkumar Rathod who participated in the 7<sup>th</sup> National Extension Education Congress reflects on his participation at this event here.*

## CONTEXT

Society of Extension Education, Agra (SEEA) organized its 7<sup>th</sup> National Extension Education Congresses during November 8-11, 2014 at ICAR Research Complex for North Eastern Hill Region, Umiam, Meghalaya. This Congress was organized by Society of Extension Education, Agra (<http://www.seea.org.in/>) in association with the ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Umiam, Central Agricultural University, Imphal, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat and Zonal Project Directorate, Zone-III, Umiam, Meghalaya. More than 400 professionals from various parts of India participated in this mega event.

The Congress broadly addressed the following themes:

- Small farm complexities and priorities for sustainable economic development
- Technology dissemination approaches for small farm production system environment
- Farmer to farmer knowledge sharing and community initiatives
- Research and development models for hill and tribal farmers
- Integration of public-private support systems for profitable and sustainable small farm enterprises



Amit Shukla

## INAUGURAL SESSION

Mr. Rowell Lyngdoh, the Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Meghalaya was the Chief Guest of Inaugural session. He emphasized on the role of Research and Extension in delivering information to farmers and expressed his concern on the delay in transferring the knowledge generated by researchers making this knowledge obsolete.

([http://www.business-standard.com/article/printer-](http://www.business-standard.com/article/printer-friendly-version?article_id=114110800988_1)

[friendly-version?article\\_id=114110800988\\_1](http://www.business-standard.com/article/printer-friendly-version?article_id=114110800988_1)). He urged the relevant agencies to solve this problem.

Delivering the keynote address Dr Mangala Rai, Former DG, ICAR and Secretary, DARE, Government of India called upon the Research and Extension professionals to strive hard to achieve sustainable small farm development through "Translational Research-Extension".



Prakashkumar Rathod

## LEAD PAPERS & TECHNICAL SESSIONS

Out of 13 lead papers listed, eight papers were presented. The papers covered a range of issues such as farming in North-East India, farmers associations, rural bio- resource complex project etc. A total of 660 abstracts were listed under the five technical sessions, out of which only about 130 papers were presented in the congress.

## MY IMPRESSIONS

At the outset, I would like to point out that my impressions of this mega event are not much different from the experiences of Dr SVN Rao and Dr RM Prasad (<http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/ivf.pdf> and <http://www.aesa-gfras.net/Resources/file/FINAL-AESA%20My%20Meeting%20Notes-Bangalore-18DEC.pdf> respectively) who attended similar conferences in the past.

- **Quality of papers and presentations:** Most of the papers presented in the lead and technical sessions were of routine nature and there was nothing innovative in most cases. Though few papers on Social Network Analysis, Scale Development etc., appeared to be interesting, there was not sufficient time to discuss these. The recommendations presented at the plenary session were not having much policy relevance which clearly illustrated the poor quality of the discussion and also the limited capacity of many rapporteurs.
- **Time Management:** Like many other conferences, this conference too had poor strategy to manage time. Most of the speakers were forced to rush and complete the presentation,

without any discussion. In one of the technical sessions, few participants were allotted only a minute to make their presentations.

- **Limited Networking:** Though professional meetings like these should serve as a platform to meet and interact with senior professionals, colleagues, scientists and students, I personally observed very limited networking among the participants. Majority of them were busy with their own colleagues or students of their own universities. Many of them left the hall immediately after their presentations without even waiting for the discussion. Presence of family members who accompanied the participants also distracted some of them to leave the venue quickly.



Amit Shukla

- **Extension Vs Non-Extension Professionals:** The congress gave a good platform for many non-extension professionals from agronomy, entomology, breeding etc., to present their extension work. This needs to be appreciated. But this led many extension professionals wondering about their roles and the “comparative advantage” (skills, expertise, knowledge) they have in relation to non-extension professionals.
- **Students and young researchers:** It was really a great experience for me to engage in several rounds of informal discussion with few of the young extension researchers. Out of the 11 students (from six states), five were attending a professional conference for the first time. Though they got very little learning from the formal deliberations, the informal discussions around research methodology for thesis, preparation for ARS/JRF/NET exams etc were very useful. However, many of these scholars were disappointed with the poor participation of scientists or teachers in the technical sessions and discussions.



Prakashkumar Rathod

- **Venue of the Congress:** Professional meetings like these in the North East region is a good opportunity for participants to understand more about farming in this region, provided opportunities for field visits are included in the programme. Unfortunately such opportunities for learning were not possible due various other engagements of the participants.



## END NOTE

Though the 7<sup>th</sup> National Extension Education Congress-2014 brought more than 400 participants together, we need to introspect about this momentary win-win situation (of the organizers and the participants). Personally, I would be more interested to attend a conference or seminar which can effectively address some of the above mentioned limitations.

I think, seminars, workshops and conferences would be more productive and successful, if we follow some of these points.

- More careful/serious screening of papers/abstracts to ensure that only quality papers are selected for presentations.
- More time to be devoted towards scientific deliberations and discussions.
- Teachers/scientists participate fully in technical sessions and discussions.
- Organize special session for students and young researchers and
- Draw policy level recommendations and train rapporteurs to play these roles effectively.

I hope my professional colleagues will ponder over these concerns while organizing similar professional events in future.

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