



## MY MEETING NOTES

### RYFF 2014: National Seminar on Rural Youth in Family Farming December 18-19, 2014 Bihar Agricultural University, Sabour, Bihar, India



*The National Seminar on Rural Youth in Family Farming was conceptualized and organized extremely well and it motivated several young farmers to relook at agriculture as a promising vocation. Neeraj Kumar and Kirti reflect on their participation at this event here.*

#### THE CONTEXT

This national seminar on “Rural Youth in Family Farming” was organised by the Bihar Agricultural University (BAU), Sabour, Bihar, India during 18-19 December 2014. Considering the increasing recognition on attracting and retaining youth in Indian agriculture, the theme of this seminar was very relevant. The event was timely too considering the declaration of 2014 as the “International Year of Family Farming” by the United Nations.

#### THE PROGRAMME

##### Inaugural session

The keynote address in the inaugural session was delivered by Dr. R. K. Mittal, Vice Chancellor, Rajendra Agricultural University, Pusa, Bihar. He highlighted the need for creating a brand name for agriculture which alone can help in attracting and retaining youth in agriculture.



Dr. D. Das Gupta, Former Vice Chancellor, Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswa Vidyalaya (BCKV), Mohanpur focused on the role of small holder family farms in ensuring food security. Prof. Sukhpal Singh, Director, Centre of Management in Agriculture, Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad pointed out that in India more than 85% of the farmers own less than 5 acres of land. In Bihar, over 92% of the farmers fall under this category and they grow more than 70% of rice and wheat in the state. Youth are part of this small holder family farms and therefore ensuring sustainability and profitability of these farms is important to attract and retain youth in agriculture.

Dr. Neelam Grewal, Director, Directorate of Research on Women in Agriculture, Bhubaneswar opined that without commercializing agriculture, retaining youth in agriculture would be difficult. Dr. A. K. Singh, Zonal Project Director, ICAR, Zone-II, Kolkata opined that if the youth approach agriculture with complete devotion, success would follow and there are several examples to prove this.

The Vice Chancellor of the BAU, Dr. M.L Choudhary urged farmers to eat quality food and grow quality food for others which can result in enhanced profits and income. He also expressed BAU's commitment to promoting involvement of youth in farming. The inaugural session also featured a small film on family farming developed by the Media Centre of BAU along with the journey of the university in aspects of teaching, research, extension and training. While Dr. R.K Sohane, Director Extension Education and Chairman of the Seminar welcomed the audience, Mr Aditya, the organizing secretary of the Seminar offered vote of thanks.

### Technical sessions

The seven technical sessions focused on varying avenues that can potentially attract youth towards agriculture. The topics discussed include, role and aspirations of youth in family farming, economic opportunities for youth in farming, role of horticulture in attracting youth in agriculture, role of ICTs in supporting family farming, innovative business proposals for improving productivity and income of family farms, new and better marketing opportunities etc. The best part of the sessions was that each of these sessions had an expert on the specialized area, for example, session in horticulture had a speaker from the National Horticulture Board; session on marketing had speakers from the National Institute of Agricultural Marketing, Jaipur; session on credit and economic opportunities had speakers from major banks etc. This made the sessions more interactive and farmer-friendly.

The plenary lecture "Making small-scale agriculture deliver: Challenges & opportunities" by Prof Sukhpal Singh set the context for the deliberations. Young farmers from different parts of the state put forward their concerns and ideas during the seminar and the experts gave them several suggestions on how to take agriculture as a profession.



The seminar made a clarion call to the youth to shift their current focus from seeking government jobs to become agricultural entrepreneurs so that they can generate new jobs in the rural areas and ensure sustainable food production. The seminar ended on a positive note with a blueprint of action for all the stakeholders concerned with providing better agricultural solutions to youth.

### MY IMPRESSIONS

The seminar was conceptualised and organised extremely well and the organisers need to be complemented for this. Some of the important factors that made this an interesting seminar are as follows:

**Excellent selection of participants and key speakers:** The presenters and discussants were stalwarts from various domains of agriculture and this ensured quality deliberations. Most of the young farmers who participated in this seminar were practicing farmers who have been experimenting with innovative farming practices and acting as role models in different districts and this helped other farmers to learn from them.



**Better avenues for implementation:** The seminar focused on all the lucrative avenues capable of attracting and retaining youth in agriculture right from suitable technologies to better marketing with the enabling of credit facilities. A book in Hindi namely “*KrishiaurUdyamita*” was released on the occasion. This book discusses all the important avenues in agriculture of interest to the youth together with details of potential costs and benefits of these different avenues. Another publication “Family Farming and Rural Economic Development” containing collection of lead papers received for the seminar was also released during the event.

**Field visits:** The field visit organised as part of this seminar provided youth exposure to important ventures such as Fish hatchery and Integrated farming system, wheat cafeteria, vegetable improvement programme, horticulture garden (strawberry unit/ nursery and high density orchard), poultry and quail farming, seed processing unit, bio fertilizer lab, tissue culture facility etc

#### END NOTE

RYFF 2014 far exceeded our expectations in matters of organization, quality of deliberations and potential impacts on young farmers. Kudos to the organizers, sponsors and the delegates who made this event memorable and worthy and at the same time commemorated the International Year of Family Farming with special focus on youth.

*Neeraj Kumar ([neeraj17pusa@gmail.com](mailto:neeraj17pusa@gmail.com)) and Kirti ([kirtisingh438@gmail.com](mailto:kirtisingh438@gmail.com)) are Ph.D Scholars at the Department of Extension Education, Bihar Agricultural College, Sabour*