

30th Annual Conference
Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE)
“Integrated Agricultural Systems for Environmental Sustainability and Production”
April 27th – May 1st 2014
Miami Beach Florida, USA



As extension faces challenging times globally, professional extension networks such as the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) are exploring new ways to strengthen the contribution of extension discipline and making it more relevant. The 30th Annual Conference of AIAEE held recently was an important event for extension professionals to come together and discuss some of these challenges. Dr C Bhaskaran reflects on his participation at this event here.

CONTEXT

The Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) is a professional association to network agricultural and Extension educators who share the common goal of strengthening agricultural and Extension education programs and institutions worldwide. The AIAEE aims to, among other things:

- articulate the role of Agricultural and Extension Education in international agricultural development
- develop state-of-the-art papers on Agricultural and Extension Education worldwide
- establish a continuing dialogue within the profession in international Agricultural and Extension Education on a global scale

The 30th Annual Conference of AIAEE was held at Miami, Florida, USA from April 27 – May 1, 2014. Over 150 delegates representing about 40 nations attended the Conference, with me being the only one representing India.



PETE VERGOT

REFLECTIONS

Global challenges

The keynote presentation was made by Dr. Nick Place, Dean & Director, University of Florida/IFAS Extension. Dr. Place narrated the history of 100 years of Extension Education in the USA, since the enactment of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, the federal law that established the co-operative extension service. Focusing on the current agricultural extension scenario in the Florida State, Dr. Place mentioned the lack of broad awareness about extension, limited use of extension among certain audiences, competition from other entities and the need for more focused and consistent branding as the major issues facing global extension.

118 presentations were organized in the conference under poster session, concurrent abstract sessions and professional development sessions. These presentations unfolded the immense potential of agricultural education and extension in conflict resolution in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Middle-east which are torn by civil war. The new roles of the public, private and NGO's particularly in providing hand holding support to small and subsistence family farms through new crop and technology introductions, social/community mobilization and attracting youth to agriculture were also discussed in these technical sessions. The international collaborative programs of the Land Grant Universities of the USA with the developing and the underdeveloped economies were also narrated.



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The presentation I made focused on the Transformational Model of Extension Education being followed in the ATMA PLUS program in Kerala, which attracted many curious enquiries regarding the MIDICCI approach and its scaling up.

EVOLUTIONARY MODELS OF EXTENSION EDUCATION				
Sl. No.	Type / Feature	Traditional Models	Transitional Models	Transformational Model
1	Period	Prior to 1990s	1990-2010	Post Recession
2	Leadership	Legitimizer, State, Official	State, Official, Business	FEO
3	Focus	Human Capital	Human and social Capital	Human, Social, Physical, Financial and Natural Capital
4	Locus	Localised	Globalised	Glocalised
5	Nature	Monolithic, Directive	Semi-flexible, PPP	Dynamic, PPPPP
6	Drivers	Supply driven	Market driven	Farmer driven
7	Cost	Free	Free/Fee based	Profit sharing
8	Sustainability	Incentive prone	Innovation prone	Internalisation prone
9	Equity	Access based	Asset based	All inclusive
10	Examples	Pre-Independence Indian Models, Package Models, T&V Model	ATMA Model, LEADS, Farmer Business School Model	Best Practices Mix- ATMA PLUS MIDICCI

BEST PRACTICES MIX IN ATMA PLUS

MIDICCI

M – Multidimensional Extension

I – Intensification

D – Decentralisation

I – IT/ICT applications

C – Convergence

C – Capacity building

I – Innovation

Organisation of the conference

The conference was well organized. Everyone appreciated the advance planning, meticulous review and feedback on papers and regular communication with the participants. Impeccable arrangements including choice of field visits deserve mention. To me the most rewarding aspect was the professional development session. However this could have been organized in a series so that every participant could attend all the four sessions. Most of the abstracts presented were by student-researchers and hence methodological sophistication was a bit low. The proceedings will be published in the next issue of JIAEE. The announcement of 2015 Conference theme, dates, venue etc in advance was also commendable.



CBHASKARAN

PETE VERGOT

As part of the Conference, the delegates were taken on a cultural tour to visit the RF Orchids, Angel’s hatchery, UF/IFAS Tropical Research and Education Centre, the Everglades National Park Visitors’ Centre and the Schnebly’s Winery in Florida State. The value addition to Florida agriculture through agribusiness tie-ups was an eye opener to many of the delegates. Massive farm mechanization, precision farming,

high value agricultural enterprises including promotion of organic products, market connectivity through IT/ICT applications, the bridging role of University Extension between research and farmer systems were evident in the cultural –cum- field tour. These learning experiences are particularly relevant in the context of global dynamics and cultural knowledge for the New Extensionist (<http://www.g-fras.org/en/knowledge/gfras-publications/file/126-the-new-extensionist-position-paper?start=20>)

The US agriculture with about 1.5 million farmers operating an average farm size of over 400 acres is a study in contrast to the microscopic family farms of the developing world including India. Agriculture in the USA is agribusiness with excellent link to the research stations through the University Extension Service supported by Internet based technology access. The funds and the technical help from the Federal USDA and the Land Grant Universities nurture the competitiveness of American Agriculture. Connectivity to the markets through agro-industry, local farmers' markets and promotion of organic products help the US farmers sustain their agriculture economically and environmentally. The State's support to agriculture is massive in the USA and similar policy measures are warranted on a war-footing from the developing nations too, I feel.



TRACY RUTHERFORD

The GFARS-AESA presence was felt in the Conference with the active leadership role played by Dr. Kristin Davis, who is also the present President of the AIAEE. Kristin received the Outstanding Achievement award during the annual conference of the Association for “a professional who during their career has demonstrated a combination of service, leadership, and scholarly activity”.

WHAT NEXT?

The AIAEE 2015 with the European Seminar for Extension Education will be held from April 27 – May 1, 2015 at Wageningen, The Netherlands. The Conference theme will be: Competence and Excellence in Extension and Education. For more details visit: www.esee2015.wur.nl

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