



# Standing Committee Report Summary

## An Evaluation of the National Agricultural Research System

- The Standing Committee on Agriculture (Chairperson: Mr. Basudeb Acharia) presented its report on the National Agricultural Research System on February 18, 2014. The National Agricultural Research System comprises the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), other central research institutes, and national research centres set up by ICAR. The Committee's recommendations are:
  - **Representation of states in Regional Committees:** The Committee noted that the Governing Body of ICAR has constituted eight Regional Committees for the eight different agro-ecological regions of the country. These committees analyse and recommend solutions for problems of agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries and forestry that are particular to the region. The Committee recommended that these committees meet annually instead of biennially and have adequate representation of states.
  - **AICRP/Network Projects:** All India Coordinated Research Projects provide opportunities for scientists working on similar problems in different institutions to come together to exchange their ideas and solutions to similar problems. These projects are typically sanctioned for five years. The Committee felt that since the projects provide for effective coordination across institutions and disciplines, it is important that regular interaction take place and the projects be completed within the stipulated time frame.
  - **Strengthening of ICAR:** The Committee recommended that the Department of Agricultural Research and Education strengthen the ICAR network to meet new challenges with respect to food security. The Department should study the methods and technologies adopted by countries such as China, Brazil and Malaysia and adapt them to India's given conditions so as to enhance productivity in the agriculture sector. The Ministry of Agriculture should also lay more emphasis on agriculture research in the Twelfth Five Year Plan and provide adequate financial support.
  - **Twelfth Plan allocations:** The Committee noted that the Planning Commission had allocated less than 50% of the funds sought by the Department of Agriculture for the Twelfth Five Year Plan. It had also allocated only 23% of the total amount for the first two years of the Plan. The Committee recommended that the Department request the Planning Commission to grant more funds, i.e., at least 1% of the GDP and grant them evenly over the years so the Department can achieve its targets on conservation agriculture, higher agricultural education, etc.
  - **Investment in agricultural research:** The Committee noted the significance of agricultural research and development. It recommended that the Department prepare an action plan to attract investment in agricultural research. This would help reduce dependency on imports and add to the export capacity of the country. The Department should also approach the Ministry of Finance to provide monetary and fiscal incentives for such investment.
  - **Policy framework for agricultural research:** ICAR has prepared a policy framework for research and development (R&D) in agriculture and allied areas. The Committee urged the Ministry to ensure the implementation of the policy, as well as ensure it is integrated with the national R&D system and Science and Technology Innovation Policy 2013.
  - **Farm mechanisation:** The Committee urged the Department to call for research in developing low cost, light weight, multi-purpose farm equipment and tools for the benefit of small and marginal farmers and those with fragmented land holdings. The Department should also probe the possibility of encouraging youth to create stocks of machines and rent them out to small land holders to utilise mechanisation for enhancing productivity.

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