



National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



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Vishwjeet Jaybhay

Introduction

As an M.Sc. Agricultural Extension student at ICAR-IARI, New Delhi, I arrived at the National Young Professionals Development Programme (NYPDP) with a strong interest in digital agriculture, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies. I left with something far more valuable, a broader understanding of people, systems, and the true role of Agricultural Extension.

Key Learnings:

Discovering Professional Identity

Day 1

The first day encouraged us to reflect on who we are and who we aspire to become as extension professionals. The sessions on professional identity, career opportunities, and future competencies challenged me to think beyond conventional career paths. One important realisation was that Agricultural Extension is no longer limited to technology transfer; it is increasingly connected with innovation, entrepreneurship, policy, and digital transformation.

Exploring the Future of Extension

Day 2

The second day focused on emerging competencies and digital transformation. Learning about AI tools for academic research and the evolving digital ecosystem of agriculture was particularly exciting for me. As someone interested in AI and digital agriculture, I found these sessions highly relevant. However, I also began to understand that technology alone is not enough. The real challenge lies in making technology useful, accessible, and meaningful for farmers.



Understanding Innovation and Inclusion

Day 3

Day three was anchored by Dr. Mahesh Chander's sessions on entrepreneurship, gender equality, and organic farming, all grounded in field realities rather than textbook frameworks. They gave me a broader perspective on agricultural development and highlighted the importance of inclusivity and innovation in addressing contemporary challenges. What stayed with me was a simple but sharp idea, that successful innovations are not necessarily the most advanced technologies, but those that effectively address real needs and create value for farming communities. The day as a whole reminded me that extension fails the moment it forgets who actually does the farming.

Looking Beyond Traditional Boundaries

Day 4

Day four was one of the most intellectually stimulating parts of the programme. Discussions on innovation ecosystems, policy engagement, advanced research, and human decision-making expanded my understanding of extension. A real highlight was Dr. Sethuraman Sivakumar's simulation game on field extension work, the hours felt like seconds, and it pushed us to think from every angle about serving farmers according to their own context and needs. The session on how farmers make decisions was especially insightful because it emphasized the human side of technology adoption, reminding me that understanding behaviour, trust, and decision-making is just as important as developing technologies.



Reflection and Action

Day 5

The final day encouraged us to reflect on our learning and think about future applications. Sessions on monitoring and evaluation, focus group discussions, and research ethics reinforced the importance of evidence-based and responsible professional practice. It was also a time to consolidate our learning and transform insights into action plans.

Change in Perspective

Before attending NYPDP, I viewed Agricultural Extension primarily as a bridge between technology and farmers.

Today, I see it as a bridge between innovation and impact.

Extension professionals are not only communicators of information but facilitators of innovation, connectors of people, enablers of entrepreneurship, and catalysts of change.

Training Environment



One of the most remarkable aspects of NYPDP was the learning environment. The programme was highly interactive, participatory, and engaging. Discussions extended beyond classrooms into informal conversations, networking sessions, and even dinner-table reflections. The atmosphere encouraged curiosity, collaboration, and open exchange of ideas.

Peers of Interaction

Perhaps the most unexpected gain from NYPDP was the network of peers. Interacting with young professionals, researchers, and scholars from different parts of India exposed me to diverse perspectives and experiences. These interactions enriched my learning and helped me appreciate the wide range of opportunities and challenges within Agricultural Extension.

Main Takeaway

My biggest takeaway is simple:

Technology creates possibilities, but people create impact.

No matter how advanced a technology may be, its success ultimately depends on understanding people, building trust, and facilitating adoption.

Application of Learning

Going forward, I intend to integrate these learnings into my academic and professional journey. I am particularly interested in exploring how digital technologies and AI can be effectively integrated into agricultural extension systems while remaining farmer-centric, inclusive, and practical.

Gratitude

I sincerely thank Dr. Saravanan Raj, Dr. Sandipamu Raahalya, Team MANAGE, all resource persons, alumni, and fellow participants for creating such a memorable and transformative learning experience.

I came to NYPDP as a student interested in technology.

I leave as a learner who better understands people.

I came searching for tools.

I leave with perspectives.

I came to build knowledge.

I leave with a community.



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