



National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

(A program of the MANAGE-University Alliance for
Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services)

MANAGE NYPDP Mentors Diaries:

Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE)

(An Autonomous Organization of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India)

Rajendranagar, Hyderabad – 500 030, Telangana, India

www.manage.gov.in

Extension for Organic farming, Entrepreneurship and Gender Equality




Dr. Mahesh Chander

Principal Scientist

Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI)

Izatnagar, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh

drmahesh.chander@gmail.com

 [Mahesh Chander](#)

01 About the MANAGE NYPDP Program

NYPDP stands out as a truly transformative capacity-building initiative for young scholars in agricultural extension. At a stage when many Master's and doctoral students, as well as young researchers, grapple with uncertainty about their future and see career choices confined to a few conventional paths, the programme brings much-needed clarity and direction. By broadening perspectives and showcasing diverse professional opportunities beyond academia and government services, NYPDP helps budding extensionists rediscover the relevance and potential of their discipline and imagine meaningful careers with renewed confidence. Looking back, I often feel that we truly missed such a valuable opportunity during our own Master's and doctoral days.

02 How can agricultural extension services effectively promote awareness about organic farming practices and certification, including the use of ICT tools?

Agricultural extension services can promote awareness of organic farming and certification through a participatory, ICT-enabled approach. Field demonstrations, farmer field schools, exposure visits, and peer learning through progressive organic farmers help build practical understanding and trust. Certification awareness can be enhanced by simplifying information on standards, conversion periods, documentation, and benefits, while promoting group-based models such as Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) to reduce costs and complexity.

ICT tools strengthen outreach by enabling mobile advisories, WhatsApp groups, SMS alerts, and social media content in local languages to disseminate timely information on organic practices and certification procedures. Digital platforms and apps can support record-keeping, traceability, and compliance, while convergence with organic farming schemes ensures wider coverage and sustained adoption.

What is the role of agricultural extension in fostering rural entrepreneurship?

Agricultural extension plays a crucial role in fostering rural entrepreneurship by enabling farmers and rural youth to move beyond subsistence production toward market-oriented and value-added enterprises. Extension services build entrepreneurial capacities through skill development, vocational training, and exposure to successful agribusiness models, helping rural stakeholders identify viable enterprise opportunities based on local resources and market demand. Extension agencies also facilitate access to information, inputs, credit, and markets by linking entrepreneurs with financial institutions, FPOs, incubators, and value-chain actors. Through advisory services on business planning, risk management, quality standards, and use of ICT tools, extension helps reduce uncertainty and enhance enterprise sustainability. Additionally, by promoting innovation, collective action, and convergence with government schemes and private sector initiatives, agricultural extension creates an enabling ecosystem that nurtures rural entrepreneurship and livelihoods.

How can extension professionals assist in value chain development for agri-entrepreneurs?

Extension professionals can play a pivotal role in value chain development for agri-entrepreneurs by acting as facilitators, knowledge brokers, and linkages builders across different stages of the chain. They help entrepreneurs identify high-potential commodities and value addition opportunities based on local resource endowments, market demand, and price trends. Through training and handholding, extension professionals build capacities in post-harvest management, processing, packaging, quality standards, and food safety, enabling entrepreneurs to move up the value chain.

They also strengthen horizontal and vertical linkages by promoting farmer collectives, FPOs, and SHGs, and by connecting agri-entrepreneurs with input suppliers, processors, traders, retailers, and exporters. Extension services assist in market intelligence, branding, certification, and compliance with regulatory standards, often using ICT tools for price discovery, traceability, and digital marketing. By facilitating access to finance, incubation support, and government schemes, and by fostering innovation and partnerships, extension professionals help create efficient, inclusive, and resilient agri-value chains.

Why is gender-sensitive extension important in agricultural development?

Gender-sensitive extension is important in agricultural development because men and women play distinct yet complementary roles in farming systems, and ignoring these differences limits the effectiveness and equity of extension interventions. Women contribute significantly to agricultural production, livestock management, post-harvest operations, and household nutrition, yet they often have less access to land, inputs, credit, training, and information. Gender-sensitive extension ensures that advisory services, technologies, and programmes are designed to reach and benefit both men and women according to their specific needs, constraints, and responsibilities. By recognizing women as farmers and decision-makers, gender-sensitive extension enhances technology adoption, productivity, and farm sustainability. It promotes inclusive participation, builds women's capacities, and strengthens their role in producer groups and value chains. Ultimately, such an approach contributes to improved household food security, better nutrition outcomes, poverty reduction, and more resilient and equitable agricultural development.



What barriers do women face in accessing agricultural extension services?

Women face multiple barriers in accessing agricultural extension services that are structural, socio-cultural, economic, and institutional in nature. Limited ownership and control over land and productive resources often exclude women from being formally recognized as farmers, reducing their eligibility for extension programmes, trainings, and credit-linked services. Socio-cultural norms and gender roles restrict women's mobility, time availability, and participation in meetings, especially when extension activities are scheduled at inconvenient times or conducted by male extension agents.

Information and communication barriers further constrain access, as extension messages are frequently targeted at men and delivered through channels less accessible to women. Lower literacy levels, limited access to ICT tools, and weaker representation in farmer organizations also reduce women's visibility and voice in extension systems. Additionally, institutional biases, lack of women extension personnel, and inadequate gender-disaggregated planning result in services that do not adequately address women's specific needs, priorities, and farming roles.



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How can extension systems be redesigned to be more inclusive of women farmers and ensure equal participation?

Recruiting and training more women extension professionals, and sensitizing all extension staff to gender issues, can improve outreach and trust. Strengthening women's collectives such as SHGs, FPOs, and producer groups enhances peer learning and collective voice. ICT tools like mobile advisories, community radio, videos, and social media can be tailored to women's access and literacy levels to improve information flow. Finally, convergence with gender-focused schemes, continuous feedback from women farmers, and monitoring outcomes through gender-sensitive indicators can help ensure equal participation and more inclusive agricultural development.

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What role do women extension professionals play in promoting gender equality in agriculture?

Women extension professionals play a critical role in promoting gender equality in agriculture by acting as effective change agents, role models, and trusted intermediaries for women farmers. Their presence helps overcome socio-cultural barriers that often limit women's interaction with extension systems, enabling more open communication, higher participation, and better adoption of technologies among women farmers. They are often better positioned to understand women's roles, constraints, and priorities in farming, livestock, and allied activities. By facilitating women-focused trainings, strengthening self-help groups and producer collectives, and promoting access to inputs, credit, and markets, women extension professionals enhance women's skills, confidence, and decision-making power. They also advocate for gender-sensitive planning within extension organizations, ensure that women's perspectives are reflected in programme design, and support inclusive value chains. Through these roles, women extension professionals contribute significantly to more equitable, productive, and sustainable agricultural development.

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What strategies can be employed to ensure equal participation of men and women in extension programs and decision-making?

Equal participation of men and women in extension programmes and decision-making can be ensured through a combination of institutional, social, and operational strategies. Extension systems should begin by recognizing both men and women as farmers and stakeholders, using gender-disaggregated data to plan, target, and monitor activities. Programme schedules, venues, and methodologies must be adapted to women's time constraints and mobility, with participatory and group-based approaches that encourage joint learning and decision-making. Capacity building of extension staff on gender sensitization, along with increased recruitment of women extension professionals, helps create a more inclusive environment. Strengthening women's collectives such as SHGs and FPOs, ensuring their representation in committees and leadership roles, and promoting couple-based or household-level extension approaches can balance voices within families and communities. The use of ICT tools and local media tailored to different literacy levels, combined with supportive policies, incentives, and continuous feedback mechanisms, further ensures meaningful and equitable participation in extension programmes and decisions.

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What strategies would you suggest for faculty and Universities to prepare graduates for emerging extension roles?

Faculty and universities can prepare graduates for emerging extension roles by reorienting curricula from a predominantly transfer-of-technology approach to systems, market- and innovation-led perspective. This includes integrating courses on agribusiness, value chain development, rural entrepreneurship, ICT-enabled extension, policy analysis, climate-smart agriculture, gender and social inclusion, and participatory research methods. Greater emphasis on problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and facilitation skills is essential for graduates to function effectively in diverse extension settings. Experiential learning should be strengthened through field immersion, internships with NGOs, start-ups, FPOs, private agribusinesses, and development projects, along with exposure to real-world case studies. Faculty can encourage interdisciplinary learning, industry interaction, and mentoring by practitioners. Universities should also promote incubation centres, innovation hubs, and career guidance cells, and foster partnerships with government, private sector, and civil society organizations. Such strategies will equip graduates with adaptable skills, professional confidence, and a broader vision for emerging extension careers.

Are there any planned updates, revisions, or additions to the new curriculum that will be implemented in the future?

Yes, updates and revisions to agricultural education curricula, including extension programmes, are a continuous and evolving process to keep pace with changing agricultural and societal needs. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) periodically revises curricula through Deans' Committee reports. The Sixth Deans' Committee, aligned with NEP 2020, introduced a restructured teaching and credit system emphasizing flexibility, interdisciplinary learning, technology integration (including AI and machine learning), internships, and multiple entry-exit options. These reforms are being implemented across agricultural universities and are further refined through institutional feedback and periodic reviews.

At the Master's and doctoral levels, ICAR's Broad Subject Matter Area (BSMA) has recently undertaken a major curriculum review, introducing demand-driven and contemporary courses such as Extension Landscape, Facilitation for Development, Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS), Policy Engagement and Extension, Technology Commercialization and Incubation, and Applied Behaviour Change. Themes such as AIS, e-Extension, facilitation skills, and gender mainstreaming are now central to extension education, reflecting the shift from linear technology transfer to innovation-led, inclusive, and pluralistic extension systems.

Universities are also expanding electives, vocational courses, and short-term skill-based programmes in digital agriculture, ICT, agribusiness, entrepreneurship, climate-smart agriculture, and extension system transformation. Overall, curriculum modernization in agricultural extension is ongoing, driven by policy reforms, technological advances, labour market demands, and stakeholder feedback, ensuring that graduates are future-ready and professionally relevant.

Read more: [AESA Faculty Development Programme](#) | [Blog on Extension Curricula Changes](#)

How does the Indian experience of curriculum development and implementation compare to that of other countries?

India's agricultural curriculum development is largely centralized and policy-driven, guided by ICAR through Deans' Committee reports and influenced by national frameworks like NEP 2020. Reforms emphasize interdisciplinary learning, experiential training, skill development, and internships, ensuring uniform standards across universities. A distinctive feature of India's system is its strong focus on rural development, smallholder farming, and agricultural extension, reflecting the country's agrarian context. Gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches are increasingly integrated, addressing the needs of women and marginalized groups. The curriculum restructuring and updating process need shorter intervals as the changes are much rapid now in the arena of rural transformation.



In comparison, developed countries like the USA, Netherlands, and Australia grant universities greater autonomy in curriculum design and have long emphasized high-tech agriculture, commercial agribusiness, global exposure, and early industry engagement. Many developing countries in Africa and Southeast Asia are now adopting elements of India's model, particularly linking education to rural livelihoods and extension. Overall, India balances policy-led standardization, rural relevance, and inclusive education while gradually integrating global trends such as ICT, entrepreneurship, and experiential learning.

Do you suggest any organisations for the Internship/ online courses/ training etc to develop agricultural extension students' competence in above topic ?

Agricultural extension students can enhance their competencies in organic and natural farming through online and blended courses offered by platforms such as NPTEL (IIT Kharagpur), IGMPI, NITPS, NCONF, MANAGE, Krishna Sudha Academy for Agroecology, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA), and Morarka Foundation. These programmes cover topics like soil health, pest management, organic standards, and sustainable farming practices. Course durations range from short workshops (1–5 days) to diploma-level programmes (3 months to 1 year), with certificates awarded upon completion, providing both theoretical knowledge and practical exposure. May be some of these programmes are available only to government or NOGs' field functionaries, but students may find the online resources helpful to them.

For agri-entrepreneurship, students can benefit from courses such as FAO's Agripreneurship 101, CABI's Entrepreneurship in Agribusiness, and certificate programmes from LSBR Online. These courses focus on business planning, market analysis, finance, and value addition, helping graduates pursue innovative agribusiness ventures. Practical experience is also available through Internshala internships and government initiatives like Agri-Clinics & Agri-Business Centres (ACABC), giving students hands-on exposure to real-world agri-enterprises and start-ups.

Additionally, ICT and gender-focused extension skills are increasingly emphasized. Courses from Digital Green, World Bank eLearning, ICT for Ag Learning Network, and SWAYAM train students in digital tools, mobile advisory systems, and participatory learning techniques for effective extension delivery. Gender-sensitive courses from MANAGE/CIWA enable students to integrate inclusive approaches in extension programmes, strengthening the role of women and marginalized groups in agriculture. Collectively, these opportunities help students develop holistic competencies across technical, entrepreneurial, digital, and social dimensions of modern agricultural extension. Beyond these institutions, numerous other online options are available that students can explore based on their context and interests.

What suggestions would you offer to the young professionals?

Young professionals in agricultural extension should aim to develop a broad and practical skill set that goes beyond classroom learning. Gaining hands-on experience in areas like organic and natural farming, agribusiness, digital agriculture, and community development can make them more effective and adaptable in a rapidly changing sector. Participating in internships, field projects, study tours, and farmer training programmes provides real-world exposure, builds problem-solving skills, and helps establish professional networks. Embracing technology and ICT tools is essential for modern extension work. Using mobile advisories, digital platforms, and social media can enhance knowledge dissemination and engagement with farmers. At the same time, young extensionists should explore entrepreneurial opportunities in agribusiness, value chains, organic farming, and rural enterprises, supported by relevant courses, mentorship, and innovation hubs.

Inclusivity and gender-sensitive approaches are key to effective agricultural extension. Understanding the roles of women and marginalized groups, and incorporating participatory methods, strengthens the impact of interventions. Continuous learning through online courses, workshops, webinars, and professional associations, combined with strong communication, leadership, and facilitation skills, equips young professionals to be innovative, solution-oriented, and capable of making meaningful contributions to rural livelihoods and sustainable agricultural development.



Can you quote your professional competency in this particular area? How you developed or developing? And how did you contribute?

My journey into organic agriculture began in 1996 with a simple request for one hectare of barren land at ICAR-IVRI's Mukteswar hill campus. A little offbeat, but what started as an experiment soon became a living classroom. Growing organic vegetables, interacting with consumers, and marketing the produce not only generated revenue for the institute but, more importantly, taught me firsthand the realities of organic farming like soil regeneration, production constraints, and the challenge of linking farmers to markets.

Those early years shaped my conviction that meaningful agricultural research must be rooted in the field. Over time, this journey expanded into presenting at international conferences, authoring books, delivering lectures, guiding students, and contributing to national and international committees on organic agriculture.

Parallel to this, my engagement with entrepreneurship development and gender research evolved naturally through continuous interaction with enterprising farmers, students, and rural communities. Coordinating entrepreneurship courses at IVRI, mentoring young professionals, and working on nationally and internationally funded research projects helped me understand how innovation, markets, and social inclusion intersect in agriculture.

Writing papers and blogs on agripreneurship, organic farming, and gender in agriculture allowed me to share these insights more widely. Recognition from ICAR in the form of the Best Teacher Award, the Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Award for outstanding research, and induction as a Fellow of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences has been deeply humbling. Even today, I see myself first and foremost as a field-oriented agricultural extension professional, continually learning from farmers and committed to advancing sustainable, inclusive, and entrepreneurship-driven agricultural development.



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MANAGE launched its flagship National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP) in 2024, in partnership with agricultural universities across India. The program is designed to cultivate next-generation competencies, explore emerging career pathways, and identify research priorities in agricultural extension. NYPDP orients young scholars toward contemporary themes in extension research, practice, and policy, fostering leadership among future extension professionals in an ever-evolving agricultural landscape. As of 2025, twelve successful NYPDP cohorts have trained 658 young professionals from 73 universities across 22 states, nurturing a vibrant and interconnected community of emerging extension leaders. Collaborative editions with institutions such as SDAU (Gujarat), SOA (Odisha), KAU (Kerala), CAU (Meghalaya), CCSHAU (Haryana), RAJUVAS (Rajasthan), KVAFSU (Karnataka) and AAU (Gujarat) have significantly enriched the program, creating a robust ecosystem of experiential learning and academic exchange.

This publication, “MANAGE NYPDP Mentors Diaries: Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow’s Agricultural Extension”, captures the insights and experiences of mentors with the NYPDP participants. It serves as a source of inspiration and guidance for future generations committed to strengthening agricultural extension and building resilient, sustainable farming communities

MANAGE - Center for Agricultural Extension Innovations, Reforms and Agripreneurship (MANAGE- CAEIRA)
National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE)

Rajendranagar, Hyderabad- 500 030, INDIA

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