

National Young Professionals Development Program on New Competencies, Career Opportunities, and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension
Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University and MANAGE, Hyderabad
December 02-06, 2024



Arulmanikandan, Apoorva and Amit reflect on their recent participation in National Youth Professionals Development Program on New Competencies, Career Opportunities, and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension, which Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar and MANAGE, Hyderabad organized from December 02-06, 2024.

Context:

Agricultural extension has evolved significantly, with new research in innovation diffusion, innovation systems, digital tools, and communication studies driving its transformation. These advancements demand updated teaching and training materials to keep the discipline relevant to the needs of Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) stakeholders. To address these needs, the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad launched the MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services in 2018.



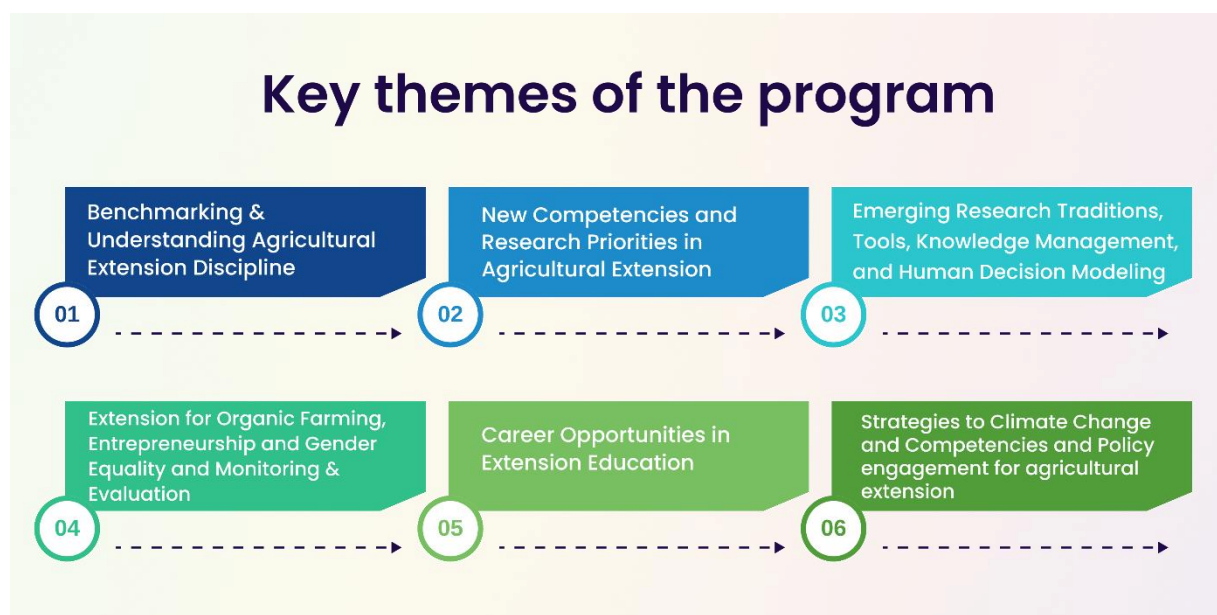
Fig. The training participants with the programme organizers and delegates

Under this alliance, the **National Young Professionals Development Program on New Competencies, Career Opportunities, and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension** was

organized by the Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad and Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, from December 2-6, 2024. It aimed to orient M.Sc. students, Ph.D. scholars, and young faculty members on emerging areas in extension research, practice, and policy and to discuss new competencies, career opportunities, and research priorities in the discipline. Forty-eight participants from six states and ten universities attended the five-day program.

Program Overview:

The program was structured and conducted by Dr. Saravanan Raj (Director, Agricultural Extension, MANAGE Hyderabad), Dr. Sandipamu Rahalya (MANAGE Fellow), Dr. Anupam Anand (Assistant Professor, CCS HAU) and Dr. Rati Mukteshwar (Assistant Professor, CCS HAU).



Program Summary and Key Learnings:

Day 1: The sessions began by assessing participants' understanding of agricultural extension, exploring their competencies, and discussing time management strategies and digital media engagement in professional and personal contexts. Activities included individual and group tasks that encouraged collaboration and innovation.

Participants also reflected on their perceptions of agricultural extension, examining both personal views and societal perspectives. A major highlight was the discussion on "**Challenges and Opportunities in Agricultural Extension Professional Specialization,**" which sparked thought-provoking ideas about the evolving landscape of agricultural extension.

Key Takeaways from Day 1:

- Understanding one's competencies and areas of improvement is critical for professional growth.

- Time management and effective use of digital tools play a significant role in balancing personal and professional commitments.
- Collaborative activities foster innovation and collective problem-solving in addressing challenges in agricultural extension.
- Exploring perceptions about agricultural extension helps identify gaps and redefine its role in the current context.



Fig. Individual and group tasks performed by the participants

Day 2: The day started with an inspiring session by **Dr. Saravanan Raj** on **"Evolving Competencies for Agricultural Extension Professionals."** He emphasized aligning skills with emerging job opportunities in the agricultural sector and adapting to its dynamic demands. His session provided a clear roadmap for professionals to remain relevant and thrive.

Following this, **Dr. P. Sethuraman Sivakumar**, Principal Scientist at CTCRI, Trivandrum, delivered an engaging session on **"Emerging Research Traditions, Approaches, and Tools in Extension."** He discussed:

- Agro-socio-cultural-economic-psychological interactions in farmers' research.
- Emerging challenges and expectations from extension research, such as replicable extension models, high-impact research, intellectual property ownership, commercialization, and revenue generation.
- New research pathways, including climate-smart agriculture, nutrition-sensitive and sustainable agriculture, and grassroots entrepreneurship.

- Human decision modelling, detailing the types of farmer decisions, steps in the decision-making process, and the complexity of related research.

Dr. P. S. Sivakumar further explained key research dimensions through the concepts of accretion, exploration, sophistication, and excavation.

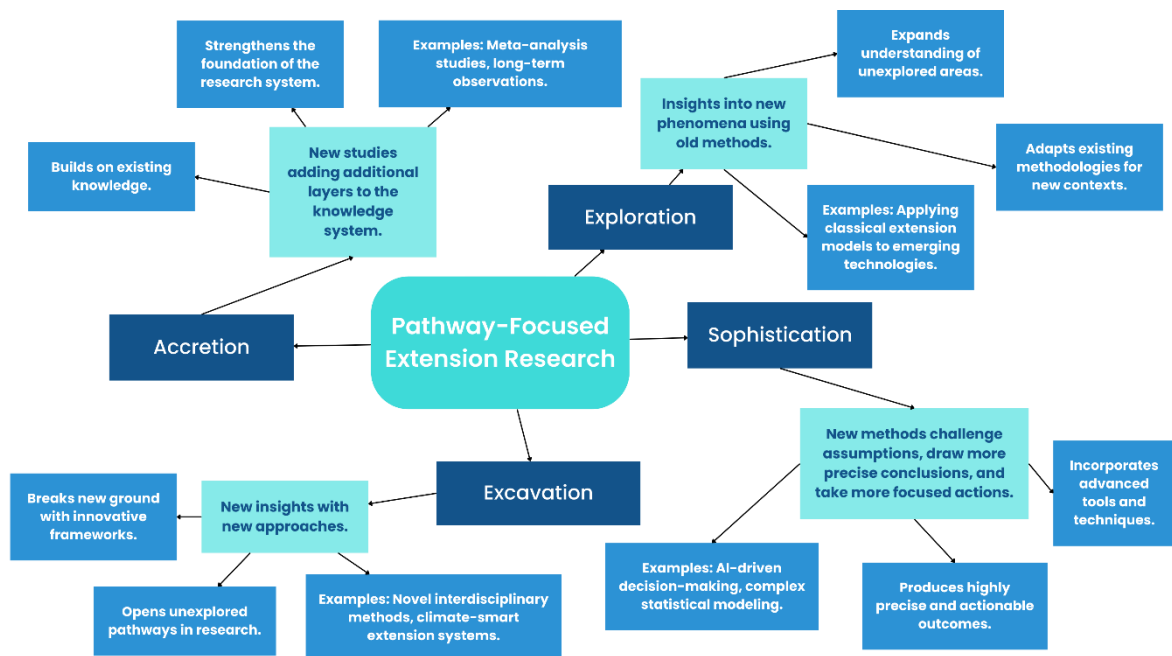


Fig. Mind map illustrating the concept of "Pathway-Focused Extension Research" (created by Arulmanikandan)

Later, **Dr. Krithika Sundaram**, Manager of Social Science Research and Documentation at the Shroff Foundation, presented an engaging session on "**Social Science Research and Knowledge Management: Sharing Experiences of NGOs.**" She provided clarity on covering the framework of grounded theory, knowledge management, and the application of AI tools to simplify and enhance research processes. She emphasized the importance of qualitative research and how formulating robust research questions is equally critical as quantitative analysis and data. Additionally, Dr. Krithika Sundaram highlighted the competencies and skills required to work in NGOs and shared valuable insights into career opportunities in the NGO sector through her personal experiences with various projects.

The day concluded with **Dr. Anupam Anand's** session on "**The Startup Mindset: Nurturing Entrepreneurs for Tomorrow.**" He provided a comprehensive overview of startups, discussing the attributes of successful ventures, steps to build entrepreneurial skills, and funding opportunities for budding agri-entrepreneurs. His session inspired participants to explore innovation and entrepreneurship in agriculture.

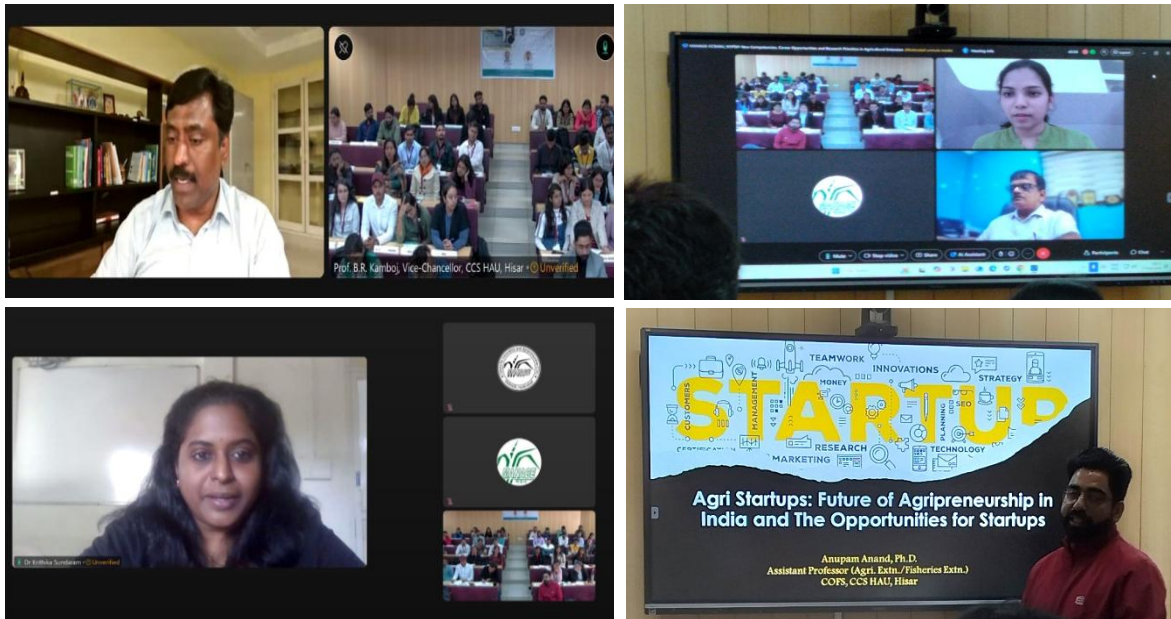


Fig. Dr. Saravanan Raj, Dr. P. S. Sivakumar, Dr. Krithika Sundaram and Dr. Anupam Anand interacting with participants on different topics in their respective sessions.

Key Takeaways from Day 2:

- Adapting to new competencies ensures professional relevance and career progression in the evolving agricultural sector.
- Extension research must integrate social, cultural, economic, and psychological dimensions to be impactful and replicable.
- Tools like human decision modelling and AI-driven research methodologies can significantly enhance research depth and relevance.
- NGOs provide a unique platform for professionals with diverse skills, offering career opportunities and contributing meaningfully to social development projects.
- Entrepreneurship in agriculture requires a structured approach, including a startup mindset, understanding of funding mechanisms, and innovation-driven solutions.

Day 3: The focussed area for the day was on “Extension for Organic Farming, Entrepreneurship and Gender Equality and Monitoring & Evaluation”. It explored the role of agricultural extension in promoting organic farming, fostering agri-preneurship and advancing gender equality. It also emphasized the significance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in assessing agricultural extension programs.

Key Learnings:

1. **Extension for Entrepreneurship and Gender Equality:** Dr. Mahesh Chander highlighted strategies for integrating gender-sensitive approaches in agricultural extension to ensure

inclusivity. Insights were shared on leveraging extension services to support agri-preneurship emphasizing sustainable business models in agriculture.

2. **Extension for Organic Farming:** The session delved into best practices for organic farming, focusing on eco-friendly methods and the role of extension in disseminating knowledge about organic techniques.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** **Dr. P.V.K. Sasidhar** provided a comprehensive understanding of M&E frameworks for evaluating extension programs. Best practices in designing and implementing effective evaluation techniques were discussed to ensure impactful agricultural interventions.
4. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** The demonstration led by **Dr. Sasidhar** emphasized methods to conduct effective FGDs fostering participatory approaches for gathering qualitative insights.



Fig. Participants active participation in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) demonstration led by **Dr. P.V.K. Sasidhar** (Professor, IGNOU)

Reflections:

The sessions were engaging and practical, Dr. Mahesh Chander emphasized the power of inclusive extension services in promoting entrepreneurship and gender equality. Dr. P.V.K. Sasidhar’s insights on monitoring, evaluation and focus group discussions provided clear actionable methods for assessing and improving agricultural programs.

Day 4: The sessions for the day focussed on “Career Opportunities in Extension Education”. This day highlighted career opportunities in extension education, emphasizing advanced graduate studies in the United States, transdisciplinary research and practical application of monitoring and evaluation frameworks in extension programs.

Key Learnings:

1. **Graduate Study and Career Opportunities:** Insights were provided on pursuing advanced studies in extension education and evaluation in the U.S., with a focus on interdisciplinary approaches to tackle global agricultural challenges.
2. **Transdisciplinary Research:** Participants explored the concept, motivations, advantages and challenges of integrating multiple disciplines to address complex agricultural issues.
3. **Practical Skill Development:** A group exercise on monitoring and evaluation frameworks fostered critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving.

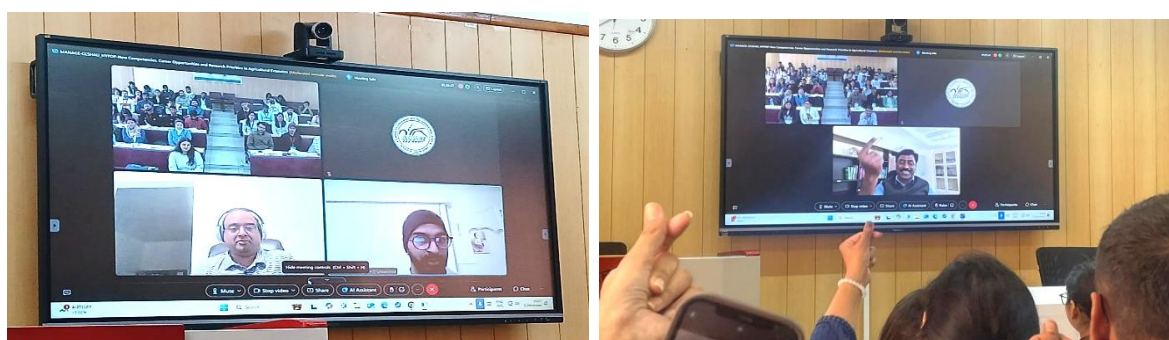


Fig. Dr. Vikram Koundinya, Dr. Parmveer Singh and Dr. Saravanan Raj interacting with participants during their respective sessions.

Reflections:

Session by Dr. Vikram Koundinya and Dr. Parmveer Singh provided a deep understanding of academic and professional pathways in extension education. Their guidance on transdisciplinary research emphasized innovation and adaptability.

Along with this he describes some elementary point's pertaining to submit the project with its necessary requirements. Herewith, he presented some key points that are as follows:

- What should in a cover letter
- Who are you?
- Why are you potential candidates?
- Why should be selected for our organization

Field Visit: The visit to the **Dr. Mangal Sein Agricultural Science Museum, CCSHAU, Hisar** offered participants an opportunity to explore agricultural heritage and technological advancements. The experience highlighted evolution of agricultural practices and the role of innovation in addressing modern challenges.



Fig. Visit to the **Dr. Mangal Sein Agricultural Science Museum, CCSHAU, Hisar**

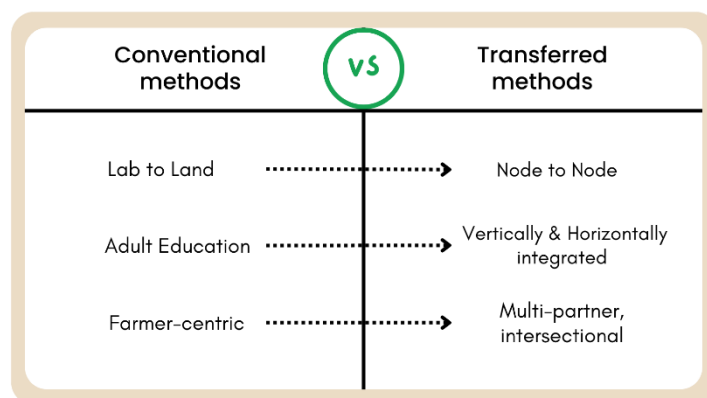
Reflections: The field visit to the CCSHAU Museum served as a bridge between history and future aspirations, inspiring participants to learn from the past while innovating for the future.

Day 5: The day began with a session by **Mr. Srajesh Gupta** on "**Agricultural Extension in the Times of Climate Change: Community, Markets, and Policy.**" In his lecture mainly he focused on farmer welfare in terms of food production, climate change increase, community interface, policy makers. Along with this he made some mentioned few push factor like incassating pressure on natural resources (Soil, Water, Air and Forest).

Extension = Problem Identification + Communication + Management

Similarly, discussion was made on the pull factors that are globalization, increasing, digitalization, Internet of things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Private capital. He also in sighted about the node interface in extension education with conventional and transferred extension methods.

Redefining Extension



This was followed by an engaging session by **Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman** on "New Competencies for Agricultural Extension", emphasizing the skill sets needed to navigate the changing agricultural landscape. He explained how individuals can build experience through internships, volunteering, joining the workforce, and honing new extension advisory methods as essential core competencies. Another key focus of his session was on why extension professionals should engage in policy-making and how they can do so effectively, with practical guidance on drafting impactful policy briefs and writings.

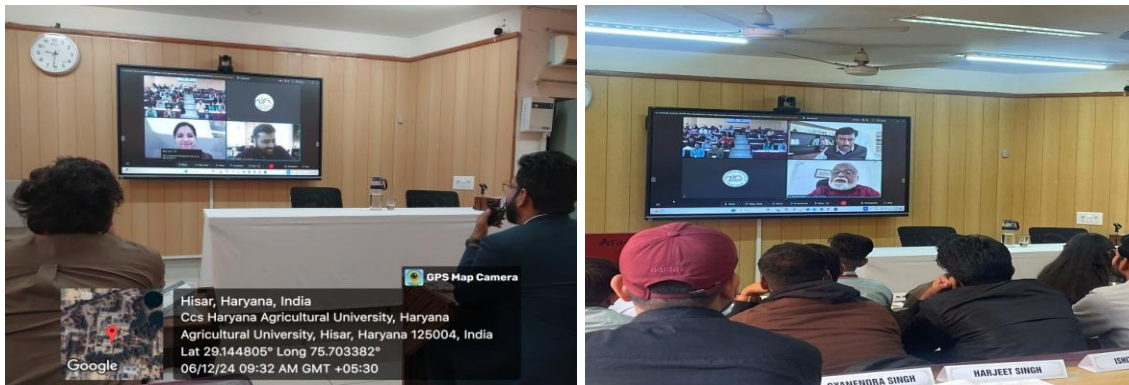


Fig. Mr. Srajesh Gupta and Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman taking sessions and interacting with the participants.

Key Learnings from Day 5:

- Integrating community, market, and policy perspectives to address climate challenges.
- Exploring innovative approaches to engaging stakeholders in sustainable practices.
- Emphasizing new extension advisory methods as essential tools for success.
- Building experience through internships, volunteering, and jobs to gain practical skills.
- Recognizing the importance of policy-making for extension professionals and how to get involved.
- Learning to draft impactful policy briefs and writings to influence agricultural innovation.

Overall, the program has been a transformative experience. We have learned that agricultural extension is not just about knowledge dissemination but also about creating meaningful collaborations, fostering innovation, and addressing systemic challenges with a future-ready mindset.

Scope for improvement: To enhance the effectiveness of the training program

- ✓ A better balance between theoretical discussions and practical applications can be achieved to keep sessions engaging and actionable.
- ✓ Incorporating more hands-on workshops and simulations, such as policy brief writing, extension program evaluation, or advisory model building, would provide valuable experiential learning opportunities.
- ✓ Additionally, facilitating virtual or in-person discussions with industry leaders, successful agripreneurs, and policymakers would offer broader perspectives and real-world insights.

- ✓ Leveraging technology to make sessions more interactive using tools like live polls, breakout rooms, and real-time feedback platforms would further boost engagement.
- ✓ Employing both pre- and post-training assessments would effectively measure learning outcomes, ensuring the program's objectives are met and identifying areas for continuous improvement.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the organizers, Dr. Saravanan Raj, Dr. Sandipamu Rahalya, Dr. Anupam Anand and Dr. Rati Mukteshwar, and also grateful to the speakers, and all those who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make this program a grand success. Your efforts have created an environment conducive to learning and growth.

Arulmanikandan Balasubramaniam is a Doctoral Scholar (Agricultural Extension Education) at the Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, Haryana, India. He can be reached at manikandanarul02@gmail.com

Apoorva Singh is a Doctoral Scholar at Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture and Technology, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India. She can be contacted at singhapoorva1909@gmail.com

Dr. Amit Kumar Mungarwal is an Assistant Professor at Maharishi Markandeshwar University, Mullana, Haryana, India. He can be reached at amitkumarmungarwal@gmail.com