

## MANAGE Internship: Cultivating Experiences for Future Professionals



### **Brewing Change for Resilience: My Voice on Joyful Learning at MANAGE**

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The MANAGE Internship focuses on various thematic areas in Agricultural Extension, and “*Impact of Extension in Agri-Food Systems*” is one of them. This theme aligns perfectly with my research interests and career aspirations. I am particularly drawn to MANAGE's commitment to capacity development in research and extension. My previous experience with MANAGE, attending the “*National Young Professionals Development Program on New Frontiers in Agricultural Extension*”, gave me a clearer vision of my professional goals. That training boosted my confidence and inspired me to pursue more in Agricultural Extension. It also shifted my perspective and intentions toward the subject. With that hope, I applied for this internship, expecting further growth in my professional career.

Moreover, the opportunity to engage with and work under Dr. Saravanan Raj (Director, Agricultural Extension) deeply motivated and excited me. I had the chance to meet him earlier during an international conference in January 2023. At that time, while one of my seniors discussed potential research collaborations with him, I stood silently, wondering if I would ever get such a chance. When the internship notification was released, I thought, “*This might be the rare opportunity to work with him and learn under his guidance.*” The vibrant environment at MANAGE and the chance to work alongside fellow interns and professionals from diverse backgrounds further encouraged me to apply.

I was truly excited to learn and grow under Dr. Saravanan Raj's mentorship. His passion for Agricultural Extension, as witnessed during the NYPDP training, was inspiring. I proposed an internship topic aligned with the “*Impact of Extension in Agri-Food Systems*”, which is closely related to my PhD research, aiming to gain deeper insights into the field. I hoped to develop a robust methodology by the end of the internship to apply in my doctoral work. I believed that MANAGE would offer the right platform for dynamic learning, practical exposure, meaningful mentorship, and professional skill development. I was confident that this internship would equip me with the mentorship and resources needed to excel in my research endeavours.

The learning environment was nurturing, collaborative, and intellectually stimulating. I thoroughly enjoyed both formal and informal discussions with my mentors and fellow interns, within and beyond the classroom setting. The constant encouragement from mentors pushed me beyond my limits, I was able to work consistently for more than fourteen to sixteen hours a day. I cherished every sip of flavoured tea that accompanied thoughtful conversations and light-hearted moments.



The freedom to work in any space, be it the well-furnished rooms or the serene green outdoors, enabled me to focus and refresh my mind. The hospitality and food were exceptional, and I miss them dearly. I had everything I needed to remain focused; inspiring people, modern workspaces, and seamless internet connectivity across the campus. The colourful gardens, gym facilities, and clean surroundings helped renew both my mind and body daily. These factors collectively enabled smooth and uninterrupted learning.



Initially, I felt the pressure to complete the internship on time and meet the expectations of my mentors. However, their support, especially from Dr. Saravanan Raj, helped me enjoy the process and fall in love with the work itself. Instead of merely focusing on deliverables and outcomes, I embraced his advice to enjoy the progress at each stage. Taking mindful breaks, enjoying tea, and walking around the campus while discussing our work with fellow interns became my way of recharging. Yet, at times, the pressure would return. During such moments, I turned to spiritual practices, reading the Bible, listening to worship songs, and praying.

I also adopted one of Dr. Saravanan Raj's iconic habits: reading motivational quotes. I displayed positive quotes on my tablet screen in slideshow mode while working, which helped me stay focused and energized when I felt drained.

## Internship Experience



I conducted a research project titled “*Shaping Sustainable Food Systems: Opening New Windows for Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services*” in Thanjavur District, Tamil Nadu. I submitted a research report, a research article, and a review article to fulfill the internship requirements. I also participated in several activities, including the Saturday Webinar Series. Notably, I served as the event anchor for the finale of the International ITEC Training Programme on “*Technological Interventions by Agri-Startups for Economic Growth.*”

Engaging with international participants from Bhutan, Nepal, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Fiji, Iraq, Malawi, Peru, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Zimbabwe, and South Sudan broadened my understanding of how agri-startups globally address local challenges through innovation. In collaboration with my fellow interns, I contributed to video script development for promoting MANAGE internships on social media. Peer feedback played a key role in refining and polishing the final drafts.



## Skills and Knowledge Gained

The internship strongly resonated with my PhD research on sustainable food systems. It deepened my understanding of systems thinking and offered rich field-level experiences. These insights not only brought joy but also sparked new research questions and directions for exploration. The practical exposure I gained now helps me navigate complex research problems more effectively.

I sincerely thank Dr. Ravi Kumar Theodore, Dr. P. Sethuraman Sivakumar, and Dr. J. Paul Mansingh for their invaluable guidance in designing my interview schedule. Their feedback on methodology helped me proceed with confidence during data collection. I am also grateful to Dr. C. Karthikeyan for his support throughout the internship.

Daily interactions with MANAGE experts during lunch or evening walks provided valuable informal learning moments that helped refine my professional mindset. Networking with visiting delegates allowed me to connect my research ideas and receive mentorship and guidance. One memorable moment was meeting the passionate startup founders from the RKVY RAFTAAR Cohort-11 training. Their creativity inspired me to consider starting my own venture and explore research gaps in this field.



## Takeaways and Action Plans

Earlier, I used to feel disheartened by setbacks caused by situations or people that impacted my professional journey. I would often wait for things to improve before restarting. But from my mentor, I learned that it's not about waiting for the right time, it's about changing our mindset. A simple yet powerful phrase from Dr. Saravanan Raj, "*Who stops you?*", profoundly impacted me. It reminded me that no one can stop us unless we quit. Resilience and focus can help us bounce back and stay on track.

I learned to focus not just on outcomes but to enjoy each step of the process. Acknowledging and valuing our progress, no matter how small, is essential. Support and appreciation from peers further amplify this motivation. Learning doesn't have to be confined to four walls. The more enjoyable and meaningful we make it, the more effective and rewarding it becomes. I am now integrating the skills and experiences from the internship into my PhD research. I also explored new software tools for qualitative analysis and simulation modeling, which will be valuable in generating meaningful results.



The internship was immersive, complete, and transformative. It shaped me to become more resilient and adaptive in pursuing my dreams. I truly appreciated the freedom to think creatively and the constructive mentorship that helped refine my ideas. The trust and encouragement I received pushed me to give my best. Knowledge-sharing from both mentors and peers created a comfortable, collaborative environment that fostered professional growth. The hands-on fieldwork, webinars, interactions with national and international delegates, and exposure to agripreneurs enriched my learning experience tremendously.

The internship also fulfilled my goal of developing a methodology for my PhD research. Working under Dr. Saravanan Raj shifted my mindset. Simple yet meaningful practices, like taking breaks, enjoying nature, walking with discussions, and loving the process, were exactly the kind of work culture I desired. Overall, this internship was an outstanding opportunity for personal and professional growth.

I'm grateful to everyone who supported me through each storm and sunshine. Special thanks to; Dr. Saravanan Raj (Director, Agricultural Extension), Dr. Raahalya and Dr. Neethu (MANAGE Fellows), Mr. Saurabh, Ms. Usha Sree, Ms. Josephine, Mr. Amit, Mr. Srinivas, Mr. Karunakar, and Ms. Priyanka. Your love, affection, and humor made the journey joyful. A heartfelt thanks to my fellow interns, Divina, Anukul, and Sakshi, for your unwavering support, and to my dear friends Basava, Amrit, and Aman for the wonderful memories.

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