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WELCOME SPEECH

By

SHRI A. P. JAIN

Minister for Food and Agriculture

Government of India

I am very happy to be present here this afternoon and take part in the inauguration programme of the Tenth International Conference of Agricultural Economists. My assignment is a most pleasing one, to request our Prime Minister to inaugurate the Conference. We could hardly have thought of anyone other than the Prime Minister to perform this function, for he symbolises the spirit of India on the move, dynamic, eager to imbibe new ideas and techniques, but at the same time not breaking violently with the past. That in spite of his many pre-occupations he should respond to our invitation is a testimony alike to his broad sympathies and his abiding interest in scientific pursuits. And the object of this Conference is precisely to promote scientific studies and research in a field where, I feel, much lee-way has still to be made.

In a country like India, where the economy is predominantly agricultural-oriented, the importance of studies and research in agricultural economics can hardly be over-emphasised. But I must admit that this discipline has not been receiving that attention in this country which its importance deserves. The Government of India, however, have been trying to foster agro-economic research in the country. The Central Ministry of Food and Agriculture has set up four regional Research Centres for carrying on continuous research in agro-economic problems, at the Delhi School of Economics in the north, at the University of Madras in the south, at the Viswa-Bharati University in the east and the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics in the west. It is proposed to set up two other centres to cover other regions as well. For guidance in framing and putting into operation research projects in agricultural economics, the Government of India, a few years ago, invited a team of two eminent agricultural economists from U.S.A., Dr. John D. Black and Mr. H. L. Stewart to make a study of the various problems relating to research, teaching and public administration of the economics of agriculture in this country. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research in the Central Ministry of Food and Agriculture have set up an Agricultural Economics Committee which have drawn up a broad programme of research in the light of the Report of Black and Stewart and have been encouraging investigations on different subjects within this broad programme. In view of the importance of farm management studies, both for extension work and for policy making, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture have also initiated farm management studies ; the investigations at the first six Centres have been completed while three new Centres have been taken up. Side by side, steps are being taken to improve the standard of teaching and research in agricultural economics in agricultural colleges. Thus, there is an increasing awareness of the need to build up a sound basis of research and advisory work in agricultural economics.

I need not stress how important it is that there should be the closest collaboration between agricultural economists and other specialists to improve the efficiency

of all sectors of agriculture. Such collaboration is all the more needed in this country where low farming efficiency has been hindering the progress of development. Much of the stresses and strains which have developed in the Indian economy of late has been due partly to the lag in agricultural production. Increasing agricultural productivity has played a crucial role in the economic development of many countries and it is particularly important to countries in this region with their relatively dense population. The broad theme of the Conference, *Agriculture and Its Terms of Trade*, comprises a varied and rich fare like the shifting fortunes of agriculture, technical peculiarities of agricultural supply and lack of flexibility in agriculture, agricultural support measures, inter-dependent development of agriculture and other industries, population movements, etc. What we are interested in knowing is what it is which has provided 'the take off' for sustained development. We in this country have launched a programme of development, the tempo of which is dependent increasingly on a sustained growth in agricultural productivity. This is the challenge we have to face. As Toynbee has remarked, creativity requires a challenge and a response ; the challenge is there, I hope the response would not be weak. In meeting the challenge we would like to profit by the experience of the agricultural economists of international repute who have gathered here, if only they could lay bare those causative factors which have helped a sustained economic growth.

I hope the deliberations of this Conference would stimulate a greater interest in the subject of agricultural economics. I have great pleasure in requesting the Prime Minister to inaugurate the Conference.



Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru Inaugurating the Conference