

Press Information Bureau

Government of India

Vice President calls for promotion of agro-based industries for job creation in rural areas

VP asks agricultural universities to handhold and support farmers' collectives and FPOs

VP calls for greater use of technology in increasing the farmers' income

Shri Naidu lauds farmers for ensuring nation's food security amid COVID pandemic

VP calls for reversing the fall in standards seen in every walk of life including politics and legislatures

Vice President addresses the 2nd Annual Convocation of Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa and inaugurated various projects

Strive to excel in your chosen domain and contribute towards the growth and development of the country – Shri Naidu to students

East Champaran, November 07, 2021

The Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu today emphasised the need to promote agro-based industries in rural areas so as to create employment opportunities for the rural youth. Referring to the phenomena of reverse migration from cities to villages during the COVID-19 pandemic, he said that entrepreneurship in agriculture can immensely benefit the Indian economy by creating jobs in areas where they are needed the most.

Addressing the second Annual Convocation of Dr Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Pusa at its Piprakothi Campus (East Champaran) in Bihar today, the Vice President said that the Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) can immensely help small and marginal farmers with forward (processing, marketing and export) and backward (input and extension services) linkages in the Food Supply Chains. Therefore, he emphasised the need to promote FPOs through handholding and capacity building, and appreciated the University for initiating training programmes in this regard. Reiterating that there is a lot of scope for food processing in India, he urged the Universities to encourage farmers in their respective region to form collectives.

Observing that Indian agriculture is characterized by marginal and small farmers with fewer resources, Shri Naidu highlighted the need for increasing the farmers' income through various sources, including improved resource use efficiency. Calling for greater use of technology in food management to ensure food security for all, he said "The developed world

is already reaping benefits from the use of Artificial Intelligence in agriculture and India too must harness its potential to help improve farm income.” In this regard, the Vice President asked Dr Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University to work on the Impact Assessment of Technologies and also evaluate alternative farming techniques and their sustainability.

Lauding the farmers for record foodgrain production despite the challenges thrown by COVID-19 pandemic, Shri Naidu said that our country owes a lot to our hardworking farmers and frontline Corona warriors. Stressing that “agriculture is our basic culture,” he urged the Center and State governments, public leaders, universities and research institutions, and the media to give more importance to agriculture. “We must see that the agri-sector is given all the support that is needed for development and sustenance of agriculture,” he said.

Congratulating all the students who graduated today, the Vice President asked them to strive to excel in their chosen domain and contribute towards the growth and development of the country. On this occasion, he also praised Shri Radha Mohan Singh, Member of Parliament and the former Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare, for his efforts in establishing several farmer-centric institutes at Piprakothi, Champaran. “I am confident that all these institutes and centres will play a crucial role in alleviating the problems of small and marginal farmers of the region,” Shri Naidu added.

Referring to the stellar performance of the agriculture sector despite challenges thrown by COVID-19, the Vice President said that this was the first time since 2013-14 that agriculture regained this economic prominence. Terming agriculture as one of the main pillars of the Indian economy, he exhorted the young agri-professionals to work for the development of this crucial sector.

Noting that the university is continuously evolving its research and pedagogy, the Vice President appreciated it for introducing courses in contemporary disciplines such as agricultural journalism, agro-tourism management and also for establishing a start-up incubation center to help students start their own business enterprises. “Agro-based tourism which will boost farm economy and will also act as a detox therapy for urban tourists by letting them experience the natural beauty of the place, ethnic food, unique flora and fauna,” he added.

Stressing that India’s growth strategy is focused on sustainable development, Shri Naidu praised the University for its innovative ‘Sukhet Model’ aimed at creating a circular economy/bio-economy in the village and establishing a self-reliant village. He also complimented the university for coming up with slew of technologies suitable for migrant labourers, including women and for training them under PM Kisan Kalyan Yojna. In his address, Shri Naidu also advised the students to spend half of their time in classrooms/labs and remaining half in the fields with farmers to understand their problems and find solutions for the same.

Mentioning several other initiatives by the University for the welfare of the farming community, the Vice President expressed his happiness that the new knowledge created in the laboratories is being transferred to Covid through a strong network of 18 Krishi Vigyan Kendras.

Recalling Mahatma Gandhi's historic Champaran Satyagraha movement in support of farmers, Shri Naidu said that he felt privileged and honoured to stand on that pious soil. "Champaran is also the land that gave Mahatma Gandhi Ji the name that he loved the most, Babu," he added.

Reminding the students that Bihar is the land of great personalities like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Jai Prakash Narayan and Karpuri Thakur, the Vice President asked them to take inspiration from their lives and high moral standards they followed. "We are witnessing a fall in the standards in every walk of life today, be it politics, legislatures, local bodies or even educational institutions. This fall needs to be arrested because these persons/institutions provide leadership to our country," Shri Naidu said. In this regard, he also stressed the need to mould public opinion in such a way so that people select and elect their representatives based on four Cs, namely – character, calibre, capacity and conduct.

Stating that with institutions like Nalanda, Bihar was "the knowledge centre of the world," Shri Naidu called for regaining that past glory and to make it a knowledge and innovation hub again.

On this occasion, the Vice President also inaugurated the Pt Deendayal Upadhyaya College of Horticulture & Forestry (its administrative building and two hostels for the girls and boys), Centre of Excellence on Embryo Transfer Technology and Indigenous Cattle Breeds – Conservation and Improvement Centre. He also paid floral tribute at the statue of former Prime Minister of India, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the University campus.

The Governor of Bihar, Shri Phagu Chauhan, the Chief Minister, Shri Nitish Kumar, Deputy Chief Minister, Smt. Renu Devi, Agriculture Minister of Bihar, Shri Amarendra Pratap Singh, Member of Parliament, Shri Radhamohan Singh, Chancellor of Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, Shri Prafulla Kumar Mishra, Vice-Chancellor, Dr. R.C. Srivastava, Secretary, DARE & DG, ICAR, Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra, faculty and students were among those who attended the event.

Following is the full text of the speech –

"Namaskar to all of you!

It gives me immense pleasure to be a part of this second Annual Convocation of Dr Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University in this historically important land of Champaran. This is the place that became the initiation centre of Mahatma Gandhi Ji's Satyagraha movement in support of farmers, in the year 1917. I pay homage to all the Satyagrahis who fought against the tyrannical laws of the British government. This is also the land that gave Mahatma

Gandhi Ji the name that he loved the most, Bapu. I feel privileged and honoured to stand on this pious soil and address you from here.

To begin with, I would like to congratulate all students who have been awarded degrees and medals and graduated today with flying colors. Today, as you graduate and feel the sense of pride along with your parents, it is important for each one of you to look back and convey your gratitude to all the teachers who had shaped your educational career since primary education. Like parents, your 'Guru' is also irreplaceable.

Dear students, as you embark on your new journey, I am confident that you will strive to excel in your chosen domain and contribute towards the growth and development of the country. Let me also convey my appreciation to the faculty members, the non-teaching staff and other employees of this institution on this occasion.

I would also like to congratulate Shri Radha Mohan Singh ji, Member of Parliament and the former Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, for transforming this hallowed land into a centre of agricultural education, research and extension. His efforts are in tune with Mahatma Gandhi's vision of placing farmers' interests above everything else. It is due to his tireless efforts that Piprakothi has become home to multiple farmer-centric institutes, such as Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay College of Horticulture and Forestry and the Centre of Excellence in Embryo Transfer Technology.

I am confident that all these institutes and centres will play a crucial role in alleviating the problems of small and marginal farmers of the region.

While no country or sector remained unaffected by Covid 19, the agriculture sector in India registered a positive growth. This was the first time since 2013-14 that agriculture regained this economic prominence.

Dear students,

Agriculture is one of the main pillars of the Indian economy and as young agri-professionals, you will have a bigger role to play ahead. Be proud of your alma mater which has achieved multiple milestones in agricultural research, education, and extension since its inception as a Central Agricultural University in the year 2016. In the past, Nalanda and Vikramashila made Bihar a source of inspiration and enlightenment and played a pivotal role in making India a *Viswaguru*.

I am told that this university is continuously evolving its research and pedagogy and has taken significant steps to prepare students to meet the challenges of the future. I am happy to note that it has very recently introduced post-graduate diploma courses in agricultural journalism and mass communication, agro-tourism management, and agricultural warehouse management. I am also told that the University is planning to start more technical and entrepreneurship-oriented courses in mushroom production and post-harvest processing of agricultural produce. The University's start-up incubation center will help students start their own business enterprises.

I was also informed that the University is promoting agro-based tourism which will boost farm economy and will also act as a detox therapy for urban tourists by letting them experience natural beauty of the place, ethnic food, unique flora and fauna.

Dear sisters and brothers,

India's growth strategy is focused on sustainable development. The sustainable development goals focus on maintaining food and nutritional security by addressing social, economic, and ecological components. I am happy to learn that the 'Sukhet Model', an innovative idea of the University linking Government of India's objectives of 'Clean India Campaign' and 'Ujjawala Yojana', has been applauded by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji in 80th episode of 'Mann ki Baat'. I am told that this model will help create a circular economy/bio-economy in the village and establish a self-reliant village. I am sure that the efforts of the university through knowledge partnership will help this novel idea reach many more Panchayats across Bihar and rest of India.

As agriculture is characterized by marginal and small farmers with fewer resources, increasing the income of farmers through various sources, including improved resource use efficiency, is of utmost importance. The developed world is already reaping benefits from the use of Artificial Intelligence in agriculture and India too must harness its potential to help improve farm income. Greater use of technology in food management is needed to ensure food security for all. I urge the University to work on the Impact Assessment of Technologies and also evaluate alternative farming techniques and their sustainability.

As you all are aware, small and marginal farm holdings constitute the core of Indian agricultural production systems. The Farmer Producer Organizations can immensely help small and marginal farmers with forward and backward linkages in the Food Supply Chains; backward in terms of input and extension services and forward in terms of processing, marketing, selling and export. There is a need to promote FPOs, and I am happy to learn that the University is also initiating training programmes in this regard. Handholding and Capacity building is important for FPOs and I urge the University to encourage farmers in the region to form collectives.

While many people from towns are forced to migrate to cities in search of work, mostly in the unorganized sector, we have also witnessed reverse migration during the COVID-19 pandemic. This calls for the need to develop more employment opportunities in the rural regions, especially in the farm sector. Agro-based industries can flourish in rural areas where labor is abundant and inexpensive. Entrepreneurship in agriculture can immensely benefit Indian economy by generating employment opportunities for rural youth and reducing the migration from rural to urban areas.

I have been told that this university came up with slew of technologies suitable for migrant labourers, including women and trained them under PM Kisan Kalyan Yojna. I must compliment the university for coming out with technologies for monetization of agro-waste such as banana pseudostems, pigeon pea stalks, maize cobstones, litchi stones, turmeric

leaves and waste vegetables. The value-added products from these agro-wastes can generate employment in rural areas.

It is also heartening to note that the robust research is supported by an equally strong extension base through a network of 18 Krishi Vigyan Kendras which are functioning as Knowledge and Resource Centres. I am happy to learn that the technology developed by the university has been adopted in various micro-farming situations, with special focus on major crops of the state like paddy, wheat, maize, sugarcane, potato, sweet potato, turmeric, banana, mango and litchi.

I would also like to compliment the University for having provided digital solutions in the wake of the pandemic to each farmer to deal with soil management, pest and diseases management and post-harvest management, among others. I am happy to learn that the University's extension support system has played its part to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 by reaching out to more than 1.28 lakh farmers through video conferencing hubs at Krishi Vigyan Kendras for webcast of training programs.

Dear sisters and brothers,

Knowledge is a powerful agent of change. The application of new knowledge has contributed to the growth of agriculture and thereby to the welfare of the farmers. It is heartening to learn that the University is involved in '*Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana*' and '*Attracting Rural Youth to Agriculture*' by providing vocational courses to rural youth and in promoting '*Climate Smart Agriculture*' practices for overall increase in productivity. I appreciate the efforts of the University in these directions.

COVID-19 has affected the education system badly as the institutions had to shift to online teaching. It was a new experience both for teachers as well as students. I am happy to know that this university shifted from class room teaching to online seamlessly and conduct examination successfully.

In the end, let me salute our soldiers, farmers and scientists-- Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan!

I once again congratulate the students on the successful completion of their studies at this great institution. My wishes to all of you for your future endeavours!"

MS/NS/DP