

THE 7TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY IPS INAUGURATED

Inaugural function of the 7th International Conference on “Phytopathology in Achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals” organized by the Indian Phytopathological Society (IPS) was held at Dr. B. P. Pal Memorial Auditorium of ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi. At the very outset, Dr. M. P. Thakur, President, IPS, welcomed the dignitaries and the delegates from 24 countries attending the conference. Dr. Dinesh Singh, Secretary, IPS, briefed the august gathering with history and the activities undertaken by the society. Dr. P. K. Chakrabarty, President (Elect), IPS & Member, Agricultural Scientist Recruitment Board in his deliberation stated that among the factors that contributed for low yields in leading crop plants are biotic and abiotic stresses and plant protection is of paramount importance to bio-security. Among the biotic stresses, diseases caused by plant pathogens are existential threat to agriculture. Dr. Chakrabarty reiterated a recent report that highly-productive countries such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and the Philippines are likely to be harbouring hundreds more crop pests and diseases than currently known. With advancement in science and technology especially the Omics tools, the world is experiencing new era in the field of plant pathology. Dr. Serge Savary, Editor-in-Chief, Food Security & Ex-Vice-President, International Society for Plant Pathology, France graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour. In his address, he stated that ecosystem strategy need to be adopted to produce nutrition-rich food which, in turn, will help achieving food security. He further added that India had a massive challenge to feed 1.3 billion people with nutritious food. Dr. A. K. Singh, DDG (Extension) & Director, ICAR-IARI, in his address, deliberated that to feed ever growing 1.3 billion population of India, plant protection is of prime importance as, on an average, the crop losses due to diseases, insect pests and weeds are estimated to range from 15 to 25% of crop production. Though importance of pesticides and chemicals in achieving food goals cannot be denied, it was also equally important to consider soil health, animal health and human health while devising plant protection strategies. Of the diverse components of disease management, bio-control is important. But, notwithstanding their efficacy, bio-control formulations have only an inadequate share in the national pesticide scenario. How to make bio-control more effective, feasible and popular, strategies need to be reviewed thoroughly. Dr. A. K. Singh, DDG (Hort & Crop Science), ICAR and the Chief Guest of the occasion told that the manifold increase in food grain production from 50.82 million tonnes in 1950-51 to 281.37 million tonnes in 2018-19 have been possible due to strong policy decisions of the Government of India & generation of the tools and technologies by the researchers and the development and deployment of varieties with genes for higher yield and resistance. Government of India has set goals to double the farmer’s income by 2022 and also to increase our agri-export earnings. To achieve this daunting task, newer tools and technologies, viz., ICP, digital agriculture IoT etc., being developed have to get adopted in the field for which our farmers have to be educated and trained in the use of these new tools and technologies. For increasing the agri-export, our produce has to be cost and quality competitive and should be nutrition-rich and free of pesticidal contaminants. Thereafter, IPS conferred awards to eminent

past and present researchers in the field of Plant pathology in nine different categories, namely, A. P. Mishra life Time Achievement Award, Indian Phytopathological Society Recognition Award, Mundkur Memorial Award, S. N. Dasgupta Memorial Award, M. K. Patel Memorial Young Scientist Award, J. F. Dastur Memorial Award, Sharda Lele Memorial Award, K. C. Mehta and Manoranjan Mitra Award and D.P. Misra and R. N. Pandey IPS Best Women Scientist Award. The meeting ended with vote of thanks from Dr. Rashmi Aggarwal, Dean and Joint Director (Edn), IARI.