

Valedictory Function of the 7th International Conference on Phytopathology in Achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals held on January 19, 2020



The 7th International Conference on “Phytopathology in Achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals” organized by the Indian Phytopathological Society (IPS) came to an end in the evening of Jan 19, 2020. Altogether 650 delegates from 24 countries participated in this mega-event of which 40 delegates were from outside India. There were 60 farmer delegates from different states of India. During the 4 days’ long (from Jan 16 to 19, 2020) conference, 21 technical sessions on 21 different themes were conducted. There were 8 plenary speakers, 49 keynote speakers, 76 invited speakers, 130 oral speakers and 423 poster presentations. Valedictory function of the conference was held at Dr. B.P. Pal Memorial Auditorium, ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi.

The function was presided over by Dr. Ashok Kumar Singh, Director, ICAR-IARI, New Delhi who in his address emphasized on the need of institutional reform for human resource development by exposing the young scientists to the best of the laboratories and research environment outside the country. He also urged the scientists to make endeavours to meet the challenge of increasing country’s agri-export earnings from the present 39 billion US \$ to 80 billion US \$. To achieve this daunting task, our produce for agri-exports must be either free of pesticidal contaminants or below maximum residue limit set by international standards. He further added about the scope of using gene editing tools for making variants of genes of resistance.

The Chief Guest, Dr. C. D. Mayee, Former Chairman, Agricultural Scientists Recruitment Board (ASRB), New Delhi expressed his concern on the use of chemical pesticides in plant disease management. He informed that the researchers were also less oriented towards chemical management of plant diseases which was evidenced by the fact that only about 10 per cent of

papers presented in this conference were on chemical management as against 52 per cent of the papers in the 1st International Conference of IPS organized way back in 1966.

The Guest of Honour, Dr. AnupamVarma, an Eminent Virologist of international repute, told about the need to produce more food combating various emerging and re-emerging diseases and by adopting natural farming ways. The Guest of Honour, Dr. A. N. Mukhopadhyay, Former Vice-Chancellor, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat (Assam) urged upon the plant pathologists to focus their research on a few national problems of importance.

Earlier, Dr. Rashmi Aggarwal, Dean & Joint Director (Edn), ICAR-IARI, New Delhi placed the technical report of the Conference in front of the august gathering. The technical report comprised of 33 recommendations which emerged out of discussions in different technical sessions. The recommendations endorsed upon the need (i) for establishment of National Plant Pests Diagnostics Network to ensure bio-security in Indian agriculture, (ii) for strict regulations for manufacturing, distribution and licensing of pesticides to avoid residual toxicity, (iii) to study the involvement of major dominant genes for disease resistance and to incorporate these genes in breeding programme, (iv) to identify novel bio-control agents and to validate the technologies developed against seed and soil-borne disease, and (v) to quantify abrupt climate variables with respect to emerging diseases.

Dr. P. K. Chakrabarty, President (Elect), IPS & Member, ASRB emphasized that IPS has to play a greater role in bringing desired changes in the plant protection scenario of the country and has to develop greater linkages with other national and international societies.

IPS felicitated the representatives of thirteen co-organizers of this international event.