

Growing Green...Going Ahead...

Looking Back & Going Ahead:

The school of Agricultural Sciences (SAS) has been established in 1989 has received massive response and unprecedented success in distance education in agriculture. Enrolling just 80 students in 1990 and over a period of time the enrollment has been sky rocketed to more than 20,000 every year within the first decade of our existence and the cumulative enrollment till date has been reached to more than 231,000 students in the last 24 years of our existence.

The School has succeeded in providing sustainable academic and operational support to the farming community and reduced the morbidity rate of debt ridden farmers in Maharashtra through Sustainable Education and learning in sustainable farming in Agriculture.

The school has practiced a vision to provide vocational and employment generating mass education in regional language of Marathi with a mission of reaching the unreached section of population such as dropouts of the conventional education system, practicing farmers, farm women and rural youth in Maharashtra.

The Director of the School of Agricultural Sciences, Dr. Surya Gunjal, with his small team of academic and administrative staff is proud to say that they have achieved unprecedented success in achieving their target of reaching the unreached. However, our journey has faced lot of undulating shocks and surprises from regulating bodies and authorities in the past.

Fact Sheet of Agriculture Programs:

The SAS has developed 16 academic programs right from the Certificate Program in Gardening to Post Graduate and Research Program in Agricultural Extension, Recognized 60 Agriculture Education Centers in Maharashtra, Nominated more than 600 Teacher Councilors imparting instructions to more than 20,000 students in Maharashtra.

The list of academic programs covers Certificate in Gardening, Foundation in Agriculture, Diploma in Horticulture, Diploma in Agri-business Management, Diploma in Agro-Journalism, Diploma in Fruit Production, Diploma in Vegetable Production, Diploma in Floriculture & Landscape Gardening, B.Sc. Agriculture, B.Sc. Horticulture and M. Sc. and Ph. D. program in Agricultural Extension.

Dr. Surya Gunjal, while reviewing the quality of students in Agriculture, says that the third party evaluation of his students, in comparison with the students from conventional agricultural educational system, is highly encouraging and positive; when it comes to delivering fitness to the purpose of education and services, however they little lag behind in and communication skills. This has been proved during the recruitment of Agricultural Assistants in the State Department of Agriculture during last 10 years.

The seed production companies around Pune, Aurangabad, Jalna and Wardha prefer to recruit the Open University Diploma holders as they can only Survive under Hot Sun and Wet Seasons during Seed Production program. More than 50 % Practicing Gardeners (Mali) and Nursery Men around Mumbai, Pune, Thane, Nashik and Nagpur are the products of YCMOU's School of Agricultural Sciences.

This is evidence enough that the courses at the School of Agricultural Sciences are truly relevant to the needs of both the masses and the classes; and they have meaningfully changed the lives of millions of families. Moreover, we are very conscious for the content creation, the program delivery mechanism and the end product.

Our Distinguished Alumni base besides many Innovative Farmers, Krishi Bhushan Farmers, Agri-entrepreneurs

and Development Reformers in various agro-industrial establishments in Maharashtra includes following luminaries working in various institutions and serving cause of concern in Agriculture and Rural Development. Dr. Sangita Laddha, Former Director, International Horticulture Research and Training Center, Jaipur & Present Vice President, Jain Irrigation System Limited, Ahmedabad. Dr. Ramchandra Hegde, Former Chief General Manager, NABARD, Pune & Present Senior Consultant on Watershed Management to World Bank Project, Bangalore. Dr. Sahebrao Kshirsagar, Former Chairman, Bhandara Rural Bank, Bhandara & Present President of Global Research Center on Organic Agriculture, Nashik. Dr. T.K.Sridevi, Former District Magistrate & Present Development Commissioner, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad. Dr. Prakash Pawar, Deputy Secretary, Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai. Dr. Rajendra Deshmukh, Former Chief Horticulturist, Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers Limited, Mumbai. Dr. Aseem Gokarn, Landscape Horticulturist, Reliance Industries Limited, Mumbai. Dr. Bhaskar Gaikwad, Organic Farming Scientist, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Babhaleshwar, Dist. Ahmednagar. Dr. Rajendra Sarkale, Managing Director, Satara District Co-Operative Bank, Satara. Dr. Bandikumar Mallik, Deputy Commissioner of Animal Husbandry, Govt. of India, New Delhi. Dr. K. Devrajaiah, Chairman & Managing Director, RR Seeds Limited, Bangalore, Dr. Saju George, Principal Scientist (Extension Education), Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Bangalore. Dr. Kailash Mote, Joint Director, Department of Agriculture, Maharashtra State, Pune. Mr. Tanaji Gaidhani, Former Chairman, Nashik District Cooperative Sugar Factory, Palase, Dist. Nashik.

National & International Collaborations:

The school of Agricultural Sciences worked in Knowledge and Technology exchange program with prestigious research and development organizations of National and International repute, such as Yashwantrao Chavan Foundation, Mumbai, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Mumbai, Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi. International Crops Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington and Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada. We have attracted funds worth Rs.12 Crore during last 20 years through project collaborations.

The School is working in close collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi on National Agricultural Innovation Projects on Re-usable Learning Objects Technology in Agro-horticulture Education, With DEC, New Delhi for Documentation and dissemination of Indigenous Agricultural Technology. With Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Canada on Life Long Learning of Farmers (L3 Farmers) in India and Technology Mediated Open & Distance Education program. With IFPRI, Washington & ICRISAT, Hyderabad on Global Open Food & Agriculture University Project.

Innovative Practices in Agriculture Programs:

Vertical Mobility in Admission: All Programs in Agricultural Sciences under the School offers full Vertical Mobility and Credit Transfer from Certificate level to post graduate programs. Thus a 10 th. Class pass student when enrolled for Certificate Program can reach up to Post Graduate program in Agricultural Sciences, if he/she wishes to do so. The pace, time and course load can be decided by the student thus giving him a chance to work out his own capacity and time for learning.

Social Opportunity Programs: It is painful to see that some of the students that fail in 10 th. 12 th. Class board examinations commit suicide owing to ends the opportunity of hope for the betterment in the life. Our school tries to offer some simple, feasible solutions to these suicides through its educational programs. The foundation courses offered by the school are achievable by students who have been frustrated with the conventional education system. In addition, all the programs of the school are relevant and employable in the world of work and thus the school has given renewed hope to the dropouts of matriculation/post matriculation examinations shouldering the social responsibility of rehabilitation of School and College drop outs in Maharashtra.

Employment & Self Employment Generating Programs: The School attaches utmost value to Vocational, Professional and Employment generating Programs which can also serve as entry points into many of the government jobs in addition to private jobs and self employment. Till dates, More than 20,000 students are absorbed in government jobs and more than 40,000 are engaged in Self-employment, the remaining 70,000 are engaged in farming with new outlook and progressive vision. Thus out of 230,000 enrolled till dates, 100,000 are again dropped out from the system while 130,000 are sincerely contributing to National Agriculture Development Program.

Network of Agriculture Education Centers: The school believes that to run qualitative programs, we need committed people who respect quality academic practices and shared values. We have established a network of 60 Agriculture Education centers in reliable, authentic and resourceful learning centers such as 15 ICAR Affiliated Krishi Vigyan Kendras and 45 State Agricultural University Affiliated College of agriculture and Horticulture in Maharashtra. More than 600 Professors, Scientists and Agriculture Extension Officers working as Teacher Councilors on these 60 recognized Agriculture Education Centers in Maharashtra.

Our strength lies in the weakness of the conventional agricultural education system in terms of Vertical Mobility, which has become a distinct feature of our university education system. Hence, we are working in the areas where the conventional agricultural universities have inherent limitations in reaching out to the non-traditional target groups, for instance in achieving full vertical mobility and reaching out to the dropouts, practicing farmers and rural youths.

Share of Agriculture Education in Maharashtra: There are 4 State Agricultural Universities and 1 Animal Sciences University in Maharashtra imparting Agriculture Education to nearly 25,000 students in all areas of knowledge while our university alone catering to the need of more than 20,000 students in Maharashtra in Agriculture and Horticulture.

Excellent Self Instructional Learning Material: All these courses are disseminated through highly qualitative Self-Instructional Material (SIM) developed totally in-house by the university involving more than 300 experts in the field. The school has developed 172 Text Books and Work Books so far in the Self Instructional Format. All the courses are disseminated through highly qualitative Self Instructional Material (SIM) developed by the university.

Practical and Face-to-Face Contact Sessions: In addition to the self-learning books, regular face-to-face counseling sessions for theory, practical and interactive learning are held 6 days in each month from August to February month on the study center, where theory and practical including Field component are being conducted to ensure hands on learning. There are 33 Contact Sessions in one academic year, each of 6 hours duration (3 hours for theory and 3 hours for practical) devoted to practical fieldwork at the respective study centers.

Collective Approach in Program Planning & Development: The school adopts quality practices in all its processes. Agriculture and agriculture business management is constantly influenced by new research, uncertain climate and market conditions. The school is committed to providing latest knowledge to its students, and abreast them with the new cost effective and relevant options based on research findings in agriculture. Therefore, it also goes through a periodic revision of its course content and implementation mechanism. The school is committed to providing latest knowledge to its students, and keeping them informed about the latest cost-effective options.

Provision of Supportive Learning Materials: Though the school develops qualitative learning material developed in house, it recognizes the significance of new knowledge and research based production system. Therefore, in addition to the in-house study material, it also archives quality publications and uses them for the development of new learning materials. The school addresses academic issues through proactive consultation

with peer groups. It develops framework and curricula inherent with high-end self-employability skills. It provides learning materials in quality assured compact modular format. The school has been doing seminal work for farmers in the field of agriculture, and simultaneously building its capacity to serve more and serve better in active collaborations with some of the reputed National and International partners. The school develops area specific curricula in consultation with the State Agricultural Universities and ICAR institutions.

Periodical Accreditation of Study Centers: The school has developed 100 points Evaluation Report/Format based quality parameters and benchmarks for reorganization of new center or continuation of existing center. It ensures academically healthy and resourceful institution capable of imparting agricultural education. Then a professional team from the university headed by the Director of the school visits the institution. This team assesses the infrastructural capabilities of the institution before signing the Memorandum of Undertaking (MOU). In the process, after assessing the criteria, a MOU is signed with the partner institution; which results in it being recognized as an authorized and recognized study centre of the university. The study centre is bound to deliver mutually agreed upon services to the students enrolled at the study centre. Annual/periodic re-visiting of the partner institutions by the director of the school or the responsible authority delegated by the Director of the School ensures continuance of delivery of quality education.

Corporate Model of Mass Education & Fiscal Surplus:

The School of Agricultural Sciences has since its establishment in 1990, started working on Corporate Model of Distance Education in Agriculture with special consideration to resources generation and utilization for development. The School has started first academic programs in Certificate in Grape Production Technology and enrolled just 81 students in 1990, with Rs. 500 as program fees. While as on today, the program fee is still in affordable range of Rs. 5000 per year including all, It is nearly one third of the fees charged for the same program in State Agricultural Universities in Maharashtra. However, by practicing the Principle of Scale of Economy, our School since its inception, has generated financial resources of Rs. 60.00 Crores in the form of Tuition Fees, spent nearly Rs. 30.00 Crores for the Development of the Academic Programs and Operation of the Agriculture Education Centers in Maharashtra and still surpluses worth of Rs.30.00 Crores during the span of last 25 years of our existence.

Future Plans in Agriculture Education:

The road map pertaining to the development of the School of Agricultural Sciences for the next five years has already been chalked out. The school plans to revisit, revise and consolidate all its programs in consistence with the new ICAR and UGC guidelines. It also proposes to monitor and evaluate all agriculture education centers in line with NAAC accreditation.

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