



MY MEETING NOTES

National Young Professional Development Program on New Competencies, Career Opportunities, And Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension Kerala Agricultural University and MANAGE September 30 to October 5, 2024



Namitha, Jeena, Aravindh, Shanila, Swathy, and Fathima reflect on their recent participation in Kerala Agricultural University and MANAGE's National Youth Professionals Development Program on New Competencies, Career Opportunities, and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension.

The MANAGE National Young Professionals Development Program on New Competencies, Career Opportunities, and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension, conducted in collaboration with Kerala Agricultural University from September 30 to October 5, 2024, brought together a nationwide network of skilled experts and 50 young professionals. Participants included postgraduate (PG) students and PhD scholars in agricultural extension, representing six states and 10 universities.

This program aimed to:

- Familiarize participants with emerging trends in extension research, practice, and policy.
- Explore new competencies, career opportunities, and research priorities in agricultural extension.
- Equip participants with the skills needed to address the evolving demands of a dynamic agricultural landscape.



The training participants with the programme organizers and delegates

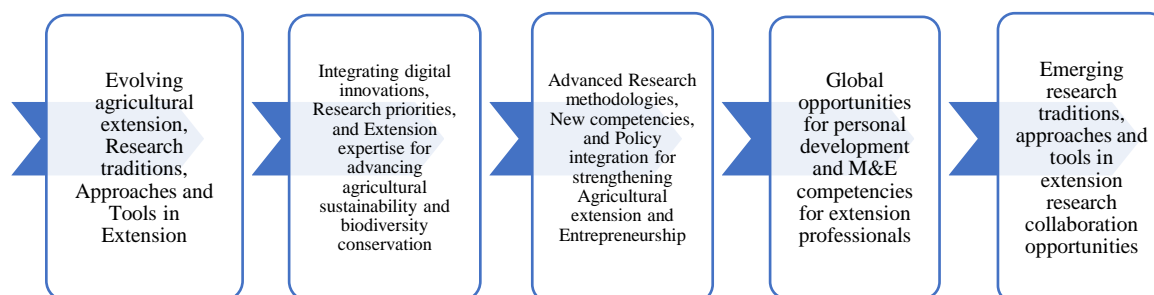
The event fostered innovation, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration, preparing young professionals for prosperous careers in agricultural extension.

Program Overview

The five-day training program was meticulously planned and executed by Dr. Saravanan Raj, Director, Agricultural Extension, and Dr. Sandipamu Rahalya, MANAGE Fellow, MANAGE Hyderabad, and Dr. Darsana S., Assistant Professor and Dr. S. Helen, Professor and Head, Central Training Institute, Kerala Agricultural University

Focus Areas

The program addressed key themes, including:



These themes were explored through lectures, interactive sessions, and field visits, enabling participants to gain practical insights and develop essential skills.

Policy Engagement and Extension

The sessions under this theme provided a comprehensive understanding of policy formation, engagement, and the competencies required to shape the future of agricultural extension. Experts including **Dr. Jiju P. Alex** (Kerala State Planning Board), **Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman V.** (Director, Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy), and **Dr. Suchiradipta Bhattacharjee** (International Water Management Institute) delivered thought-provoking lectures.



Dr. Jiju P. Alex (Kerala State Planning Board) interacting with participants on the topic Policy formulation and Planning

Key insights included:

- The role of extension specialists in promoting farmers' interests, encouraging innovation, and fostering sustainable agricultural practices.

- The significance of evidence-based advocacy and policy frameworks in advancing agricultural development.
- Practical guidance on engaging with policymakers and contributing to inclusive and effective agricultural policies.

Curriculum Development

Discussions emphasized incorporating policy engagement into the curriculum for postgraduate and PhD scholars in agricultural extension. Recommendations included:

- Hands-on activities in policy formulation and planning.
- Courses that build skills in policy analysis, evidence-based advocacy, and stakeholder engagement.



Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman V. (Director, CRISP) taking a session on “New competencies for Agricultural Extension.”

These additions aim to prepare future professionals to navigate complex policy landscapes and address real-world challenges effectively.

Unexplored Career Opportunities and Competencies for New Extensionists

As the agricultural landscape evolves, extension professionals must adapt to meet the changing demands of farmers and the industry. This theme highlighted the competencies and career opportunities emerging under the New Extensionist framework.

Key topics included:

1. Competency Development:

- Soft skills: Communication, facilitation, and negotiation.
- Technical expertise: Climate-smart agriculture, digital tools, and sustainable farming practices.
- Innovation management: Fostering local entrepreneurship and integrating ICT solutions.

2. Global Opportunities:

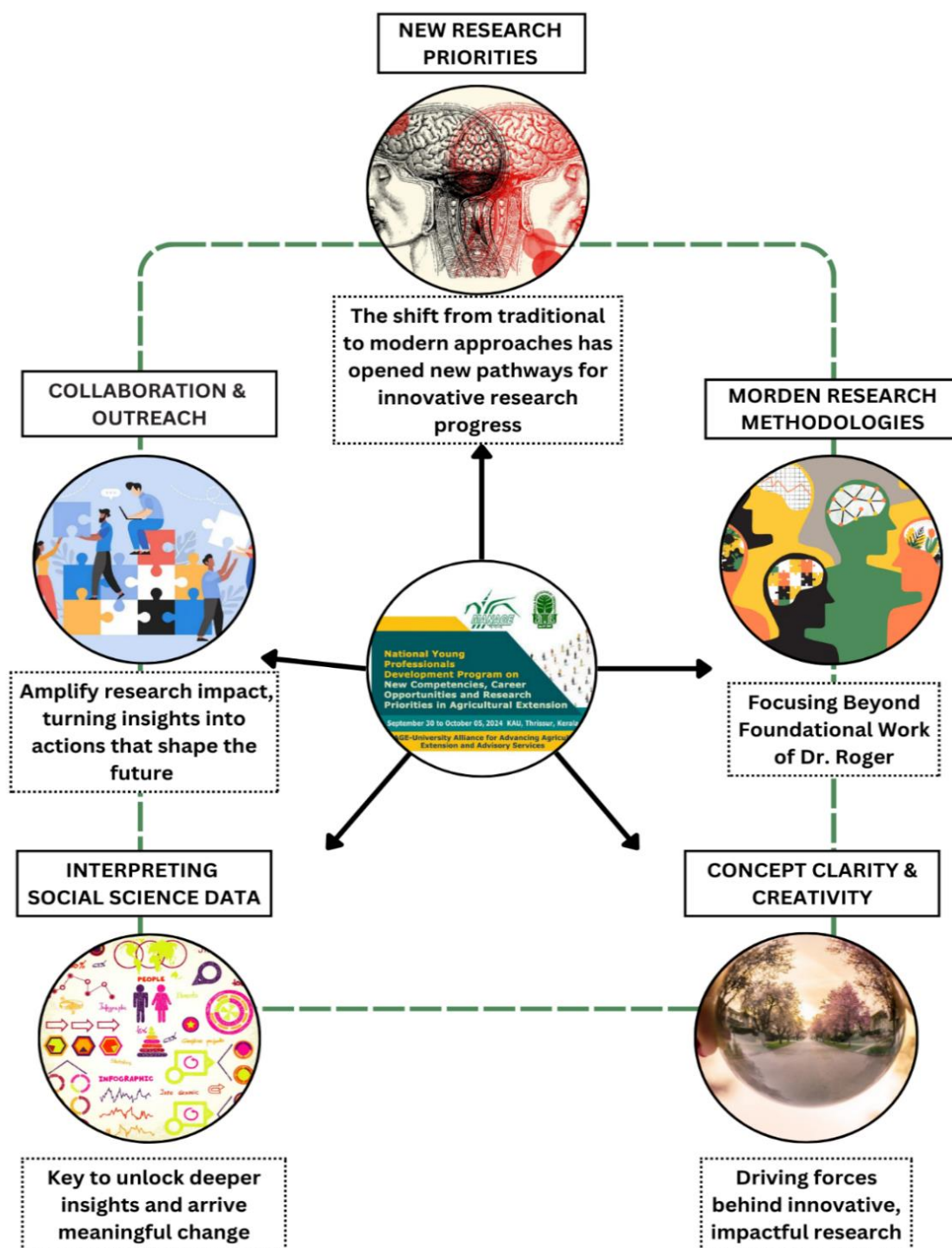
Lectures by Mr. Parmveer Singh, Dr. Vikram Koundiya, and Dr. Archana Raghavan Sathyan shed light on opportunities in:

- Social media platforms and digital outreach.
- Organic farming and biodiversity conservation.
- Agribusiness and gender-sensitive programming.
- Monitoring and evaluation roles in extension programs.

These sessions encouraged participants to explore non-traditional career paths and create innovative roles for themselves within agricultural extension.

Emerging Research Areas and Advanced Methodologies

The program introduced participants to modern research paradigms and advanced methodologies, emphasizing their importance in addressing global challenges such as climate change, gender equality, and food security. The sessions underscored the transformation of agricultural extension research and highlighted multidimensional opportunities in cutting-edge areas.



Key lessons learned from Emerging Research areas and Advanced Methodologies session
(Chart: S. Aravind Kumar)

Key Research Priorities:

1. Aligning research objectives with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. Addressing challenges like climate-smart agriculture, artificial intelligence, and inclusivity in agricultural practices.

Advanced Methodologies Discussed:

- **Social Network Analysis (SNA):** Mapping relationships and interactions in social systems.
- **Structural Equation Modelling (SEM):** Analysing complex variable relationships.
- **Thematic Analysis (TA):** Extracting themes from qualitative data for in-depth understanding.

Concept Clarity and Creativity:

Participants were urged to combine clear research concepts with innovative methodologies to break traditional boundaries. This approach fosters impactful and actionable research outcomes.

Data Interpretation:

The program emphasized the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data, highlighting how qualitative research uncovers hidden insights that quantitative methods might overlook.

Collaboration and Outreach:

- Building networks with peers and experts.
- Effectively communicating research findings to influence policy and practice.

This session equipped participants with tools and perspectives to excel in agricultural research and extend its impact.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Competencies in Extension

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are crucial for ensuring the efficiency, accountability, and impact of extension programs. **Dr. P.V.K. Sasidhar** (Professor, IGNOU) led sessions on developing M&E competencies, focusing on both theoretical and practical aspects.



Dr. P. V. K. Sasidhar (Professor, IGNOU) interacting with the students on the topic “Monitoring and Evaluation”

Key Concepts:

1. **Program Evaluation Stages:**
 - **Appraisal:** Examining program proposals before implementation.
 - **Monitoring:** Ongoing assessment for mid-course corrections.

- **Evaluation:** Summative reviews by external agencies for future planning.
 - **Impact Assessment:** Long-term evaluation of program outcomes.
2. **Evaluation Tools and Approaches:**
 - Logical Framework Approach (LFA).
 - Bennett's Hierarchy of Evaluation.
 - Inputs and Results Evaluation.
 3. **Data Analysis and Reporting:**

Emphasis was placed on drawing meaningful inferences and actionable recommendations from data to enhance the quality and relevance of extension programs.
 4. **Curriculum Enhancements:**

The inclusion of courses like **EXT-507: Evaluation and Impact Assessment** in the postgraduate syllabus was highlighted as a step forward in preparing professionals for real-world challenges.

CONCLUSION

The MANAGE National Young Professionals Development Program on New Competencies, Career Opportunities, and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension proved to be an enriching platform for knowledge-sharing, skill development, and professional networking.

Key takeaways include:

- Deeper understanding of evolving competencies in agricultural extension, including soft skills, technical expertise, and innovative management techniques.
- Exploration of diverse career paths in extension education, agribusiness, and sustainability.
- Advanced research methodologies and tools to drive impactful agricultural research.
- Integration of policy engagement and monitoring and evaluation competencies into extension practices.



Visit to the Kudumbashree unit Jwala at Nadathara Panchayath

The program's highlight was a visit to the Kudumbashree Self-Help Group, showcasing grassroots empowerment through financial inclusion and community-based initiatives.

Scope for Improvement:

1. Reduced reliance on online components; more in-person interactions.
2. Diverse learning formats such as role plays and workshops.
3. Enhanced resource accessibility through pre-session materials.
4. Inclusion of diverse stakeholders like farmers and policymakers in discussions.
5. Real-time feedback mechanisms for adaptive program improvement.

Overall, this program empowered participants to contribute meaningfully to agricultural extension as dynamic and innovative professionals.

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