

Minutes of the General Body Meeting of the Indian Society of Agronomy held 20.11.2008 at Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari (Gujarat)

One hundred and twenty-six (126) members of the Society were present in the meeting. Dr. R.P.S. Ahlawat, President; Dr. I.P.S. Ahlawat, Chief Editor; Dr. A.R. Sharma, Secretary; and Dr. B. Gangaiah, Treasurer were on the dais.

At the outset, Dr. R.P.S. Ahlawat welcomed all the members and thereafter the agenda items were taken up.

The minutes of the previous general body meeting held at Vasanas on 27.10.2006 were confirmed as there was no comments / objections from the members present.

Dr. A.R. Sharma, Secretary of the Society presented a detailed account of the Society activities during the biennium 2007-08. He listed various achievements and the new initiatives undertaken by the Executive Council for promoting the activities and visibility of the Society. These included: (i) Designing of comprehensive website of the Society covering all details since the founding of the Society in 1955; (ii) Online availability of the Indian Journal of Agronomy; (iii) Formulation of revised guidelines for contributors of articles as per international standards; (iv) Good rating for Indian Journal of Agronomy as per the latest NAAS ranking; (v) Signing of agreement with IOS Press, Netherlands for promotion and marketing of the journal outside India; (vi) Revision of mailing list, deleting names of non-serious, inactive and non-existent members; (vii) Dispatching the journal in bulk to several places in order to ensure timely availability and saving postage costs; (viii) Inclusion of one review article in each issue of the journal from renowned scientists; (ix) Quickening the process of reviewing of articles and minimizing the time gap between submission and acceptance to less than 6 months in most of the cases; and (xi) Extensive use of Internet / Email facility for communicating with the authors / members.

Dr. Sharma informed that there is no backlog of articles submitted in 2007 and the articles are now processed for publication within months. The problems in bringing out 'Agronomy Digest' were highlighted and it was suggested that this may be discontinued due to non-availability of articles. Similarly, it was suggested that Indian Agronomy News may be made available on the Society website only. He informed that there has been a total enrollment of 2309 life members of the Society till date, and a record 95 members were enrolled as life members in 2008 alone.

Dr. Sharma also mentioned some of failures / shortcomings such as delay in processing of some articles due to slackness on the part of referees and delay in printing of the journal by 2-3 months due to shortage of good-quality articles.

Dr. Sharma listed the various tasks ahead that need be undertaken for further growth of the Society. These included: (i) Printing of new publications on "Soil-Water-Plant relationships", "Integrated Farming Systems", and revised version of "Agronomy Terminology" with all the latest terms; (ii) Online submission and reviewing of articles; (iii) Online access of the journal to all the members; (iv) Reviving and strengthening of regional/zonal chapters; (v) Streamlining the award and recognition system; (vi) Printing of the journal exactly as per schedule; (vii) Broadening the scope of the journal by including articles on medicinal crops, aromatic crops, plantation crops, vegetables and ornamental crops dealing with agronomic aspects.

Dr. Sharma informed that the next Biennial Symposium of the Society, as decided by the Executive Council, will be organized at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore during 2010.

Dr. Sharma expressed his thanks to all the members for giving him the opportunity to serve as Secretary of the Society during the biennium. He expressed his gratitude to all the key office bearers, councilors, members of the Editorial Board, authors of articles, referees for their support and advise in running the affairs of the Society. He also acknowledged the contributions of the Secretarial staff of Society.

After the presentation by the Secretary, Dr. B. Gangaiah presented Treasurer's report and gave a brief account of the financial position of the Society. He informed that the Society is in very good financial state, with fixed deposits exceeding Rs 1.20 corers. He also mentioned that the Society saved around Rs 3.0 lakhs by organizing the Symposium at BHU, Varanasi, during 2006, and a similar positive balance is expected this time as well. It was suggested that in order to bring stability to the Society and ensure its continuity, an amount of Rs. 100 lakhs may be transferred from the General Reserve Account to the Corpus Fund of the Society. The Corpus may be appropriately invested and the return of the Corpus may be utilized for the objectives of the Society.

Dr. R.P.S. Ahlawat invited suggestions and inputs from the members on the functioning and future growth of the Society.

Dr. V.C. Patil appreciated that Society's functioning. He wanted that journal should improve its standing in the Science Citation Index. He desired that the suggestion made by Dr. R.P.S. Ahlawat to constitute a 'Policy Cell' in each Institution should be discussed in the Vice Chancellors' conference. He objected to the reference made by the Secretary in his report that life members are a liability.

Dr. M.L. Jat wanted to know whether 3rd International Agronomy Congress will be organized by the Society, to which he was informed that this issue is virtually closed for the time being. He desired that the quality of the journal should be improved further, and the articles in a given issue should be categorized under different themes. The Society should encourage younger scientists by awarding 'Associates' on the NAAS pattern. He also advocated that the selection of Fellows / Gold Medals of the ISA should be more transparent and made through inviting applications / nominations.

Dr. A. Baishya desired that formation of Zonal chapters is a good idea and a zone for north-eastern states should be constituted.

Dr. S. Bhasker wanted that there should be more encouragement from the Society for the younger scientists. He wanted to know whether we are discouraging life membership of ISA.

Dr. M. Devender Reddy wanted that there should be proper guidelines for ISA Awards, and that there should be a proper system for scoring and evaluation for selection of ISA Fellow and Gold Medals.

Dr. B.L. Manjunath wanted that Society should bring out quality publications, and a publication on "New Innovations in Agronomic Research" should be brought out.

Dr. B.G. Shivakumar wanted that Society should think of organizing National Symposium on annual basis so that different zones of the country can be covered and Society's financial position can improved further.

Dr. A.S. Rao wanted that mailing list of ISA members should be updated regularly.

Dr. B. Gangaiah suggested that Society's secretarial staff should be discharged and selected on annual basis only.

Dr. A.R. Sharma presented a letter from Dr. Ambika Singh for strengthening the Society activities, and revamping the award and recognition system. Dr. Singh made the following suggestions for consideration by the general body of the Society: (i) Strengthening of regional/zonal chapters, (ii) Bringing out basic / advanced publications, (iii) Organization of a brain-storming session on "New Paradigms in Agronomy", (iv) Organization of National Symposium on annual basis; (v) Revamping of awards / recognition system with proper criteria for eligibility, greater transparency in the selection process by following a more scientific approach, proper constitution of judging committees and meeting at the Headquarters, and exclusion of EC members from consideration for ISA awards during their tenure in the Executive Council.

Dr. R.P. Ahlawat, President of the Society summarized the deliberations and remarked that the suggestions made by the members will be duly considered by the Executive Council and appropriate action will be taken. He thanked all the members for visiting Navsari and appreciated their contributions. He was

presented a 'Silver Plaque' in honour of his outstanding contributions to the Society and for organizing the Symposium successfully.

At the end, Dr. I.P.S. Ahlawat proposed a format vote of thanks.