

## A National Virtual Academy for Indian Agriculture: To promote MOOCs for Agriculture Professionals

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In 1960s, the early establishment of Agricultural Universities in India, on the pattern similar to that of the Land Grant colleges of the United States, contributed a lot in boosting the agricultural growth in the country and brought the integration of education, research and extension. The model has shown a direction in reorganizing and strengthening the agricultural education system in India and also helped in bringing diverse subjects in the course curriculum integrating provision of hands-on practical exposure to the student. The role of Indian Agricultural Universities has been significant in increasing food grain production from 51 million tons in 1950 to about 257.13 million tons (MT) in 2013-14. However, in the recent years these agricultural universities are failing to attract good number of students' in comparison to other subjects. According to All India Survey on Higher Education conducted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the percentage of students pursuing agriculture as an undergraduate or a post graduate degree or PhD, remains amongst the lowest; whereas, streams like Engineering and Technology, Computer Science, Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science, Commerce, etc. attract a greater number of students. This is mainly because of outdated curriculum, unavailability of good quality faculty members and requirement of reorienting the agricultural education according to the changing scenarios at national and international level. To address some of these challenges in a more cost effective manner, universities especially in the western part of the world has been experimenting and adopting innovative educational approaches that includes consortium approaches to share the costs, using technology mediated educational approaches or open educational

resources. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are much talked in the recent years and increasingly becoming popular due to their ability to reach an unlimited amount of students, free of cost or at a very minimal cost. Nevertheless, agricultural universities are yet to explore and exploit these opportunities to enable students' access to research infused curriculum and high quality faculty members. To extend these opportunities at various agricultural universities across the Globe a partnership framework was developed with select land grant universities in USA, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the African Green Revolution Alliance (AGRA), the Regional University Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM, a consortium of 42 universities in 19 countries in Africa), US Department of Agriculture, US Agency for International Development, and CGIAR centers. This initiative is named as One Agriculture-One Science: A Global Education Consortium at the Global level, which has a regional initiative called "A National Virtual Academy (NVA) for Indian Agriculture to promote MOOCs for Agricultural Professionals. In this presentation the author discusses about the components of NVA, a road map and execution framework to strengthen Indian agricultural education.

Source: <http://agricongress2015.in/downloads/2.%20ASC%20COMPENDIUM-I.pdf>