

SWAMINATHAN WALKED AHEAD OF HIS TIME: SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

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File photo of M.S. Swaminathan. | Photo Credit: Reuters

Indian agriculture scientists and policymakers [remember M.S. Swaminathan](#) as someone who walked ahead of time not just as a scientist, researcher and academic but also as a visionary administrator. The community believes that developing high yielding Basmati rice varieties, innovatively using the technology of mutation for various crops, application of genetics for increasing production and food security and launching programmes such as “lab to land” were his major contributions to the country’s agriculture sector.

Former Director-General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Trilochan Mohapatra remembers Dr. Swaminathan as an encouraging teacher and a strong administrator. “He was our professor at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute. He minced no words to encourage us. When we successfully organised a congregation of scientists, he wrote a letter to then Director of IARI congratulating us as ‘students who take pride in perfection’. I had met him last for his birthday in August. In all our meetings, he would passionately talk about research and finding in the field of agriculture, which was so inspiring,” Prof. Mohapatra said.

Nutritional quality through mutation of crops, bio fortification, funding States to promote agriculture, precision farming, advocacy through National Academy of Agricultural Sciences and establishment of a Central Institute for Women in Agriculture were all his pet projects, Prof. Mohapatra said. “Political class always valued his suggestions and recommendations,” he added.

Prof. Mohapatra remembers insightful papers by Dr. Swaminathan on his doctoral research work in the science of potato in *Nature* magazine is still considered as seminal. “He joined the Central Rice Research Institute in Cuttack when he came back to India after his research. He always had a special consideration for this Institute,” Prof. Mohapatra said. “His stamp is visible in ICAR, IARI and all other national agriculture science institutions,” he added.

Chairman of the Punjab Farmers Commission and eminent agro-economist Sukhpal Singh said it was under Dr. Swaminathan’s leadership that efforts were launched at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) to cultivate rice with C4 carbon fixation capabilities, enabling improved photosynthesis and water utilisation. “Dr. Swaminathan also contributed to developing the world’s first high-yielding basmati rice,” Prof. Singh said, adding that his incomparable

contribution in improving agricultural production by developing high yielding crop varieties and modern technologies would always be remembered by the country, especially by the farmers of Punjab. "A true visionary and pioneer in agriculture and sustainable development," Prof. Singh said.

IARI Director A.K. Singh said in a statement that in passing away of Dr. Swaminathan ends an era of agricultural research, education and extension that was full of disruptive innovation. "If God appears to poor and hungry in form of bread as said by Mahatma Gandhi, that God is Dr. Swaminathan who should be worshipped by every citizen while taking daily meals," Prof. Singh said.

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