

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

EXPERT COMMISSION FOR REFORMS IN KERALA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

Chairperson

Prof. Dr. E. Balagurusamy
(Formerly Member UPSC, Chairman,
Tamil Nadu Planning Commission and
Vice-Chancellor, Anna University)

Members

Prof. Dr. P. Rajendran
(Formerly Vice-Chancellor,
Kerala Agricultural University)

Prof. Dr. P. V. Balachandran
(Formerly Director (Extension),
Kerala Agricultural University)

Member-Convenor

Dr. B. Ashok IAS
(Formerly Vice-Chancellor,
Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University),
Agricultural Production Commissioner and
Principal Secretary, Government of Kerala)

Special invitees

Prof. Dr. K. Aravindakshan
(Formerly Registrar,
Kerala Agricultural University)

Prof. Dr. K. Ramasamy
(Formerly Vice-Chancellor,
Tamil Nadu Agricultural University)

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The Agricultural Universities in the country have been set up on the recommendation of ICAR, which has prepared a Model Act for all the Agricultural Universities. It is necessary to amend the KAU Act in conformity with the ICAR Model Act. The General Council (Senate) is to be abolished and the Executive Committee (Syndicate) has to be made the supreme authority of the University. The Executive Committee (E C) is to be renamed as Board of Management (BoM) with its membership limited to 15. Registrar & Comptroller should be academicians of repute & competence, in the rank of Professor. It is seen that there is considerable delay in filling up of all the senior positions of various Deans & Directors and the same may be filled up immediately giving wide publicity. The vacant positions of Assistant Professors, Associate Professors & Professors are also to be filled up immediately through merit-based selection, curtailing inbreeding and encouraging candidates from other parts of the country and abroad. There is acute shortage of farm staff and it is recommended that the large, qualified pool of Agriculture diploma holders from KAU should be employed as Farm Assistants & the labour force is to be monitored effectively for increasing the productivity of various farms.

In view of the financial crisis faced by the university the following economy measures are recommended. During 2010–11, trifurcation of KAU happened and two new universities were formed without a realistic deployment of ministerial staff. Now with the implementation of “e office” for administration, only one third of staff is to be retained and the excess staff positions are to be treated as supernumerary and are to be abolished on superannuation of the present incumbents. The travelling & transportation facilities of employees should be done thorough hiring of the vehicles through a common bidding process and sanction should not be given for the purchase of any new vehicles hereafter. The positions like drivers, typists, office attendants, duplicate operators etc., are no more required and

these posts are to be abolished in a phased manner. Also the construction wing of the university, Directorate of Physical Plant (DPP) has lost its relevance & may be retained only as a maintenance wing with minimum staff. If at all any new constructions become necessary, it should be completely outsourced.

The present five research zones of the university are to be amalgamated into three viz., South (Kumarakom), Central (Pattambi) & North (Pilicode). As there is considerable duplication of activities, many of the research stations have to be repurposed as pure field level research units, retaining laborers and minimum supervisory staff, to carry out students & staff projects, whenever necessary. New relevant mission mode projects across the various departments & stations are to be taken up in a multi-disciplinary mode. In key emerging areas of agriculture and allied sectors, every year, ten percent of the faculty be sent for training overseas and there should be fully paid Sabbaticals at par with UGC system where a teacher can take break and work for one year at another university within the country or abroad. Induction trainings should be given to all scientists, staff & labourers for periods varying from one month to 6 months depending on their nature of job & area of specialisation. For effective coordination of various research organizations within the state and across the country, a Directorate of Research Coordination and Outreach Activities be established at the Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram, directly under the administrative control of Agricultural Production Commissioner & Principal Secretary, Government of Kerala.

For effective transfer of technologies, a dedicated media team should be formed, with the necessary qualifications and mindset to manage the web content including social media, in consultation with faculty and scientists. It is recommended to implement a digital platform to reinvigorate university extension. It should aim to move beyond conventional models and empower the university to address the challenges of the evolving agricultural information needs of all stakeholders in the present context of liberalized economy, changing farming needs and climate vagaries. Strengthening of existing Agri-Business Incubators, and formation of a network under the leadership of Kerala Agricultural University is recommended. Agromachinery training centres are to be established in all the zones. Similar to “Uber or Ola services” Agro Service Centres (ASC), Karshika Karma Sena (KKS), and Krishi Sree Centres (KSC) should function as ‘Call Centres’ offering all the agricultural services required for handling of farm produces, on Mobile Assisted Apps (MAA).

There is an urgent need to strengthen the basic disciplines of biochemistry, genetics, microbiology, bioremediation, bioenergy, biosecurity, and computational biology. It is recommended to include new courses like artificial intelligence, mechatronics, renewable energy, nanotechnology, climate change, soil carbon enrichment & soil rejuvenation, waste disposal & pollution abatement in the syllabus.

It should be considered to establish Global Chairs and provide opportunities for globally renowned scholars to join KAU as Distinguished International Visiting Professors. The commission recommends establishment of a Horticultural college, at RARS Ambalavayal from 2024-25 onwards. A separate Department on AI should be initiated & competent & renowned scientists from India or abroad may be posted in this department. The university should be given the authority to give sanction to start affiliated colleges after due modification of Act & statute, following strict guidelines. KAU should directly admit UG students to Agriculture and allied courses based on CUET (Common University Entrance Test) score (like KAU PG/PhD admission). KAU could look to provide various short term and long-term Executive and Management Development Programs to students and various industry professionals in India & abroad via the Live Digital Classrooms, in association with Centre for e Learning. All faculties must upload their latest CV in College/University website and should update the same at regular intervals and there should be annual review of the performance of faculty by Deans & Directors. In order to strengthen teaching programs, the university may consider utilizing the vast pool of experienced superannuated KAU faculty, NAAS fellows & Emeritus scientists.

For improving the National & International ranking of the university it is imperative to understand all the different parameters of ranking & to work on a road map for the same. A separate “University Ranking Monitoring Cell” may be formed for this purpose. The Alumni of KAU should be used to enhance the positive image of KAU & it should actively engage and contribute towards university’s activities. The Library facilities should be improved considerably & it should assume a key position in the mindset of the student community. In view of the importance of digitalisation, the teachers need to be equipped with advanced tools and new skills to transit along the changing times for greater utilization of digital education.

The financial management of the university has to be extremely efficient & vigilant. The dependency on non plan grant is as high as 70% now. It should be reduced to 50% in a time bound manner by increasing the internal revenue many fold. It could be done through the sale of seeds & planting materials, various types of KAU products & processed food item, patent transfer & technology translation & through the Conduct of Quality Check & Certification process through the NABL accredited labs of the University. Promotion of Agri-eco tourism could be another important source of income. The Commission recommends banning of politics in all the KAU campuses. Kerala High Court has already banned strikes, gherao, marches, demonstrations and protests that adversely affect “academic atmosphere” in educational campuses, in a judgment made in Feb 26, 2020.

