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ABIDAT

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The Real Winners in life are the people who look at every situation with an expectation that they can make it work or make it better.

A year has gone by since we posted this message on our website. A lot has happened in the interregnum – more land has come under dryland classification, rains have been erratic for the most part and our dryland farmers have had to pay the price for the climate change that has visited us. In India 68% of total net sown area (136.8 m ha) comes under drylands spread over 177 districts. Dryland crops account for 48% area under food crops and 68% area under non-food crops. Drylands produce 44% of the food grains of the country, thus drylands always have and will continue to play a critical role in India's food security. With climate change, it is expected that the area under dryland farming is likely to increase significantly and this will certainly threaten our food security. It is with this backdrop in mind that the ABAN-BGU Institute of Dryland Agriculture Technology (ABIDAT) has been set up. This unique Indo-Israel collaboration aims to take full advantage of Israel's desert farming knowledge and build sufficient human capital in India and overseas so that we might be able to remain food secure and food self-sufficient inspite of the ravages of climate change.

Dryland areas also significantly contribute to the country's pulses, oilseeds, coarse grains, and cotton production. Optimal use of dryland technologies for increased agricultural production can help to fill the demand-supply gap in pulses and oilseeds production and improve the economic status of farmers in these dry areas.

Over the course of two semesters our students will learn that drylands are not only thirsty, but also hungry too. Soil fertility in drylands is hugely limiting and has to be improved, but there is limited scope for extensive use of chemical fertilizers due to lack of adequate soil moisture in drylands. Alternate means of improving soil fertility will be demonstrated to our students so that they can become agents of change in drylands and extend their knowledge to farmers in these areas. We hope to build a bank of human resources who will make dryland farming remunerative and less risky thus ensuring that the food security of the country is guaranteed.

We wish all our students a fulfilling learning experience from the leaders in the area of desert farming. This experience is one of a kind in India and the region and could be a game changer for students who opt to study at ABIDAT. Our 1st batch of students have all completed their Post-Graduate Certificate in Dryland Studies (PGCDS) and have been selected by BGU, Israel to study for another year in Israel to obtain a Master's degree in Desert studies. Their study in Israel is completely funded by BGU. In the light of this I believe this is a golden opportunity for Life Sciences and Agriculture students to join the 2nd batch of the PGCDS program which will start in Fall 2023. We look forward to welcoming the second batch of PGCDS students and promise them a year of eventful multi-disciplinary learning experiences.

Sailendra Bhaskar