**Brief History of AICRP-NSP (Crops)**

Quality seed provides foundation to productive agriculture, be it crop husbandry, horticulture or fisheries. It constitutes the very basic and cheapest input and plays seminal role to enhance agricultural productivity and production as well, which has been revalidated recurrently over years across locations globally. Without good seed, the investment on fertilizer, water, pesticides and other inputs does not yield desired dividends; rather other inputs remain contingent upon quality seed for being optimally effective. Simply by using quality seed alone, 15-20% yield increment has been observed in different crops and under optimum management with recommended input the productivity may increase upto 40-45%. In essence since, it is a biological industry, productive agriculture depends upon good seed and *vice-versa*. One cannot exist or advance without the other. The pace of progress in food production is largely depend upon the progress of seed programme with which a country is able to multiply and market good quality seed of high yielding varieties with superior genetics. It is therefore essential to make quality seed available to the farmers at the right place, in right time at cheaper rate. To operate quality seed programme, it is essential to produce sufficient quantity of breeder seed. Similarly, to organize well orchestrated successful seed production programmes, research back up on various aspects of seed production technology, quality maintenance and its fine tuning, storage, seed health care and seed processing *etc.* are vital and found to be indispensable. Conscious of the fact that for successful spread of varietal technology, seed is seminal, the country has been according due priority right from the beginning to quality seed production and supply. The development of high yielding dwarf varieties of wheat and rice; hybrids in maize, bajra and sorghum in early sixties was the landmark beginning for development of the seed programme in the country leading to establishment of giant seed corporations like National Seed Corporation in 1963 followed by formation of State Seeds Corporations, development of Seed Certification Agencies and implementation of Seed Act, Seed Standards *etc.*. As per policy, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) along with its partner - State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) have shouldered the responsibility of producing the breeder seed, which forms the backbone of the quality seed programme to facilitate seed sector for productive agriculture in the country. The ICAR has taken up various steps from time to time to augment the breeder seed production along with seed technology research/crop improvement programmes.

The World Bank assisted considerably in this endeavour for strengthening the Indian seed programme by launching NSP I in 1977-78 with financial assistance of US$ 52.7 million and subsequently NSP II in the following year with financial assistance of US $ 34.9 million. The ICAR had launched an All India Coordinated Research Project on seed called ‘National Seed Project’ in 1979-80 with 14 centres on Seed Technology Research with an equal number of Breeder Seed Production centres. Another related Coordinated Project called ‘Seed Borne Diseases’ with eight centres was also launched in 1980, which was later on merged with NSP in June 1991 for better resource utilization and also to avoid the overlapping of the programmes. The seed programme of the country was further strengthened with NSP III (World Bank) Project
started in 1989-90, which not only supported the ICAR and SAUs but also Department of Agricultural and Cooperation and Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW), Seeds Corporations, Seed Certification Agencies and Private Seed Industries to a large great extent in production, processing and in providing quality seeds to the farming community.

The National Seed Project has been strengthened very well and has developed state of art facilities both in respect of infrastructure and also in technical output. At present, the Breeder Seed Production (BSP) programme is operating at 41 centres and Seed Technology Research (STR) at 24 centres under National Seed Project at various SAUs and ICAR institutes across the country. The ICAR is guiding, coordinating and promoting seed technology research and breeder seed production very systematically. In addition to the responsibility of production of breeder seed of different varieties and parental lines of hybrids, the production programme is also mandated to produce nucleus seed and to carry out research on various aspects of seed technology under five broad disciplines *viz.* , seed production and certification; seed physiology, storage and testing; seed pathology; seed entomology, and seed processing.