

Obituary to Dr. A K. Basu (Ex President , ISCI, Mumbai and Director, ICAR-CICR, Nagpur)



Dr. Amal Kumar Basu, born in 1934, had his schooling in Dhaka (Bangladesh), Delhi, Shimla and Kolkata, followed by B.Sc.(Hons.), M.Sc.(Botany) with specialisation in Genetics and Cytogenetics, Ph.D. in Botany, Calcutta University. His Ph.D. work was done in Mutation Breeding in rice during 1955 to 1961 at Bose Research Institute, Calcutta. Dr.Basu joined Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in 1962 as oilseed and millet breeder at Shimoga and Raichur(Karnataka). His chequered career of scintillating Cotton R&D work started in the year 1965, when he was transferred to IARI, Regional Station, Sirsa (Haryana). He deservedly became the Project Coordinator (Cotton) and Head, ICAR-CICR, Regional Station, Coimbatore after notable research achievements in Cotton like release of a cotton variety for western parts of Uttar Pradesh, short branch cotton genotype for closer planting(HDPS) and role of morphological and biochemical factors for bollworm tolerance in cotton. During his tenure as PC(Cotton), he spearheaded release of several cotton varieties and hybrids like LRA 5166 (a super adaptable variety), MCU5VT, Anjali (compact variety), DCH 32(first ELS hybrid), implementable modules of Integrated Pest management(IPM), strategies for containment of whitefly menace in coastal Andhra Pradesh in late eighties through Centre-State cooperation besides adoptable novel Extension methodologies.

In the year 1989, Dr. Basu became the Director of prestigious ICAR-CICR, Nagpur, wherein he gave much needed thrust to Biotechnology of Cotton, germplasm collection and evaluation besides documentation, newer approaches in IPM, basic and fundamental research aspects with equal focus on applied and strategic research in cotton. His collaborative efforts with other ICAR institutes like ICAR-CIRCOT, State Agricultural Universities, State Departments of Agriculture and also international agencies paved a way for unique approaches in cotton R&D. After completion of a fulfilling period of leadership in Cotton Institute, Dr.Basu joined Cotton Corporation of India in 1994 as Advisor, wherein he gave impetus to quality seed production of cotton varieties and parental lines of cotton hybrids by State Seed Corporations, extension activities and research by ICAR and SAUs, focussed attention to all four Mini-Missions of Technology Mission on Cotton in addition to novel initiative of Public-Private partnership of Contract Farming in Cotton in the State of Maharashtra. He later joined Bayer Crop Science and played significant role in Cotton R&D activities besides impetus to Bt cotton hybrids. He joined John Deere at Pune, in which he interacted with all concerned for practical implementation of mechanical picking in cotton to overcome shortage of labour and rising cost in cotton picking.

With several firsts to his credit in cotton R&D efforts, Dr.Basu had published more than 200 research publications in reputed national and foreign journals, reviews, popular articles, book chapters and bulletins etc. His publication on Success story of Hybrid cotton in India alongwith Dr. R. S. Paroda is a monumental piece of work. He championed the cause of cotton researchers, Extension personnel and farmers besides other stakeholders alike, with perception of high order. Dr.Basu was decorated with several awards and served in different high profile Committees. He was life member of Indian Society for Cotton Improvement (ISCI), Mumbai and held positions of Chairman and President of ISCI with distinction. A well-travelled person across length and breadth of the country and international arena for the noble purpose of improvement in Cotton productivity and production in India, Dr. Amal Kumar Basu shall continue to remain etched in the minds of Cotton researchers and other stakeholders even after his sad demise on 6th April, 2019.

Neither fire nor wind, birth nor death can erase our good deeds, says Lord Buddha.

It is well said that the highest tribute to the dead is not grief but gratitude.

We owe a lot of gratitude to you, Dr.A.K.Basu.