



North Eastern Economic Association

[Founded in 1997]

Secretariat@ Dept. of Economics, Tripura University

Email: secretary_nea@rediffmail.com; secretarynea@gmail.com

14th July, 2016

Respected Member,

Hearty Greetings!!!

Hope you are keeping well.....

I take this opportunity to inform you about the activities of the Association in the past one year as well as apprise you about the future plan of actions.

A) The Last Conference and the Annual General Meeting

NEEA was back to the campus of Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh after exactly 10 years for the 17th Annual Conference which was organised by the Department of Economics during 30-31 October, 2015. The conference was very immensely successful, with 73 papers being presented and attended by almost 130 participants including 70 out-station delegates.

The inaugural session of the Conference was graced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Shri Nabam Tuki. The Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of RGU, Prof. Tamo Mibang, had been a pillar of support for the entire conference. The inaugural address by Prof. Barbara Hariss-White, University of Oxford was on Questioning Work and Wellbeing in the Informal Economy. The Presidential address of Prof. Saundarjya Borbora was on 'Governance and Institutional Reform', which was very well received by all present. The inaugural session was followed by two special lectures. Prof. Rajarshi Majumder, Burdwan University, spoke on Labour Market Issues in India: Some Key Pointers; while Prof. Dibyojyoti Bhattacharjee made an unique presentation on Visualizing the Disparities of Indian States in Health and Wealth through Longitudinal Data: An Application of Dynamic Graphics. A Panel discussion on Cooperative Federalism was held in the last session of the day with Prof. Atul Sarma, former President of NEEA and Member, 13th Finance Commission in Chair. The other panelists were Prof. E Bijoykumar Singh, Prof Sushanta K Nayak and Prof. Gautam Mazumdar. The cultural show organised by the students and the scholars of the Department of Economics, in the evening made us spellbound. In the second day of the Conference, Prof. Barbara Hariss-White, University of Oxford, delivered a special lecture on 'Comparisons Are Odious! On The Problems of Comparing China and India'. Prof. Atul Sarma and Prof. Tamo Mibang graced the valedictory session. Everybody present was happy to have attended a successful conference.

B) The Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held in the evening of 31st October, 2015 at the Auditorium of the Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar. The Secretary presented the annual general report for the year 2014-15. The statement of Accounts for 2014-15 was also presented. Both the reports were discussed and formally accepted.

Representatives from Sikkim University informed about the slow progress of the infrastructural works in their campus and made a request to defer their hosting of NEEA by a year. You may remember that in the AGM at Agartala, it was decided to have the 18th NEEA conference at Gangtok. Meanwhile, the Department of Economics, Gauhati University proposed to host the 18th Annual edition of the Association, which was applauded and accepted by all.

The members of the editorial team appraised the house about the proposed e-journal of the association and it was decided to revamp the website of the association accordingly. The EC has been assigned to finalise the issue

There was a proposal for issuance of membership letter/card/id to the members, which has been accepted.

C) Executive Committee Meetings

Two Executive Committee meetings were held since I last wrote to you. The EC met on 30th October, 2015 at the RGU Campus and the agenda for the AGM was finalised. Another meeting of the EC was held on 2nd February, 2015 at the Chamber of the Principal, S.B. Deorah College, Guwahati to finalise the dates and theme for the 18th Conference. The issue of the new website service provider was also considered and the proposal of Assamlook.com was found to be suitable and justified. They have been assigned to update the website and convert it to a dynamic one, so that the e-journal can be hosted and maintained.

D) The Next Conference:

The 18th Annual Conference of NEEA will be organised under the auspices of the Department of Economics, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam during 16-17 December, 2016. The theme for the conference is – **Agriculture in North-East India: The Present Status and the Scenario Ahead**

Despite its falling share in GDP, agriculture continues to be an important segment of the Indian economy for several reasons. First, the proportionate workforce employed by agriculture still continues to be more than 50%. Secondly, as a supplier of essential food grains, other consumption items and industrial inputs, the entire economy still critically depends on agriculture. Thirdly, income originating directly and indirectly from agriculture continues to be a prime source of domestic demand for non-agricultural commodities. In the North-Eastern region of India, agriculture's importance is even greater as the sector contributes a higher share to the region's GDP than to the country's GDP.

The agriculture sector of the country has been going through considerable strain for quite some time now. The environmental consequences of Green Revolution, slow down of public investment in agriculture and rural infrastructure, stagnancy in yields of major crops, growing indebtedness of farmers have all pushed the sector to the brink of a slide. Recent studies have shown the rate of return from cultivation of major crops have become extremely low, if not negative. Opening up of trade under WTO obligation for some agricultural products and impending adverse consequences of climate change are posing a new threat.

While farmers' suicide resulting from agrarian distress has received wide attention, there has also been a strand of resilience and adaptation quietly emerging in the sector. It has been reported that the composition of agriculture output has gradually shifted towards the high value crops, like fruits, vegetables, other horticultural crops and livestock products, from which returns are much higher. The shift in composition of agriculture output is reflective of both farmers' choice for more remunerative production lines and consumer preferences away from cereals to other products. The Northeast India region has special advantage in diversifying to high value horticultural crops and livestock products. The climatic condition is supportive for production of variety of horticultural crops and even flowers, orchids etc. For livestock products, such as meat, the region has a ready domestic market, because of the food habits of the local population. However, various missing links will have to be addressed before the farmers in the region can come out of predominantly subsistence farming mode to commercial production of higher value farm products. While, diversification can substantially increase farm income, the higher returns can be realised only if the post-harvest/production value chain of aggregation, processing and marketing is effective and efficient. The connectivity difficulties within the region poses considerable challenge in this regard. On the other hand the community based traditional social capital can be harnessed for organising the value chain.

Traditional plantation activities, such as tea, have now been going through a transition process with the emergence of small tea growers. Moreover, tea plantation is being extended to new areas, like Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Meghalaya. Rubber plantation has already taken route in the region and the sector is currently facing extreme hardship now. However, for wider participation in plantation greater supports may be needed.

General infrastructure, such as rural roads and irrigation facilities, despite improvements over the last couple of decades, require further intensification.

An important issue in the Northeast is the existing agrarian set-up and optimal use of factors of production, such as land, water and labour. Ambiguity of land right continues to be an issue in the hill areas. The land reform in this regard has been progressing rather slowly. In the plains, the falling size of holdings and stringent tenancy regulations

are sometimes seen as hindrances. Water and rental markets of capital goods have emerged particularly in the plains. But the role of these markets have not yet been adequately assessed and investigated. Environmental and equity consideration and other forms of market imperfections related to these markets deserve greater attention. Given this background, some of the sub-themes identified for deliberation in the forthcoming conference of North Eastern Economic Association (NEEA) are suggested as below:

- Production, productivity and profitability of conventional major crops, such as food grains, potato, jute, mustard etc.
- Realising the prospect of higher value farm products
 - The progress and problems of horticultural crops and livestock products
 - Post harvest processes and value chain development
 - Technical support (extension service etc.)
- Issues related to plantation crops
- Agrarian institutional and factor markets:
 - Land and land lease market
 - Water market
 - Role of rental markets in capital goods
 - Financial inclusion of farmers
 - The extension system
- Infrastructure for agriculture development
 - Irrigation (Alternative forms, utilisation and efficiency)
 - Surface connectivity in rural areas: present status, gaps and challenges
 - Impending issues: Climate change, implication and preparedness for anticipated technological breakthrough such as genetically modified crops

The above sub-themes are only indicative of probable areas in which researchers can contribute papers. The areas specified may not be exhaustive. Papers relating to agriculture in the region but not falling into any of the above-mentioned sub-theme are also welcome. However, for the sake of more meaningful and in-depth analysis of issues, a single paper should ideally focus on a specific issue rather attempting wider coverage.

Researchers' Forum

One of our most popular section 'Researchers' Forum' will continue as usual. The papers submitted under this forum should be based on on-going or completed M Phil, Ph D work or research projects. The scholars submitting papers for this segment should specify whether the paper is based on M. Phil. or Ph. D. work or research project funded by UGC/ICSSR or other sources. .

Dates & Guidelines:

Members are requested to adhere to the following dates for submission of papers on the specified conference theme or for researchers' forum:-

- I. Abstracts of papers in about 300 words should be sent to the Secretary, NEEA in soft copy (by e-mail attachment/CD) on or before **15th October, 2016** with the subject: 'abstract for 18th Annual Conference' to the following e-mail id: secretaryneea@gmail.com with a copy to the organizers e-mail: neea18.gu@gmail.com .
- II. Full paper not exceeding 3000 words is to be submitted in soft copies (e-mail attachment/CD) on or before **15th November, 2016**
- III. Acceptance of the papers will be confirmed by **25th November, 2016**

Please adhere to the datelines, as we will try to have discussants for all the papers.

In the annual conferences of NEEA, we generally follow the following guidelines-

- A paper is expected to have an introductory section followed by the main body of the paper and then the concluding section.
- In the introduction, besides outlining the thrust of the paper, objectives and scope of the paper may be outlined.

- The main body of the paper, which may comprise of one or more sections, should be analytical and present and discuss the findings.
- Suggestions in the concluding section should be to those emerging from the analysis and discussion in the paper.

The reference style should be as shown below:

A. Journal articles:

Battese, G. E. (1992), "Frontier Production Functions and Technical Efficiency: A Survey of Empirical Applications in Agricultural Economics", *Agricultural Economics*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp 21-37.

B. Books:

Kallirajan, K.P. (1994), *Economics in Disequilibrium: An Approach from the Frontier*, Macmillan India Limited, Delhi

C. Chapters in edited book:

Radhakrishna, R. (2002), "Food and Nutrition Security" in Kirit Parikh and R. Radhakrishna (ed.) *India Development Report 2002*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

E] The North East Economic Review (NEER):

As you are aware, we have decided to come out with a peer reviewed e-journal namely The North East Economic Review (NEER). My request to you is please contribute to the journal, as well as encourage your friends, colleagues, students and research scholars to do the same. Many of you have received the templates and call for papers from neer.editor@gmail.com. If you do not have it, please write to me or the editor. We will be happy to send it again.

F] Extension Activities:

In the current year, NEEA is collaborating with several institutions of the region to augment academic activities. A National Seminar on "Solid Wastes: Their Mitigation and Management in Urban Centres in India" on 2-3 September, 2016 is being organised by Tyagbir Hem Baruah College, Jamugurihat, with academic support of NEEA. The deadline for abstract submission is July 30, 2016. You can be in touch with jitutamuli@gmail.com.

Another National Seminar on "Dynamics of Saving Behaviour in India and Development (with special reference to Household Savings)" is being organised by Margherita College on October 5-6, 2016. The contact address is ecomrgh16@gmail.com. Another National Seminar is in the pipeline at Goreswar College, the details for which are to be finalized soon.

G] Pride and Honour:

I am happy to share with you my pride in Dr. RB Barman, Life Member of NEEA and former Executive Director, Reserve Bank of India, being appointed as the Chairperson of National Statistical Commission. I am sure you will all join me in applauding this great achievement.

H] Requests:

I have a couple of requests-

1. Please update your email ids and contact addresses.
2. Please inform me if you require any membership proof. Write to me at secretaryneea@gmail.com with your name and membership-id (if it is with you)

Thank You for reading so long....hope to meet you at Guwahati

Sincere regards,



[Indraneel Bhowmik]

Hon. Secretary, NEEA

C/o Dept of Economics

Tripura University

Suryamaninagar, Tripura (W), 799022

Phone: 0381-2379174[O]; 0-9436122657[M]

Email: indraneel@tripurauniv.in / eyebees@gmail.com